



UNICEF CHILD PROTECTION EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE

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Six weeks have passed since a 7.8 magnitude earthquake ravaged Nepal on April 25 2015. Since then, the country has experienced hundreds of aftershocks, including aftershocks with a magnitude of 7.3 and 6.3 on 12 May. These earthquakes and aftershocks have had a devastating effect and directly affected millions of people. Among other things, it has led to the loss of thousands of lives, the displacement of over 110,000 people, and the destruction of billions of dollars of property¹. UNICEF's Child Protection team is working in close partnership with the Government of Nepal and protection cluster members to respond to the urgent needs of women and children in the 14 most affected districts in Nepal.

To ensure the protection of children, UNICEF Child Protection is engaged in an aggressive emergency response. Interventions focus at both the practical implementation level and at the policy level to strengthen existing child protection strategies and adhere to international legal frameworks. UNICEF is leading on a number of key child protection priorities and programmes, including:

- Family preservation and identification of unaccompanied/separated children
- Child trafficking prevention and response/ Child labour and exploitation
- Psychosocial support
- Violence against children
- Children with disabilities
- Protection and Child Protection Cluster coordination

UNICEF is closely working with the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) sub-cluster and its members to promote actions to ensure GBV is prevented and addressed, particularly in vulnerable contexts such as within affected communities and camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDP).

ACHIEVEMENTS IN CHILD PROTECTION SECTOR PRIORITIES*

Family preservation and identification of unaccompanied/separated children

UNICEF Child Protection is working closely with the Central Child Welfare Board (CCWB), and 14 District Child Welfare Boards (DCWB) to identify, register, trace, and reunify separated and unaccompanied children and to identify and support vulnerable children at risk of separation. Through initial assessments in all 14 districts, child protection actors have determined that while separated and unaccompanied children are present, a number of factors contribute to the number of unaccompanied and separated children being very low. To date, **72 children have been identified as separated and 63 as unaccompanied**. The family reunification rate is at 81% with **109 children reunified**, while the remaining 26 children have been placed in appropriate care. Separately, **89 children have lost both parents while 453 children have lost one parent**. All of these children are under the care of their surviving parent, relatives and/or community members, or placed in appropriate care as the family members are being traced.

The approaching monsoon season will increase the risk of landslides, lack of shelter and insecurity of families. Consequently, the potential for secondary separation is high. UNICEF and its partners are striving to identify and support families that are at risk of separation. UNICEF is financially supporting Child Rights Officers in 14 affected districts, as well as in non-affected districts. UNICEF is also working with the CCWB to develop a comprehensive online case management and database system as well rapid registration capabilities. This system will be rolled out in accordance with the work plan of the USAC working group.

Nationally, UNICEF has helped the CCWB to expand the use of a toll free phone number to report unaccompanied/separated children, and other child pro-

tection concerns. UNICEF is also assisting in the monitoring and **assessment of 121 registered care homes** hosting **3,072 children** throughout the districts to respond to required protection needs. The assessment includes a structural review, assessment of the supplies to meet basic needs (e.g. food, water), as well as the application of care standards that promote the child's overall well-being. UNICEF has provided assistance to 470 children in 19 damaged or destroyed care homes, and is supporting the running of 13 out of 17 **transit shelters in the affected districts**.

To raise awareness among the affected population about family preservation, regular **radio messages** have been aired eight times a day on national radio and six times a day on local radio stations **covering an estimated 70 per cent** of the total population.

Child Trafficking

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), every year nearly 12,000 women and children are trafficked out of Nepal to India for the purpose of domestic labour and sexual exploitation². Though this study is outdated and numbers may no longer be accurate, it does illustrate a serious reality of trafficking in persons in Nepal. Trafficking is not only cross border but can also happen within a country. In a less secure environment, such as after an earthquake, there is a risk that trafficking will increase.

Immediately following the earthquake, the Nepal Police sent circulars to all 75 district Police Offices and all nine Immigration Offices to monitor potential incidences of child trafficking and take corrective measures when it was discovered. Furthermore, UNICEF has entered into partnership with the Ministry of Home Affairs and Nepal Police to establish and/or strengthen **84 police stations and checkpoints** around the country to prevent and respond to child trafficking. The collaboration between police, CCWB and UNICEF has led to the **interception of 95 children who were being trafficked**, of which **25** were being trafficked to India. The remaining children were prevented from **unnecessary and illegal institutionalisation**. UNICEF is also working across the border with Indian authorities and organisations.

As a result, the Indian Home Department has issued an advisory to increase vigilance at border points. Furthermore, Indian Civil Society organisations have been mobilised to prevent and respond to trafficking. At the time of reporting, UNICEF India has verified the traffic of 3 children, 2 of them are already repatriated in Nepal.

UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare's anti-trafficking unit to strengthen **anti-trafficking committees in the 14 most affected districts and 42 border areas**. The committees are led by the district Women and Children offices and are mobilised to raise awareness and prevent and respond to individual cases of internal and cross-border trafficking. Similarly, UNICEF is working with the Department of Immigration to ensure that immigration officers receive effective training to prevent possible cases of trafficking at the border areas.

