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## Most vulnerable must not be forgotten

*Two years after the earthquake in Haiti the most vulnerable are still at risk, if aid wanes.*

**Brussels, 12 January 2012: At least half of the over 220.000 casualties during the earthquake in Haiti on 12 January 2010 were children. Many of those that have survived the turmoil of the past two years have been abandoned by families no longer able to provide for them due to poverty and impossible living conditions. Girls, in particular, face extensive sexual violence in makeshift camps. Over 500,000 people still living in camps endure worsening conditions as donor funding and interest in Haiti's reconstruction wanes. Plan International, SOS Children's Villages and World Vision call on the European Union (EU) to consider the protection of children and the economic and social support for their families in Haiti a top priority.**

In January 2010, over two million people were affected by the devastating earthquake in Haiti, leaving many homeless. **1.5 million were children.** Although the number of Haitians living in camps has decreased by 66 per cent from a July 2010 peak of 1.5 million, **the ones now left in the camps are the most vulnerable** to new natural disasters such as hurricanes and floods, as well as economic hardship. Children and adolescents are **exposed to malnutrition and violence**; they report of physical and sexual abuse, of broken homes and parents who are not able to find work. The greatest child protection risks witnessed in Plan's operational areas have been in the **crowded and unsanitary camps.** Girls and women have been especially exposed to attack on their way to the washing facilities. According to World Vision research, over half of the children registered at official border check points last year were travelling in dangerous conditions (without documents, hidden in vehicles, or clearly handled by smugglers). Many of these children are at risk of sexual or labour exploitation.

**Helmut Kutin, President of SOS Children's Villages,** states: "The conditions are catastrophic: measures to ensure children's rights are respected should be enforced as soon as possible. Those of us who have committed ourselves to helping the people of Haiti must make good on our promises, even if true consolidation is still years away".

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, **US\$ 231 million are required for 2012 to address immediate unmet necessities and to carry out longer-term projects.** In 2011, half of the financial needs were not met. Although the EU has given strong support to Haiti in the past, it must now continue to prioritise Haiti, and rise to the level of other world leaders. Aid initiatives have contributed to erasing the devastation left by the earthquake in Haiti; many children have benefited from these services. Yet reconstruction on this scale is an exceedingly complex and time consuming process, even more so when a country has a long history of permanent political, social and economic crisis.

**Plan, SOS Children's Villages and World Vision have implemented measures to protect children and adolescents** in child-friendly spaces, through emotional and psychosocial support, reunification of separated children with their families, and child-trafficking prevention. Children in Haiti have received food, medical care and shelter. **Massive investment, however, is required** to assist the Government of Haiti in fulfilling its responsibility and taking leadership on shelter, healthcare, education and economic growth.

As **Plan's director in Haiti, John Chaloner**, confirms: "Haiti is a very young nation with around half of its population aged under 18. There are many vulnerable young people at risk if we allow this to become simply 2010's forgotten crisis."

Therefore full social protection should be prioritised, in particular for Haitian girls, including safe, quality education, economic opportunities for young people, campaigns targeting child rights, gender-based violence, youth pregnancy and work rights. US\$ 7.3 million alone will be required to ensure an enrolment of 80 per cent of the children between four and 14 years of age who live in temporary camps and shelter.

**Jean Claude Mukadi, World Vision Haiti's National Director**, says: "I envision a Haiti where children and youth are given the opportunity to dream and to have hope for the future; where they are loved, cared for, protected, and where they are provided with the opportunity to express themselves and to participate in the reconstruction of their country".

**Plan, SOS Children's Villages and World Vision therefore call on the EU to allocate necessary funds to the long-term reconstruction of Haiti, and particularly the protection of children.**

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#### NOTES TO EDITORS:

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**Plan** is an international child rights and development organisation, active in 50 developing countries across Asia, Africa and the Americas. The Plan EU Office in Brussels strives to ensure the promotion and protection of child rights is a priority in EU policy and practice, and that children's voices are heard in the decision-making process. [www.plan-eu.org](http://www.plan-eu.org)

**SOS Children's Villages International** is the umbrella organisation of more than 130 affiliated national SOS Children's Village associations, in Europe and worldwide. SOS Children's Villages is a non-governmental and non-denominational, child-focused organisation that provides direct services in the areas of care, education and health for children at risk of losing parental care, or who have lost parental care. The organisation also builds the capacity of the children's caregivers, their families and communities to provide adequate care. SOS Children's Villages advocates for the rights of children without parental care and those at risk of losing parental care. Founded in 1949, its operations are guided by the spirit of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. [www.sos-childrensvillages.org](http://www.sos-childrensvillages.org)

**World Vision** is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation working at the grassroots in over 100 countries all around the world. World Vision is dedicated to working with children, families and communities, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender, to overcome poverty and injustice. World Vision has been active in Haiti for over 30 years, with a staff of over 500 local Haitians, even before the Earthquake. The Haiti program now prioritizes Child Protection Systems, child and maternal health, education and vocational training, food security, disaster risk reduction, and the transition from relief to rehabilitation and long term sustainable national solutions. [www.wvi.org](http://www.wvi.org)

According to the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), children have inalienable rights in all circumstances – including disasters – and the right to participate in decisions that ultimately affect them.

During the 2011 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva a five-point [Children's Charter for Disaster Risk Reduction \(DRR\)](#) was adopted. The Charter highlights 5 priorities identified with more than 600 children in 21 countries. They are:

- Schools must be safe – education must be uninterrupted.

- Child protection must be a priority, before, during and after a disaster.
- Children and young people have the right to participate and to access the information they need.
- Community infrastructure must be safe, and relief and reconstruction must help reduce future disaster risk.
- Disaster risk reduction must reach the most vulnerable.

More information:

- [Haiti Camp Coordination Camp Management Cluster - Displacement Tracking Matrix, 31 July 2011](#)
- [IOM: Population in Camps Housing Haitians Left Homeless by the 2010 Earthquake Drops Below 600,000](#)
- [UN OCHA: Haiti: US\\$231 million needed for 2012, as people continue to cope with aftermath of earthquake, storms and cholera](#)

**PICTURES AVAILABLE FOR USE:**



**©Plan: Girls queue up at the National Girls School of Jacmel**

As part of Plan's response to the 2010 earthquake girl's education was focused on. Often in the aftermath of a disaster education isn't seen as a priority, but the reopening of schools (facilitated by Plan) helped the children in Jacmel return to something approaching a normal life. This return to routine acts as a great psychological healer to the children while also keeping them on track in their education. Plan built temporary classrooms at the National Girls School of Jacmel to act as somewhere for the girls to study while the school was rebuilt. The joy of returning to school can be seen on many of the girl's faces.



**©Plan: Mother brings her child to Plan's nutrition center in Santa 17 Camp.**



**© SOS Children's Villages: At lunchtime the children in the Community Centre of SOS Children's Villages in Port-au-Prince receive food prepared by women from the same community.**

SOS Children's Villages supports disadvantaged families in Port-au-Prince, Cap Haïtien and soon in Les Cayes. The main objective is to strengthen the resources of the communities in order to help families support themselves and to support women in particular.



**© SOS Children's Villages: In Santo, SOS Children's Villages builds a school which will be run by the community. In the meanwhile, classes take place in tents.**

One of the focal points of SOS Children's Villages is the rehabilitation of schools. In total, SOS Children's Villages is financing the construction of a community school and of four public schools in Santo and the area of Les Cayes. Comprehensive training courses in child-centred education are also being offered for teachers in cooperation with the University Quisqueya.