

# AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE: NEPAL'S CHILDREN SPEAK OUT

NEPAL CHILDREN'S EARTHQUAKE RECOVERY CONSULTATION



Save the Children

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In collaboration with:



Government of Nepal  
Central Child Welfare Board



Government of Nepal  
Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development



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## ACRONYMS

CCWB	Central Child Welfare Board
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoN	Government of Nepal
MoFALD	Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODF	Open Defecation Free
PDNA	Post Disaster Needs Assessment
SMC	School Management Committee
TLC	Temporary Learning Centre
VDC	Village Development Committee

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Bijay Gajmer/Save the Children

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nepal was struck by a 7.6 magnitude earthquake on 25 April 2015 and another 6.8 magnitude earthquake on 12 May. These two events, combined with hundreds of aftershocks resulted in over 8,700 deaths<sup>1</sup> and wrought massive destruction across the affected districts. Children, who represent 42 per cent of Nepal's population<sup>2</sup>, have suffered unimaginable trauma and loss.

The scale of the destruction and resulting needs are documented in the Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) which was conducted by the Government of Nepal. Among other things, the PDNA explicitly warns of the potentially "disastrous consequences" of the earthquakes on the protection of "women, girls and children"<sup>3</sup>.

To better understand the consequences for children, four child-centred agencies, in coordination with the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD) and the Central Child Welfare Board (CCWB), conducted a Children's Earthquake Recovery Consultation using Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with more than 1,800 girls and boys from the 14 most severely-affected districts. The objectives of the consultation were to hear directly from children the challenges they are facing in the aftermath of the earthquakes; to assess the impact of the crisis on their roles, responsibilities and future opportunities; and to seek their views on and recommendations for recovery.

The findings powerfully demonstrate the severe impact of the earthquakes on children. Many of their immediate concerns relate to their current living conditions. The three priority issues of concern identified by children were:

- the inadequacy and insecurity of tents and other temporary shelters in which many are living as a result of destruction or damage to their homes
- the impact of school closures on their learning and social interaction and a desire by many to return to education
- the lack of access to safe water supplies, sanitation and medical care and the resulting fears for their health and that of family and community members.

The effects of the earthquakes on girls and boys are, however, much broader. Not only are children having to come to terms with deaths of family members and friends and many other losses, they are also having to adjust to new and extremely challenging circumstances. The wider impacts that emerged through the consultations included:

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- profound feelings of sadness and grief at deaths and loss of homes, belongings, schools, temples and other places of worships, communities and ways of life
  - fear of another earthquake and other potential threats, and anxiety about the future
  - an increased burden of domestic chores and other tasks to support their parents in ensuring adequate food, shelter and water
  - increased feelings of vulnerability, particularly among girls, to exploitation and abuse.

These and other impacts show the necessity of not only prioritising the more tangible requirements such as shelter, but also the psychosocial and protection needs of children and their families.

The children who took part in the consultation provided detailed and practical recommendations. They had clear ideas about how they wanted their communities to be rebuilt and the support needed to achieve this. They saw a clear role for themselves and their communities in rebuilding after the devastation. Given the magnitude of the challenges, however, they also expressed a valid expectation of significant assistance from authorities and other stakeholders. Their detailed recommendations are documented in this report.

The age and gender specific issues that emerged and recommendations that were offered demonstrate the importance of ensuring children are both informed of and consulted on decisions relating to all phases of the disaster response. They also underscore the importance of engaging children in the design and implementation of disaster preparedness plans. Many of the children who participated in the consultation said they had not known what an earthquake was or how to respond. Sharing information with children and involving them in preparedness planning will help protect them in the event of future disasters.

It is hoped that this consultation will contribute to the ongoing recovery and planning process led by the Government of Nepal and will inform responses by the national authorities, humanitarian agencies and others engaged in assisting the millions of people affected by the earthquakes as well as planning for future disasters across the country.

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# INTRODUCTION

The two large earthquakes that struck Nepal in April and May 2015, combined with hundreds of aftershocks have wrought massive destruction in 31 of Nepal's 75 districts. According to latest figures, 8,790 people died and 22,300 were injured<sup>4</sup> – among them were many children. Tens of thousands of buildings have been destroyed or damaged including homes, schools, health centres and other public and private structures, and religious and cultural monuments. Infrastructure has been damaged and livelihoods severely disrupted.

Children represent an estimated 3.2 million of the eight million people affected by the earthquakes – of which around one million live in the 14 most affected districts<sup>5</sup>. Their youth results in distinct experiences and specific vulnerabilities and needs which, in the aftermath of such a catastrophic event, can be easily overlooked. Many come from districts with human development index scores lower than the national average and with large populations of disadvantaged social groups (low caste and indigenous communities) – these compounding factors have left many children and adolescents facing an uncertain future<sup>6</sup>.

Building on previous experience and initiatives in other crisis and post-crisis situations, Plan International, Save the Children, UNICEF and World Vision International, in coordination with MoFALD and the CCWB, undertook a "Children's Earthquake Recovery Consultation" in the 14 most severely-affected districts<sup>7</sup>. The consultation sought children's perceptions and experiences of the earthquakes and the emergency response, and their recommendations on how to address the issues they identified.

# SECTION 1: METHODOLOGY

The Children's Earthquake Recovery Consultation was undertaken by partner agencies in late May and early June 2015 using participatory focus group discussions (FGDs) with a total of 1,838 children from 14 districts. FGDs were conducted in the 14 district headquarters and in 30 Village Development Committees (VDCs).

In recognition of the different needs and perspectives of children, groups were divided by gender (boys and girls) and age groups (8-12 years and 13-18 years). A total of 166 FGDs were conducted by program staff from the respective agencies and consultants. Each FGD had one facilitator and one documenter. Female facilitators were used for FGDs with girls and male facilitators for FGDs with boys. Consultation teams received a two-day training on the methodology, tools, and reporting formats, and on child-safeguarding policies and psychosocial support and referral systems.

## The FGDs explored the following questions:

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- Question 1: What are the biggest issues or problems that children are currently facing in the aftermath of the earthquakes?
- Question 2: How do these affect them and their families?
- Question 3: Who else is affected by these issues or problems and how?
- Question 4: What do they think are the possible solutions to these problems?
- Question 5: Who do they think could help resolve these problems?
- Question 6: What are children's perceptions of the emergency response?
- Question 7: What information do children have about the earthquake, emergency response and other issues affecting them? What information would they like to receive and how would they like to receive it?
- Question 8: What would they do differently if another earthquake happens?
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*Children drew to express what they saw during the earthquake and the future they want to see.*

# GEOGRAPHIC SITES COVERED BY THE STUDY

Target districts were the districts that had been identified by the Government of Nepal as the most severely affected by the two earthquakes: Bhaktapur; Dolakha; Dhading; Gorkha; Lalitpur; Kathmandu; Kavre; Makawanpur; Nuwakot; Okhaldhunga; Ramechhap; Rasuwa; Sindhuli; and Sindhupalchowk.