UNICEF has entered into partnership with two NGOs working on anti-trafficking. Maiti Nepal will collaborate with UNICEF to scale up or establish **12 screening and interception points along the Indian and Chinese borders and create 11 transit centres for victims of trafficking** in as many districts. Shakti Samuha, another local organization, will be supported to conduct surveillance and awareness raising in the 14 districts.

To further prevent trafficking, UNICEF has launched an awareness raising and public information campaign. To date, **40,000** flyers on preventing family separation and trafficking have been distributed to all 14 districts, including to police stations, IDP camps, communities and partner organisations. **25** flight companies operating in Nepal have been made aware of the need to screen passengers to ensure that children are accompanied by their legal care givers.

Understanding that "volunteerism" in orphanages and care homes can have a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of children, UNICEF has engaged with the tourism sector in Nepal and volunteering agencies

abroad to raise awareness on the issue and to advocate for child-safe volunteering. The tourism sector has requested UNICEF to support the development of "*ethical tourism guidelines*". **40 volunteering agencies** have been made aware of the harmful impact of unskilled volunteering with children. Immediately following the earthquake **8 major overseas volunteering agencies suspended their volunteering programs** in Nepal and the **Australian Council** for International Development Child Rights Working Group is in the process of preparing a statement on this issue, as a direct result of UNICEF's outreach. Further, social media, Q&A's and letters to **94 local and international media** raising awareness about volunteerism have been produced and disseminated.

Finally, UNICEF is working with **8 municipalities with high incidences of child labour and trafficking** to monitor cases of child labour and child trafficking and strengthen their capacity to prevent

STRENGTHENING POLICY

UNICEF Child protection worked rapidly to push for key policy initiatives to ensure that children were not exploited in the aftermath of the earthquake. In particular, the government of Nepal has officially suspended inter-country adoption. Nepal already has more than 700 registered care homes, housing more than 15,000 children—85 per cent of which have at least one parent. The government moved swiftly to suspend the registration of new care homes, and to inform all existing care homes that no new children are to be accepted without the approval of the Central Child Welfare Board (CCWB). The CCWB issued another circular to local authorities stating that children could not be placed outside the districts without the CCWB's recommendation.



UNICEF supported counsellors Batuli and Mukunda are giving a group counselling session for women and children in one of the badly damaged villages in Kavre district.

Photo Chandra Shekhar Karki for UNICEF

Psychosocial support

To ensure that children and adults properly recover from the emotional shock of the earthquake, UNICEF is working to respond to psychosocial distress through community based support services and specialised care. UNICEF has entered into partnerships with Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO) Nepal and three main psychosocial organisations and have deployed a total of **28** counsellors in the 14 districts. So far at least **3,450 children and adults have benefited**. UNICEF has also supported the establishment of **132** child friendly spaces (CFSs) in **13** districts and has provided 200 recreational kits as well as shelter and tents to ensure that children have a safe space to play and recover from the emotional shock. In addition to the provision of tents, UNICEF is working to procure materials from local communities to build the spaces. An estimated **12,610 children have now benefitted** from the child friendly spaces.

In addition to traditional psychosocial counseling, **radio messages on stress management** and counseling are being aired on national radio eight times a day and six times a day on local radio stations covering an estimated 70 per cent of the total population. In communities that speak languages other than Nepali, radio messages are being translated.

A total of **80,000** posters with key messages on stress management and psychosocial wellbeing have been developed and are being disseminated in the 14 districts.

Violence against children and women and Gender Based Violence

To prevent and address violence, exploitation and abuse, including GBV, UNICEF has deployed 14 child protection field officers/monitors to the 14 districts. They are working with the Women and Children Offices, District Child Welfare Boards and other partners to ensure violence prevention and response, with specific focus on GBV and the protection of unaccompanied and separated children. In addition, UNICEF field officers are supporting the **mobilisation of 900 Gender Based Violence Watch Groups**.

UNICEF has also disseminated the code of conduct for humanitarian agencies at the national and local level. Additionally, UNICEF has provided **27 tents to the police in all 14 affected districts to establish a presence in IDP camps to prevent and respond to incidents of violence**, including GBV. UNICEF and Women and Children offices have distributed **7,720 blankets** to children, women, lactating women, and children with disabilities in 14 districts.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

During emergencies, humanitarian interventions should focus on strengthening factors and systems that protect children from violence and abuse and enforce families and children's resilience by supporting positive relations between children, families and communities. In order to build resilience, UNICEF's emergency response is focusing and contributing to further strengthening government systems and building on UNICEF work prior to the earthquake.

National and Local child protection systems are being supported through the hiring and seconding of social workers to the DCWB; the implementation of revised guidelines for case management at the CCWB and strengthening and building the capacity of 28 government officials at the local level on case management; the re-activation and strengthening of anti-trafficking committees at National and district levels; the strengthening of community based groups; the assessment of existing care homes to ensure compliance with required standards of care; conducting family reunification for children institutionalized prior to the earthquake emergency; and the activation of 900 GBV community watch groups. UNICEF is building the resilience of children and their families by increasing awareness about the risk of family separation including through media; and increasing people's knowledge on stress management, psychosocial first aid and earthquake personal protection.

