

Sulawesi earthquake one year on: Over 1 million children and parents reached

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On 4 October 2018 in Indonesia, Muhamad Akbar, 4 years old, plays in front of the ruins of the building damaged during the earthquake in Palu, South Sulawesi.

JAKARTA, 27 September 2019 – Over 1 million children and family members have been reached with critical humanitarian assistance, in the year since a deadly earthquake and tsunami struck the Indonesian island of Sulawesi in September 2018.

More than 2,000 people were killed and 4,400 were seriously injured by the disaster a year ago. Around 525,000 children were left without access to basic nutrition, health and education services.

In the initial response, UNICEF and its partners supported the local authorities with urgent services including family tracing to reunite 49 children who had been separated from their families; and psychosocial support for over 21,000 children and young people who had experienced first-hand the traumatic events of the disaster.

In the months following the earthquake, around 72,000 parents were given counselling for infant and young child feeding to ensure that their children continued consuming appropriate nutrition; and more

than 776,000 children were vaccinated against measles and rubella. To date, over 450,000 people have been able to access safe drinking water and 320,000 people have been given access to water, sanitation and hygiene services.

To build resilience and ensure better preparation for potential future emergency situations, over the past 12 months, social workers were trained in psychosocial support and family tracing; and health workers were trained on nutrition for young children and managing childhood illnesses.

“In a country that is prone to natural disasters, it is crucial we work together to help children at their most vulnerable time. But it is even more crucial to build a world that is truly resilient and protective of its most precious, youngest inhabitants,” said Debora Comini, UNICEF Representative in Indonesia. More recently, with support from UNICEF, the Government undertook a school safety assessment on nearly 1,200 buildings, showing that 135 have been declared safe. This means that there is still a sizeable number of permanent school buildings to be secured (ranging from slightly to heavily damaged) and thousands of children are still studying in temporary learning spaces.

In the coming months and years, building permanent schools and homes will be an important intervention for all partners. Of equal importance, is ensuring that with those permanent buildings, children are also able to access quality education and sustainable solutions to health care and safe sanitation. UNICEF and partners are therefore supporting the Government to strengthen the urban water and sanitation infrastructure system, among other continuing efforts. – UNICEF, Jakarta, September 27, 2019