The field sites within these districts were determined on the basis of operational presence of the participating agencies or based on existing links with child clubs and other children's networks. FGDs were conducted in the 14 district headquarters and in 30 Village Development Committees (VDCs). VDCs were selected using purposeful sampling based on the criteria of "most affected VDCs" and "VDCs with high density of disadvantaged or marginalized groups" – in particular 'low-caste' (Dalit) or indigenous groups (Janjati).

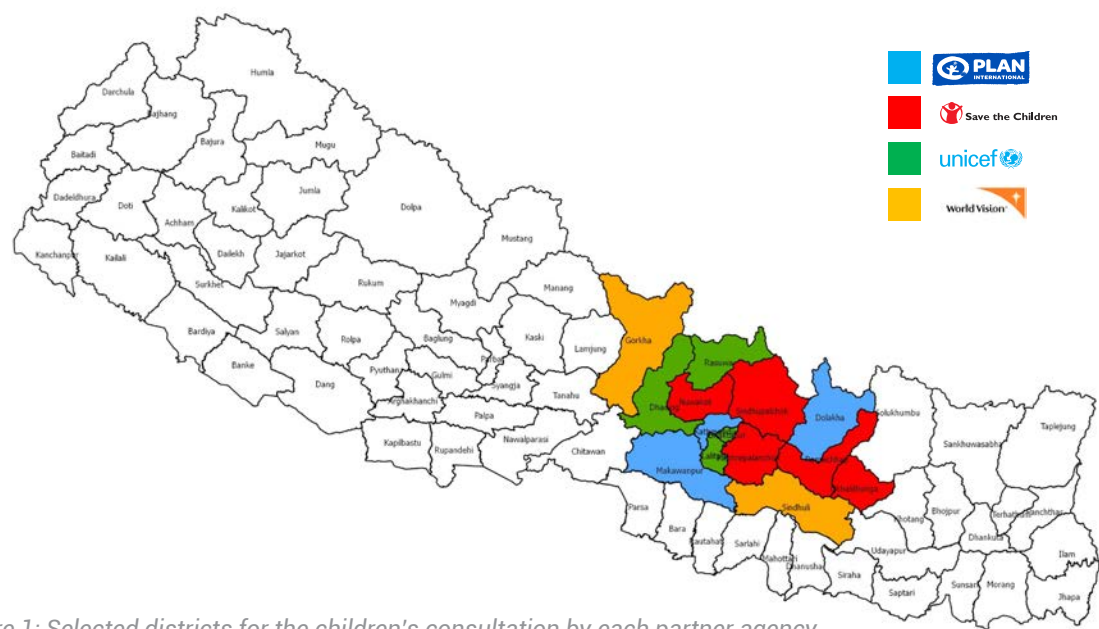


Figure 1: Selected districts for the children's consultation by each partner agency

## IDENTIFYING CHILDREN TO PARTICIPATE

Children were selected using systematic random sampling to ensure participation of as wide a range of children as possible.

Age Group	Girls	Boys	Total
8-12 years	462	474	936
13-18 years	458	444	902
<b>Total</b>	<b>920</b>	<b>918</b>	<b>1838</b>



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# PARTICIPATORY TOOLS

Four tools were used in the consultation. An expressive drawing tool was used in all FGDs and then assessment teams selected other tools depending on the age group, resources available and the facilitators' observations of the children's mood or energy.

The expressive drawing tool was used to identify the three main issues affecting children in the context of the earthquake (answering question 1). Based on the three main issues identified, more detailed discussions followed (answering questions 2-8) using expressive drawing and other tools.

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## The tools used were:

**Tool 1 – Expressive drawing:** Through this tool children were asked to draw, write or describe one issue affecting them and then this was discussed in a group and the three most common issues were identified. These and other issues were then discussed using the questions as a guide.

**Tool 2 – H-Assessment:** This tool was used to enable children to express their unique experience after the earthquake either through drawings, writing or verbal explanation as the basis for further discussion around positive and negative experiences.

**Tool 3 – Body Mapping:** The body mapping tool gave children the opportunity to freely explore and discuss their experiences and feelings about the emergency and the response. A life-size drawing of a body with head, ears, shoulders, hands, heart, stomach, legs and feet was used to represent knowledge, information, responsibility, feelings, emotions, health, protection, and changed patterns of movement and play.

**Tool 4 – Visioning Exercise:** The visioning exercise allowed children to express their views and ideas about their future, that of their family and their community using drawings, drama, writing and discussions.

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# DATA ANALYSIS AND COLLECTION

Notes were taken during each FGD and written up each day on reporting forms. They were submitted to the Project Manager at Save the Children for analysis. Reporting forms were submitted in English, and translated from Nepali language by the assessment team (facilitator and documenter) where required.

Data analysis used a thematic content analysis approach, inductively drawing out the themes from the data collected. Emerging themes were identified based on the frequency in which they featured in the FGDs and the severity of the issue. The themes were then mapped to see how the issues linked together. Direct quotes were gathered and used to support the themes where available.

More details of the methodology and a summary of strengths and limitations of the consultation can be found in Annex I.



*A group of girls share their vision for the future during a consultation with children.*

RUPA GAUTAM/SAVE THE CHILDREN

## SECTION 2: ISSUES OF CONCERN

Using the expressive drawing tool, children were asked to identify issues of concern or problems they had been facing since the earthquakes. These were then ranked and further discussed using the expressive drawing and other tools. The three top ranked concerns related to shelter, education and water and sanitation. The issues raised in connection with these concerns are elaborated below.

### I. LOSS OF HOMES



*A boy shows his home destroyed by the earthquake.*

JONATHAN HYAMS/SAVE THE CHILDREN

#### "Our houses have been destroyed"

Housing was most severely affected with over 769,000 houses estimated to have been damaged or destroyed by the earthquakes<sup>8</sup>. As a result, tens of thousands of people have been living in temporary shelters. Reconstruction of housing will be a lengthy process and, in the meantime, many children and their families are likely to remain in temporary shelters for months if not years. This will be challenging for all, but for children from higher and more remote regions the annual monsoon rains and accompanying storms, as well as the harsh winters, will create extra risks to well-being and health.

In view of this situation, it is not surprising that loss of homes was the major preoccupation of children in all age groups and across all districts covered by the research. In 93 out of 166

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FGDs (56 per cent) shelter emerged as the greatest concern and it featured among the top three priorities in 139 FGDs (84 per cent).

In cases where their homes were still standing, some children described being scared to go back inside. A significant proportion of the children who participated in the FGDs were living under tents or tarpaulins, or in some cases in animal sheds or out in the open. They described a range of problems, anxieties and fears resulting from this.

## *"We are living in a tent and cannot sleep at night"*

Children in 76 FGDs reported that their temporary shelters were uncomfortable. They explained that the tents or tarpaulins were very hot during the day and at night they found it difficult to sleep on the hard ground. Children in eight FGDs also complained that there were mosquitoes and other insects in the tents and they were afraid of catching diseases as a result.

*"We are living in a tent but it gets cold and hot, and it's infested with flies and mosquitoes."*

*– girl aged 8-12, Kavre*

A common theme among children was the feeling of insecurity in the temporary shelters. Younger children in particular spoke about fear of wild animals. Several talked about being afraid of "leopards" and "tigers", although the fear of being bitten by snakes was more common. Children also referred to thefts from shelters or fear of thieves. Some older children reported feeling responsible for the security of their family.