Children with disabilities

Children with disabilities are among the most vulnerable, particularly in the aftermath of the earthquake. UNICEF has provided tents and tarpaulins to support a total of **750** children at three boarding schools for children with disabilities. Additionally, UNICEF facilitated the emergency provision of care by the CCWB to **15** children with disabilities left unaccompanied in an institution in Rasuwa district after their primary caregiver abandoned them after the earthquake. Since UNICEF's intervention, 11 of these children have been reunified with their families, while 4 have been placed in appropriate alternative care. Including these 11 children, a total of **36** children with disabilities have been reunified with their parents. UNICEF

has finalised a partnership with the National Federation of Disabled Nepal as well as with the Karuna Foundation to provide services to children with disabilities, as well as to advocate for their needs and rights.

Cluster coordination

Together with the national Ministry of Women and Children and the district level Departments of Women and Children (DWC), UNICEF has taken a leadership role to coordinate the Child Protection sub-cluster. Together they also lead the Protection cluster jointly with the National Human Rights Commission. To provide effective coordination, UNICEF helps to ensure that child protection requirements are accurately identified, that child protection responses are prioritized within the wider humanitarian response, and responses are not duplicated. UNICEF's coordination also allows for all relevant partners to agree on a shared set of objectives, and division of roles and responsibilities to help create an efficient inter-agency and multi-sectorial response.

At the sub-national level, all districts are developing their own plans to reflect the specific needs in the district. To date, 10 plans have been finalised and four are undergoing development. All of these plans are linked to the national child protection sub-cluster and/or national Protection cluster plans.

To make the child protection sub-cluster more efficient and effective, four technical working groups have been formed to allow more technical discussions and detailed coordination. These four groups cover the following issues: Psychosocial Support; Child Friendly Spaces, Unaccompanied and Separated Children; and Trafficking. These groups report to the Child Protection sub-cluster and are led by UNICEF and relevant government departments. They work to support the implementation of the cluster's programme, avoid duplication and gaps, discuss challenges, develop forms and ensure standards are followed. **To ensure that disability is addressed** by all clusters, the National Federation of Disabled Nepal has appointed **11 disabilities focal points** to participate in cluster meetings in affected districts.

Programme Collaboration

The Child Protection Section is working in close coordination with other UNICEF programs, aiming at maximising the efficiency of our interventions while reaching the maximum number of children in the shortest time.

- In collaboration with **Education**, we have established CFS, trained CFS facilitators and trained teachers in 14 affected districts.
- In collaboration with **Health**, we are working to provide protection and psychosocial support to pregnant and breastfeeding women, as well as to facilitate recreational spaces for hospitalised children and those accompanying their parents.
- With **C4D**, we are using the radio to link affected populations with their government and to amplify their voices as they work to claim their rights.
- Alongside our **Communication** colleagues, we are streamlining and enhancing our advocacy efforts, both domestically and abroad, to prevent the trafficking of children and to curtail the use of unskilled and harmful orphanage volunteering.



In a remote area in one of the affected districts, Nuwakot, Ayush, two years old (in the picture) and his older sister became orphans after their parents died in the devastating earthquake.

Their grandparents are concerned about the future of the children particularly in terms of finance and were considering placing the children in an orphanage.

Through UNICEF intervention, Ayush's grandparents understand that the best place for they children to grow is with them. They will be further supported by UNICEF to ensure their well-being.

KEY HUMANITARIAN PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND RESULTS

	Sub-Cluster 2015 Target	Sub-Cluster Total Result	UNICEF 2015 Target	UNICEF Total Results
Children in the severely affected districts received community-based psychosocial support as well as specialized psychosocial service	235,000	15,104	165,300	15,104
People in the severely-affected districts reached by community groups to prevent and address violence, abuse and exploitation, including GBV and trafficking	143,500	80,000	143,500	80,000
Children identified as separated or unaccompanied as a result of the earthquake are reunited with their families or placed in proper alternative care	100% of identified cases		60% of identified cases	100% of identified cases



Kavita, volunteer of UNICEF's partner NGO Shakti Samuha checks a bus going to Kathmandu from Dolakha, one of the hardest-hit districts by the earthquake, to prevent potential separation of children from families. A child help desk was set up in Bandeu, a town through which people from some of the most earthquake-affected districts including Sindhupalchowk, Dolakha, Ramechhap and Sindhuli, must travel. The volunteers get into every bus passing by and check every child on board. "If we find any child in a suspicious company, we interrogate and seek help from the protection cluster for further intervention" Kavita explains. "We also distribute posters and leaflets with messages on child protection to the passengers and passers-by". This is an effort of the protection cluster, under the leadership of CCWB, to stop unnecessary separation of children. Photos by Chandra Shekhar Karki for UNICEF.