*"At night also I don't sleep well because my mother and sister and I sleep in the same tent as others and I have to be vigilant as I have to protect my sister and mom."*

*– boy aged 16, Dolakha*

*"The earthquake destroyed my house and we are living in a tent. We are scared and cannot sleep at night."*

*– boy aged 11, Kavre*

*"Living under the tarpaulin is scary, I am afraid that a snake will bite me."*

*– boy aged 8-12, Sindhupalchowk*

*"We fear living outside, sometimes it rains, most nights we don't sleep because leopards come near our tents."*

*– boy aged 13-17, Gorkha*



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## "We have no space or privacy"

Overcrowding and lack of privacy was a prominent concern among many, mainly older children. Girls in particular said it was difficult for a large family to live in a single tent and there was not enough space for them and their belongings. Some also reported feeling awkward because they were sleeping in the same space as their fathers and brothers or in some cases sharing shelters with people outside of their family.

*"Our tent is not comfortable to live in. We have seven people in our family and living in the single tent is suffocating. Living here for a long time will be challenging."*

*– girl aged 13-18, Ramechhap*

*"I am worried that a lot of people are living in the same tent: my mother, father, siblings and other people, it's really awkward."*

*– girl aged 13-18, Sindhupalchowk*

Adolescent girls also reported feeling unhappy because they had nowhere private to change their clothes. Maintaining menstrual hygiene in a cramped, shared space was a major concern for girls in this age group. With markets closed, it was difficult to buy sanitary pads or even cotton cloth to use as a substitute. Girls described being embarrassed to change the pads and having nowhere private to wash. In Nepal, where it remains customary in many communities for women and girls to live separately during their menstrual cycle and to refrain from preparing food, the lack of privacy and space available in temporary shelters was identified as particularly difficult for girls.

*"The entire family is sleeping together under the same tarpaulin. Being a girl, it becomes really uncomfortable for us while changing clothes. Particularly during the menstrual cycle, changing pads inside the tarps and washing it openly is really embarrassing."*

*– girl aged 13-18, Makwanpur*

*"There is a belief in our community that girls who are having their menstrual cycle are untouchable and that we are not allowed to touch anyone, especially the male members of our family. So, during that period we have to sleep separately and we have to do that even in this situation."*

*– girl aged 13-18, Ramechhap*

## "Our shelters cannot stand up to the storms"

Heavy rains and storms in the weeks after the earthquakes created further challenges for children living in temporary shelters. The monsoon was also approaching and will last for several months from July to September. In the immediate aftermath of the earthquakes, tents and tarpaulins were distributed to provide a minimal level of shelter as quickly as possible. With the changing weather, however, these will be insufficient to protect children and others from the elements or to provide

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suitable longer-term living conditions.

Children, particularly from hilly and mountainous districts where weather conditions are more extreme, reported that their tents or other shelters were not waterproof and that when it rained they and their belongings got wet. The durability of the shelters was raised as a source of considerable anxiety in more than half of the FGDs in almost all districts.

Children described how tents had blown away in the storms. Several boys and girls said at times they had to stay awake all night to hold onto tarpaulins to prevent them blowing away. Others described being afraid their shelters would be hit by landslides or falling trees. Older children in five FGDs raised specific concerns about the implications for shelter with the deterioration of weather conditions during the monsoon season.

*"My house has not collapsed but there are cracks everywhere. I am afraid to live inside my cracked house but I am also afraid to sleep outside. When it rains or when a storm blows, it carries away the tent and leaves us in a mess and it pains me to see all this."*

*– girl aged 17, Sindhupalchowk*

*"I get furious when it rains heavily because our tent starts to leak and if there is a storm along with the rain, the situation gets worse."*

*– girl aged 13-18, Ramechhap*

*"Our shelter is at high risk of heavy storms. We were forced to stay awake for a whole night to hold on to the tarps to save them from blowing away."*

*– boy aged 8-12, Nuwakot*

## **"We don't know when we will have a new house"**

In more than one fifth of FGDs, children expressed concerns about how long they would have to stay in tents or temporary shelters. Older children were particularly anxious about how their families would be able to afford to build new houses. Several also referred to having to rent land for temporary shelters.

Children in six FGDs from urban areas who were living in rented homes that were damaged or destroyed by the earthquakes, feared that their families would not receive relief money or other support for shelter from the government.

*"My house collapsed even before we were able to pay the loan my parents had taken to build it."*

*– girl aged 12, Sindhupalchowk*

*"Are we going to stay like this forever? Will anyone build us a better house?"*

*– girl aged 8-12, Sindhuli*

## II DESTRUCTION OF SCHOOLS



*A school in Gorkha completely destroyed by the April 25th earthquake.*

DEVENDRA TAK/SAVE THE CHILDREN

### "We cannot go back to school"

Schools in affected districts were closed immediately after the first earthquake on 25 April. According to government estimates, almost 7,000 schools were completely or significantly damaged<sup>9</sup> affecting an estimated 1,589,000 children<sup>10</sup>. Structural assessments of the remaining schools were quickly initiated. Many children were able to resume their formal education on 31 May when schools were officially reopened. However, given the number of schools that were destroyed or have been assessed to be structurally unsafe, millions of children did not have schools to return to<sup>11</sup>.

Education emerged as the second highest priority for children. It was raised as the first priority in 59 out of 166 FGDs (36 per cent) and featured among the top three priorities in 129 out of 166 FGDs (78 per cent). Many children said they could not go to school because school buildings had been damaged or destroyed.

Feelings of sadness about the loss of their school were widely expressed as was worry about when they would be able to resume their studies. Some also noted that their teachers were absent and in a few cases children reported that their teacher had been killed in the earthquake. Children in a few FGDs (seven) described feeling bored and missing their school friends and teachers.

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*"I'd like to go to school just like before."*

*– girl aged 8-12, Gorkha*

*"I don't know how our teachers will manage to teach us. We don't even have temporary classes to resume our studies."*

*– girl aged 8-12, Ramechhap*

*"Our school is closed and I am getting bored and missing my school friends."*

*– girl aged 8-12, Kathmandu*

Older girls and boys were particularly worried they were falling behind in their studies and would not be able to make this up in time to take their exams. National exams for Grades 11 and 12 were in progress when the first earthquake struck and had to be postponed. A few children who were due to take these exams raised concerns about when they would have a chance to sit them and whether they would be successful<sup>12</sup>. Several said they were worried they had forgotten what they learned and some expressed fear they had become "stupid".

*"We prepared so hard for our upcoming exams and were ready to take them. But the earthquake has completely disturbed our mental state so we've forgotten everything we'd learned."*

*– girl aged 13-18, Dolakha*

*"We don't go to school anymore. I don't know where we will study now."*

*– boy aged 13-18, Dolakha*

Several children who did return to school on 31 May spoke about the therapeutic effect of resuming the daily routine of classes and meeting friends. However, although many children indicated that they wanted to return to school, mainly younger boys and girls in a significant number of FGDs (30) said that they were happy that they didn't have to go to school and were enjoying having more time to meet and play with friends.

*"We are happy to go back to school as we meet friends and by sharing, talking, dancing we temporarily forget the fears of earthquake. But when we see the cracked buildings we feel scared."*

*We hope that these buildings are removed soon."*

*– girl aged 12-18, Sindhuli*

*"I am happy because I can hang out with friends and eat berries in the woods."*

*– boy aged 16, Sindhupalchowk*



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## "We are scared to go back to school"

Children in one quarter of FGDs (girls and boys in both age groups) expressed fear about returning to school. In most cases this was from fear of another earthquake, although children in some FGDs were worried that the route to school was insecure because of unsafe structures and rubble of collapsed buildings and because of landslides. Children in several FGDs also reported that their parents were afraid to send them or their siblings to school after the earthquake.

*"I don't feel like going to school because the buildings are completely damaged and it looks scary."*

– girl aged 8-12, Ramechhap

*"Sometimes I'm afraid to go to school. What if there's an earthquake on our way to school."*

– girl aged 8-12, Sindhuli

*"I am too afraid to go to school in case there are aftershocks."*

– boy aged 8-12, Gorkha

*"I would like to go to school but my parents won't let me. They are afraid that I will not be safe in school."*

– girl aged 13-18, Bhaktapur

## "Our school materials have been destroyed"

A recurring theme among children in almost all districts was the loss of school uniforms, bags, exercise books, and other school materials in the rubble of their houses. There was concern about where these could be purchased given shops and markets were closed and some children were also worried about how their parents could afford to pay for them.

There was a strong feeling among children that the government should provide them with free school materials to make it possible for them to study again. Boys in Rasuwa and girls and boys in Nuwakot districts specifically raised concerns that school computers and libraries had been destroyed, leaving them without proper learning facilities.

*"We don't need anything. We just need books, notebooks and a school bag."*

– girl aged 8-12, Okhaldhunga

*"I would have been able to buy books by selling the cattle if they were alive."*

– boy aged 13-18, Nuwakot

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## "We are finding it difficult to study"

Schools reopened during the second week of consultations for this study, so some children in the later consultations had returned to school. While children who were attending classes were generally positive about being able to resume their education, some were finding it difficult to study under canvas, tarpaulins or in other temporary structures. The large number of children in temporary learning centres (TLCs) and the mixing of different grades were specifically raised as problems. Older girls in four districts (Dhading, Dolakha, Okhaldhunga, Sindhuli) expressed concern that they were required to study in schools that had been marked as structurally unsafe with a red sticker<sup>13</sup>.

Some children spoke about difficulties they were having in concentrating on their studies and their fears about what this means for their future. Some of the challenges were practical, for example, lack of space and electricity in temporary homes made it difficult for them to do homework.

*"I used to be a very good student but now because of the earthquake I cannot concentrate."*

*– girl aged 13-18, Ramechhap*

*"Staying in temporary shelter is not like staying at home; there is no light, we can't study and there is no security."*

*– boy aged 8-12, Ramechhap*

Others said they were struggling to concentrate or had lost motivation. Children in a few FGDs (three FGDs with 13-18 year-old girls and one FGD with 13-18 year-old boys) reported that additional household tasks meant there was less time for their schoolwork. Girls from two districts (Rasuwa and Ramechhap) said they were worried they may not be able to return to school because of the increased burden of domestic and other chores since the earthquake. In a few cases, children expressed anxiety about whether their parents would be able to afford to send them back to school.

*"All our dreams and aspirations to excel in our studies are shattered. Now I don't feel like studying because I have so many problems in my family and I can't afford to resume my studies at this time of crisis."*

*– girl aged 13-18, Ramechhap*

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### III. LACK OF ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND HYGIENE

Sanitation and health emerged as the third priority for children. It was raised as the first priority in seven out of 166 FGDs (4 per cent) but featured among the top three priorities in 93 out of 166 FGDs (56 per cent).

#### "We don't have safe drinking water"

Water supplies were badly affected by the earthquakes with an estimated 1.1 million people losing access to safe water supplies and toilets<sup>14</sup>. Flooding is expected during the monsoon season with living conditions likely to deteriorate and water systems could be further damaged.

Access to safe drinking water was a significant concern for children (referred to in 50 FGDs). Concern was particularly high in 12 out of the 14 study districts where children reported that water supplies were contaminated and they were compelled to drink unsafe water<sup>15</sup>. Children also spoke about not having enough water to bathe or shower and unhappiness about having to bathe in public.

*"The water source is contaminated with a mixture of mud and stone. We are afraid of getting diarrhoea as we are compelled to drink the water."*

*– boy aged 13-18, Nuwakot*

*"We feel very uncomfortable bathing outside as there is no closed space for bathing and boys look at us."*

*– girl aged 13-18, Ramechhap*

#### "Toilets have been destroyed"

In recent years, a successful government-led campaign, "Open Defecation Free" (ODF), has led to the building of toilets for communities and in private homes. As a result, there has been a marked shift away from open defecation and many VDCs (including in earthquake-affected areas) have been declared "ODF." Many of these toilets, however, were destroyed by the earthquakes.

Children in 20 FGDs representing all 14 districts reported they no longer had access to toilets. Both girls and boys expressed unhappiness and disgust that they and their communities have to defecate in the open. This issue was highlighted particularly in Dolakha, Gorkha, Kavre, Nuwakot, Okhaldhunga, Ramechhap and Sindhupalchowk districts.

*"Our toilet has collapsed. I feel so awkward and scared to defecate in the open."*

*– girl aged 8-12, Gorkha*



*Many children continue to live in temporary shelters after the earthquake destroyed their homes.*

RAJAN ZAVERI/SAVE THE CHILDREN

*"We are forced to defecate openly because the majority of toilets have collapsed and the remaining ones are not safe to use."*

*– boy aged 13-18, Nuwakot*

## *"We are getting sick"*

There was wide awareness of and anxiety around the potential health risks of open defecation as well as lack of access to safe drinking water. The issue was raised by girls and boys in 45 FGDs and by both older and younger children. Some children also expressed concern about the risk of bodies still buried under the rubble and the rotting carcasses of animals that were killed in the earthquakes that had not yet been safely disposed of. They spoke about their fear of outbreaks of diarrhoea and other waterborne diseases, as well as of coughs, colds and other illnesses that could result from overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions.

*"People are defecating openly and I am sure there will be an outbreak of disease soon."*

*– girl aged 8-12, Ramechhap*

Such high levels of awareness of the health risks associated with poor sanitation and water is



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positive and underscores the importance of restoring these services as quickly as possible. According to children in ten districts there had already been a rise in health problems. Some spoke about diarrhoea, vomiting and other stomach problems which they attributed to changes in their regular diet, eating stale or poorly prepared food, eating unfamiliar food items contained in relief food packages, lack of safe drinking water and general living conditions.

*"Most of our village suffered diarrhoea, headaches and dizziness after the earthquake."*

*– girl aged 13-18, Ramechhap.*

*"Due to the earthquake some children...have died and some are suffering from stomach ache, hunger and other diseases."*

*– boy aged 12, Kavre*

*"My brother is always ill. Maybe it's because we're sleeping outdoors."*

*– girl aged 13-18, Gorkha*

## **"We do not have access to healthcare"**

Healthcare service coverage in Nepal prior to the earthquakes was uneven. Although there had been much progress, there were still significant discrepancies in the levels of quality of care between urban and rural districts. The earthquakes have compounded this situation, destroying or severely damaging over 1,000 health facilities including primary health centres and health posts. As a result, many communities have been left without access to healthcare<sup>16</sup>.

Children were concerned that inadequate access to healthcare facilities, medical supplies and expertise in their village meant they sometimes had to travel long distances for help. However, several also reported they were happy that mobile medical teams had visited their villages and they had received free medical check-ups. Several expressed the desire for such clinics to be made permanent and for the quality of healthcare to be better than before the earthquake.

*"We don't have any medical facilities due to the destruction of the hospital."*

*– boy aged 13-18, Nuwakot*

*"We want to have permanent health camps in our village with mobile doctors and health workers."*

*– girl aged 13-18, Ramechhap*

## SECTION 3: THE IMPACT OF THE EARTHQUAKES ON CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING, ROLES, PROTECTION AND FUTURE



*A child's drawing showing destruction in his village caused by the earthquake*

While shelter, education, health and hygiene emerged as priority concerns for children, broader impacts of the earthquakes were also discussed in the H-assessment, expressive drawing and body mapping exercises. Most prominent among the impacts described by children in these exercises were:

- grief and sadness at deaths of family members, friends and acquaintances (reported in 56 FGDs)
- strong feelings of loss, fear and other psychosocial impacts of the damage and destruction (reported in all FGDs)
- increased domestic and other chores (reported in 96 FGDs)
- concerns about not having adequate food (reported in 58 FGDs)
- concerns about increased risks of abuse and exploitation (reported in 25 FGDs).

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Each of these issues is elaborated below. Despite all of the hardships and fears, however, many children remarked on the positive impact the earthquakes have had in bringing families and communities together (reported in 68 FGDs). Examples were provided of family quarrels being patched up and of a sense of togetherness and equality in the community because everyone was suffering from the same disaster. Children also described making new friends and, although there was a lot of concern among children about their living conditions, children (mainly boys) in a significant number of FGDs (43) also said that it was fun to live in a tent with other people.

*"The earthquake has ended enmity... Love and care has taken its place instead."*  
– girl aged 13-18, Dolakha

*"After the earthquake my mother and Sita's mother are now talking to each other. I am so happy."*  
– girl aged 13-18, Sindhuli

*"The millionaires and the people living in the streets are now all in the same tent."*  
– boy aged 3-18, Ramechhap

## I COPING WITH DEATH

Many children who participated in the consultations referred to deaths of family members, friends and neighbours. Some children talked about witnessing people being killed and injured. In 12 FGDs children reported they had helped to carry dead bodies.

Feelings of sadness were repeatedly reported as well as concern for the suffering of others who had lost relatives. Several spoke about how this has affected their relationships as they did not know how to talk to friends who had lost family members and that this made them feel bad. Children in 11 FGDs said that they had a fear of death after the earthquakes.

*"The earthquake has brought fear among the people and taken many lives."*  
– girl aged 13-18, Gorkha

*"I was very scared to see dead bodies... I hope the earthquake never comes again."*  
– girl aged 8-12, Ramechhap

*"I am scared and I feel scared while doing household chores alone. It feels like I will be killed if anything goes wrong."*  
– girl aged 13-18, Ramechhap



## II LOSS, FEAR AND OTHER PSYCHOSOCIAL ISSUES

In addition to the deaths, a strong sense of more general loss emerged among almost all the children. They spoke about the loss of their homes, animals, belongings, schools, trees and nature, communities and way of life. Feelings of grief and sadness associated with this were widely expressed.

Children in 67 FGDs referred specifically to feelings of sadness and insecurity as a result of the destruction of cultural heritage sites including temples and other places of worship, as well as monuments and historic buildings. Temples, stupas and monasteries have both a spiritual and social significance and would have been visited by many children on a daily basis on their way to school, at festivals and on other occasions. Moreover, during a crisis such as that being experienced in Nepal, children and their families would normally have gone to temples or other places of worship to pray for better times.



*The earthquake destroyed numerous heritage sites, including Vatsala temple, Fasidega and other cultural sites in Bhaktapur.*

SANTOSH TAMANG/SAVE THE CHILDREN



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*"Our village used to be very beautiful but now everything is destroyed. Temples where we used to pray have also collapsed."*  
– girl aged 8-12, Kavre

*"I saw the earthquake destroying our village which was on the path of development."*  
– boy aged 13-18, Okhaldhunga

*"My favourite goat and chicken died which saddened me a lot."*  
– girl aged 13-18, Nuwakot

Feelings of fear and anxiety were also widely reported. Children highlighted different sources of fear including being scared of another earthquake; aftershocks; landslides; rain and storms, thieves; wild animals; of entering houses and other buildings; of sleeping outside; and of sickness.

*"I want a pill that eliminates fear."*  
– boy aged 8-12 years, Dolakha

*"I feel scared even when someone speaks with a loud voice. It feels like an earthquake."*  
– girl aged 13-18, Gorkha

*"Everyone screams 'it's [an earthquake] coming, it's coming', and we cannot concentrate on anything. We are sick of running around."*  
– girl aged 8-12, Makwanpur

*"Before we used to play with friends but now we do not and I have lost my appetite. I don't want to be separated from my parents and I feel scared all the time."*  
– girl aged 8-12, Kavre

Children also talked about lost opportunities and fears for their futures. There was particular anxiety among older children about failing exams because of the interruption to their schooling. Children in 29 FGDs reported physical and other symptoms of stress which they attributed to the earthquakes including headaches, dizziness, feeling nauseous and lethargic, being unable to sleep and loss of appetite. Some even spoke of being unable to enjoy life.

*"I'm afraid and cannot concentrate on my studies. I don't enjoy anything, I don't like playing with friends."*  
– girl aged 8-12, Sindhupalchowk

*"I am worried about my future, I only see darkness."*  
– boy aged 13-18, Okhaldhunga



*Classes are held under the shade of two trees in Dhading, one of the earthquake-affected districts in Nepal. Following structural assessment post-earthquake, parts of the school compound have been marked unsafe for immediate use without repairing.*

NSHRESTHA/UNICEF NEPAL

*"Death of people and damage to the village, along with rumours of the end of the world has given birth to a sense of hopelessness in our hearts."*

*– boy aged 13-18, Ramechhap*

A few children expressed sadness at being forced to leave their villages because the whole area was unsafe. Others were worried about the vulnerability of their villages to landslides and wanted the government to find them a safe place to live.

*"I am sad because we had to migrate, leaving our house behind. Rather than moving, I wish we could live somewhere in the corner of our village."*

*– girl aged 16, Sindhupalchowk.*



### III INCREASED TASKS IN AND AROUND THE HOME

Children in a total of 68 FGDs spoke about the roles they were now performing after the earthquake. In 13 FGDs children specifically noted they had more work to do. Some also expressed worry about their parents' ability to cope with the situation and said they wanted to try and support them.

The roles reported by boys were more associated with shelter. In particular, they spoke about having to salvage family belongings from destroyed homes; help their parents to dismantle damaged or destroyed houses; search for materials for temporary shelters and help with construction. However, a small number of girls also reported carrying out similar tasks.

*"My father is working outside Nepal and I live here with my sister and mother. Due to the earthquake my house was demolished. So during the day I am busy trying to get the rubble cleared."*

*– boy aged 16, Dolakha*



*Houses destroyed during the April 25 earthquake at Rupinala village, Masel VDC in Gorkha*

TOM VAN CAKENBERGHE/SAVE THE CHILDREN

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*"Roaming here and there for shelter is really frustrating for us."*

*– boy aged 8-12, Nuwakot*

*"We need to support our parents as they are very busy salvaging our damaged house."*

*– boy aged 8-12, Rasuwa*

*"We work more than before, we lift stones and wood and other things."*

*– girl aged 13-18, Sindhupalchowk*

*"I used to read and write but now I just help move objects here and there."*

*– boy aged 12-18, Sindhupalchowk*

Girls highlighted the increased burden of domestic chores. Women and girls are traditionally responsible for fetching water and the disruption of regular water supplies has made this task more difficult. Some girls said they now had to walk long distances to fetch water. Others, particularly in urban areas, reported having to stand in queues for long periods to collect water from public taps. At one consultation in a Dalit community in Kavre, girls arrived an hour late because of the time it had taken them to collect water.

*"The source of water near my house dried up [due to the earthquake]. These days it takes an hour to fetch water."*

*– girl aged 13-18, Sindhuli*

*"I now have to also take care of my grandmother as she became sick after the earthquake and there is no one to take care of her. I have to also help my mother to cook and clean."*

*– girl aged 13-18, Sindhuli*

Boys and girls in 42 FGDs reported they were required to look after their younger siblings while their parents were busy constructing shelters or engaged in other tasks. Although some children may have performed this role previously, children in 27 FGDs said it was a new task for them. They explained that their parents were much more fearful of leaving children alone after the earthquakes and so they were required to watch over younger brothers and sisters while their parents were building shelters, collecting relief items or carrying out other tasks. Others reported having less time to play and socialise with friends as a result of their new tasks and responsibilities.

*"Before, when I came back from school I used to go to play with my friends. But now I go around with my friends to see if any of our neighbour's houses have fallen down as we want to help them."*

*– boy aged 13-18, Sindhuli*



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## IV ACCESSING ADEQUATE FOOD SUPPLIES

A significant number of children were worried about the availability of food. They explained that food stocks, grain and seeds for planting the next year's harvest had been buried under the rubble of houses and paddy fields had been destroyed. Children also referred to livestock killed in the earthquakes. The implications of loss of buffalo, goats, chickens and other livestock are enormous for rural families, many of whom rely on subsistence agriculture or selling agricultural products to survive<sup>17</sup>.

Some children explicitly reported not having enough to eat. Others were more worried about the quality of the food they were eating and the lack of vegetables and other fresh food. A few older children noted that prices of food and other essential items had increased since the earthquakes making it difficult for their families, many of whom have lost their livelihoods, to afford basic necessities.

*"I feel that scarcity of food is my biggest problem because we could go hungry for many days as lots of food items and crops have been buried in the wreckage of our house."*

*– boy aged 13-18, Ramechhap*

## V PROTECTION

Child labour, trafficking, forced prostitution, sexual and gender-based violence, early and forced marriages are persistent problems in Nepal<sup>18</sup>. Reports indicate that risks of these and other forms of exploitation and abuse may have increased since the earthquakes.

Children, mainly girls, reported feeling more vulnerable with concerns about abuse and exploitation raised in FGDs in five districts. Girls of all ages reported feeling vulnerable because they are sharing shelters with extended families and, in some cases, neighbours. There was also a general perception amongst children of increased vulnerability to sexual abuse, harassment and trafficking.

In several FGDs girls reported specific incidents or issues of concern. In one FGD in Bhaktapur girls referred to being touched and having to sit on the laps of drunken men; in Gorkha girls referred to being pinched and sexually harassed in their tents; and in Nuwakot some girls reported that their names had been put on lists for Indian schools and that they were afraid of being trafficked<sup>19</sup>.

*"Living under the sky increases our exposure to abuse."*

*– girl aged 16, Sindhupalchowk*

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*"I don't like it when the adult men in the tent touch our cheeks."*

*– girl aged 8-12, Ramechhap*

*"We should give priority to stop child trafficking and rape of those who are living in tents."*

*– girl aged 16-18, Sindhuli*

Children in around one third of FGDs highlighted changes in their parents' behaviour towards them. In most cases, they reported parents had become more protective and did not want to let their children out of their sight. This was generally perceived as positive (49 FGDs), but others, mostly older girls, noted that this was limiting their freedom to go out and meet with friends (six FGDs).

*"Parents used to scold and scare us when we played near them, but now they want us to stay in their sight and are very caring."*

*– boy aged 8-12, Rasuwa*



*Children attend one of the first Child Friendly Safe Spaces to open in Gorkha*

BIJAY GAJMER/SAVE THE CHILDREN

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In contrast, in some cases children reported their parents were so busy trying to provide shelter, food and water for the family that they felt ignored as their parents did not have time to play or eat with them. It was also evident that some children were upset and finding it difficult to cope with the stress their parents were under. Girls particularly spoke about being worried by the hardship and suffering of their parents. In a few cases, girls were upset because they were being scolded and treated more harshly.

*"Parents are too busy now and are not able to give enough time to the children."*

*– boy aged 13-18, Nuwakot*

*"My father was always soft spoken and rarely scolded us or used abusive words. But after the earthquake, whenever I asked him any questions he scolded me and used very rude words. I had asked him a simple question but he told me to bury myself in a pit instead of asking so many questions. I felt very hurt and cried as he had never said such words before the earthquake."*

*– girl aged 13-18, Bhaktapur*

## SECTION 4: RESPONSE AND RECOVERY: CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS AND PRIORITIES

### I PERCEPTION OF RELIEF

There were negative feelings among many children about the emergency response. In response to a question in the expressive drawing exercise about whether they were satisfied with the relief that they had received, 34 per cent of participating children (616) said that they were satisfied, but a worrying 66 per cent (1,222) said that they were not.

The most common concern among the dissatisfied was the amount and content of relief packages. Children spoke about a lack of fresh food and too much “junk food”. They also mentioned certain items they would have liked included, in particular learning and education materials, toys and games and, for girls, sanitary pads.

Among the children who expressed dissatisfaction, over half said they thought relief items had been distributed unfairly and that those with political connections were able to access relief more quickly and easily. Others said that they or others from more marginalized or remote communities had difficulty in accessing relief and in some cases had received no assistance.



*A young girl reads a book that she found among the rubble of destroyed school in Gorkha*

KPANDAY/ UNICEF NEPAL



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*"... a powerful person received relief many times but other remote villages are still waiting and waiting and get nothing."*

*– boy aged 13-18, Makwanpur*

*"I want notebooks, pencils and playing materials."*

*– boy aged 8-12, Dolakha*

A lack of or inadequate information about relief distributions was raised by children in four FGDs. Specific concerns were also raised about the way in which relief was distributed. Both girls and boys in Ramechhap, Rasuwa and Sindhupalchowk districts reported they or their parents had to walk long distances and spent a long time queuing to collect relief, thereby increasing already heavy workloads.

Children in all three consultations conducted in Rasuwa, the most remote and mountainous of the 14 severely-affected districts, said they felt insulted when relief was dropped from helicopters. The same issue arose in relation to aid being thrown from trucks in FGDs in Kavre, Nuwakot, Okhaldhunga and Sindhupalchowk districts. Some children also said they did not like being teased, "gawked at" or having their photographs taken by aid workers.

*"Many of us did not know about relief distribution. They had not announced it properly."*

*– girl aged 8-12, Dolakha*

*"We have to travel a long way to get relief and by the time we get there there's usually nothing left."*

*– girl aged 8-12, Dolakha*

Of those who were satisfied with the relief, most said they were happy with the items and the timeliness of the support they and their families had received. Children variously highlighted the positive roles of the government, the Nepali security forces, national and international NGOs and private individuals in providing emergency support. Some children also said they liked the facilities for children provided through the earthquake response (for example, child friendly spaces, temporary learning centres, games and toys). Others said they liked the mobile health clinics.

*"We were happy when people distributed relief packages."*

*– girl aged 8-12, Ramechhap*

*"I became happy seeing people distributing relief and to see so many organizations and local communities working together."*

*– boy aged 13-18, Nuwakot*

Children made a range of recommendations about how relief could be improved including the content of relief, distribution and information:

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**We want to know:**

- in advance when and where relief distributions are taking place
- in advance what type of relief is being distributed
- what help the Government is providing
- whether and what relief materials are being provided by foreign countries
- what has happened to promised relief materials.

**We would like to see:**

- relief packages that address all our needs
  - relief packages that contain hygiene products for women and girls
  - relief packages that contain toys, stationery and other materials for children and adolescents
  - shorter queues to receive relief items.
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## II PRIORITIES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The visioning tool (using drawings, writing and discussions) was used to seek children's ideas about what they wanted their lives and communities to look like after one year. In the expressive drawing exercise, children were also asked to suggest solutions to the concerns they had identified. This section reflects the outcomes of these two exercises.



*A facilitator leads a group of boys participating in the consultation with children in Dhading.*

NSHRESTHA/UNICEF NEPAL

## i. HAVING A HOME

Children's vision on shelter in one year	No. of FGDs where raised
We want earthquake-protected houses with open space and gardens	145
We need temporary settlements with strong corrugated iron sheets	12
We want a beautiful village in my community	10
We want to live in a new house and not in a temporary shelter	9
We want planned cities	9
We want everyone to have access to drinking water, roads, and electricity	6

Children in all districts wanted to have a proper home and for the rebuilding of damaged and destroyed houses to begin as soon as possible. Some thought this should be a joint effort, with the government providing financial support to those who could not afford to rebuild their houses, and that families and communities should work together in the rebuilding.

Over 90 per cent of those who made recommendations related to shelter specifically recommended that the houses should be strong enough to survive an earthquake. Other recommendations related to building included that houses are constructed from lightweight materials such as wood and tin, be low rise and located in safe places where there are no risks of landslides.

*"I want to see earthquake-resistant houses built in flat areas with trees planted. People will consult with engineers before beginning building."*  
– boy aged 13-18, Sindhupalchowk

*"People should not build tall houses as if it's a competition."*  
– boy aged 8-12, Okhaldhunga

Children in several FGDs highlighted the need for government building regulations and for technical advice to be provided. Several children referred specifically to ways in which houses could be made safer and more child-friendly. Suggestions included that houses should be no more than one or two storeys high; each house should have outside space; door handles should be at a level that they can be reached by smaller children; and there should be more exterior doors to make it easier to get out in the event of another earthquake.

*"I am very scared to sleep at night because I fear that if the earthquake comes again I cannot run and open the door as the latches are very high and I cannot reach the latch... I asked my parents to keep the door open but they say that the thieves will come in. Can you request that my parents please put the latches lower or keep the door open?"*  
– girl aged 8-12, Bhaktapur

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Recognizing that they were likely to remain in temporary shelters for the immediate future, children also made suggestions about how the shelters could be improved.

Children's vision and expectations for the future also extended beyond their own homes to the broader community and environment. Many children spoke about wishing to have "a beautiful village" (raised in 10 FGDs) and "a pollution-free environment" (raised in 24 FGDs); of wanting their community to be greener (raised in 35 FGDs); and better plantation (raised in 31 FGDs). The restoration of temples and other places of religious significance was a high priority for many children (raised in 71 FGDs).

*"After a year, I want to see my village developed. There will be a market. There will be earthquake-resistant houses. I would like to see greenery and peace."*  
– boy aged 8, Sindhupalchowk

*"After one year, I wish that my village will be the same as before the earthquake. The houses, schools, temple, gumba [monastery], chaitya [monastery] and cultural heritage should be reconstructed in the old style."*  
– boy aged 13-18, Ramechhap

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#### **Measures identified in relation to reconstruction of houses included:**

- Houses should be built using earthquake-resistant techniques and lightweight materials
- The government should provide financial and/or technical support for rebuilding and repairing houses and should dismantle destroyed or damaged homes
- The government should issue policies and guidelines on building standards
- Communities should work together to rebuild houses
- Houses should be constructed or repaired under the supervision of an engineer and training should be given to labourers
- New houses should only be built after inspection by engineers and soil tests

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#### **Measures identified to improve conditions of temporary shelters included:**

- The government should provide free tarpaulins to all those affected by the earthquakes, and the number of tarpaulins allocated should depend on the number of people in the household
- Communities should stay together at night to minimise the risk of wild animal attacks
- The government should provide separate tents for men and women

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#### **Measures identified for restoring and improving the broader environment:**

- Temples, monuments and public buildings should be constructed based on the original design and with community support and involvement
  - Trees and other greenery should be planted
  - Development should be planned and there should be better facilities for pedestrians in cities and towns
-



## ii. GETTING BACK TO SCHOOL

Children's vision on education in one year	No. of FGDs where raised
We want a small, earthquake-resistant school building	140
We want a safe school with a big playground	46
We want school uniform and educational materials to go to school	35
We want uninterrupted schooling	9
We want more temporary learning centres to be established	9
We want to go back to school	8
We want a safe road access to school and a school bus	7
We want information about earthquake in curriculum	7

Many children were eager to return to school. Children in 71 FGDs recommended that education should resume in tents or other temporary shelters pending the reconstruction of damaged or destroyed schools and classrooms.

*"If it is difficult to operate schools, we would be happy to have classes under the Chautara [a platform under a tree used for community meetings]."*  
 – girl aged 13-18, Kavre

Children in two thirds of FGDs emphasised that new schools should be built in accordance with earthquake-resistant designs and with earthquake-resistant materials. Some specifically said that they wanted small schools that are only one or two storeys high. As with shelter, many children saw the rebuilding of schools as a shared responsibility, in this instance of government, teachers and communities.

*"Earthquake-resistant school buildings need to be reconstructed where small and injured children can attend their classes without fear of another earthquake."*  
 – boy 13-18, Makwanpur

Some children shared the need for teachers who had left after the earthquakes to return to school and resume teaching. A few older children suggested that school holidays should be cancelled or shortened so children can catch up with schooling they have missed.

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**Specific measures identified by children to support their quick and safe return to school and to enable them to catch up on and continue their studies included:**

- Schools should be run in tents or other temporary shelters until new schools have been built
- The government should provide books, stationery and other school materials to all earthquake-affected children

- Teachers who left after the earthquakes should return and resume classes
- The government should ensure that students do not have to study in unsafe schools
- Electricity should be provided so that children can study in the evenings
- Senior students should provide support to junior students to help them catch up on their studies
- School holidays should be cancelled or shortened in earthquake-affected areas to allow students to catch up with their studies
- Scholarships and free midday meals should be provided to children in earthquake-affected areas

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**Recommendations made by children in relation to the reconstruction of schools included:**

- Schools should be built using earthquake-resistant techniques and lightweight materials
  - The government and School Management Committees (SMCs) should begin reconstruction of schools as soon as possible, and communities should be involved and provide support
- 

### iii. ACCESSING CLEAN WATER, SANITATION AND HEALTHCARE

Children's vision on water and sanitation in one year	No. of FGDs where raised
We want a safe water supply in each house	129
We want there to be toilets in each house	56
We want there to be regular cleaning and testing of water sources	29
We want a pollution-free environment	24
We want everyone to be responsible for maintaining personal and community hygiene	8

Children's vision on health in one year	No. of FGDs where raised
We want safe hospitals in the village	81
We want sufficient numbers of doctors and nurses	33
We want medicines to be easily available	23
We want an end to viral diseases, diarrhoea, and vomiting	10
We want there to be ambulances to transport people to hospital	9

Children felt very strongly that they should be able to access clean, safe water and that, ultimately, every house should have a direct water supply. Likewise, girls and boys wanted to see

toilets rebuilt in every house. In the meantime, they suggested measures for improving health and sanitation in their temporary settlements, including burying of dead animals, regular cleaning of shelters and communal areas including wells and other water sources and maintenance of personal hygiene.

Children expressed the desire not only to see a restoration to pre-earthquake levels of healthcare but for improved facilities. Some specifically referred to the need for counselling and other forms of psychosocial support to assist those who are suffering from stress and depression as a result of the earthquakes.

**Measures identified by children to improve water and sanitation:**

- The government should arrange for purification where water sources are contaminated and provide support to repair damaged or destroyed water sources
- Temporary toilets should be built as soon as possible and there should be separate toilets for men/boys and women/girls
- Guidance on maintaining hygiene and disposal of packaging from relief items should be provided to communities
- Communities should take responsibility for keeping temporary shelters and surroundings clean

**Measures identified by children to improve access to healthcare:**

- Every village should have a health post staffed by qualified doctors and nurses
- Medicines should be easily available and free of cost in all earthquake-affected areas
- Ambulances should be available in the villages at all times

**iv. PROTECTION**

Children’s vision on protection in one year	No. of FGDs where raised
We want police posts in every village	16
We want children to be free from abuse	8
We want to be treated equally in school	7
We want families and teachers to love their children and students	4

Children said they want to see stronger protection for themselves and other children in their communities. They saw responsibility for their protection lying with their families, their teachers, the security forces and the government.

Specific recommendations relating to protection included:

- Parents should spend more time with their children
- The government should provide orphans with shelter, food, education and other basic needs
- The government should introduce stronger rules to prevent the trafficking of children
- Children should try and stay away from people who harass or harm them

v. FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS

Children's vision on food security and livelihoods in one year	No. of FGDs where raised
We need increased agricultural production in the community	23
We want to have nutritious food	12
We want jobs for our parents	11
We want to grow vegetables in the kitchen garden	11
We want sufficient food items	8



Classes are running in temporary learning space at a school in Sindhupalchowk.

BIJAY GAJMER/SAVE THE CHILDREN



Children wanted to have access to adequate food. In the short-term, they were also concerned that the distribution of food assistance should be fair and according to need. They also wanted some support to salvage food products and seeds that were buried in the rubble of their houses. In the longer-term, they wanted help for their families to restore their livelihoods, including support to buy agricultural supplies and to replace livestock killed in the earthquakes.

**Specifically children recommended:**

- Fair distribution of food assistance based on who needs it most
- Support from the security forces to salvage seeds and food stocks from damaged houses and buildings
- Provision of seed and fertiliser to farmers by the government
- Compensation for and/or loans to enable farmers to replace livestock
- Government-supported employment for those living in earthquake-affected areas
- Provision of loans by rich people to help poorer people re-establish their livelihoods

vi. PARTICIPATION

Children’s vision on participation in one year	No. of FGDs where raised
We want to have recreational activities in school	16
We want to become members of a child club	10
We want children’s voices to be valued	5

A significant number of children expressed the desire for more child-orientated activities and to be able to participate in or be consulted on issues that affect their lives.

**Specific recommendations included:**

- Students should be consulted about their concerns about temporary and longer-term education issues by SMCs and VDCs
- There should be spaces for children, for example, in child clubs or Chautara (a communal space, platform underneath Pipal or Banyan trees) for children to play and discuss issues with friends.

## SECTION 5: PREPARING FOR FUTURE DISASTERS



*A retrofitted school building in Ilam, rebuilt after the 18 September 2011 Earthquake.*

GANGA PYAKUREL/SAVE THE CHILDREN

*"Can anyone tell me what an earthquake is?"*

*– boy aged 13-18, Okhaldhunga*

The earthquakes have been devastating for children and many were determined that they should be better prepared in the event of another earthquake.

Children spoke about the lack of information and understanding about earthquakes which meant they were under prepared. They also pointed to the way in which lack of information, incomplete understanding and rumours have exacerbated fears. Younger children in particular had many misconceptions, but older children also said that they had not known exactly what to expect.

*"The earthquake is a monster which destroys as much as possible when it comes."*

*– boy aged 8-12, Bhaktapur*

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*"Nobody shared adequate information about the earthquake. Only rumours were spread about the bad effects of earthquake and other issues to scare people."*

*– girl aged 13-18, Makwanpur*

*"Houses do not collapse in strong winds so why do they collapse in earthquakes? What is an earthquake?"*

*– boy aged 8-12, Okhaldhunga.*

There was a strong desire to understand more about the science behind earthquakes. For example, what "magnitude" means, what a tectonic plate is, what causes the vibrations and so on.

Almost all children said they wanted to know more about how to protect themselves in the future. Some said they had received basic preparedness lessons on what to do in the event of an earthquake but it didn't mean much because the nature of earthquakes had not been properly explained. Others said they were unhappy that they were only receiving safety training after the earthquake had happened.

Children referred to having been taught the "Drop, Cover and Hold" drill to protect against death and injury in earthquakes, but questioned whether it was appropriate in Nepal. Some said that children who were already out in the open (the safest place to be) followed the "Drop, Cover and Hold" drill and ran inside to find something to hide under.

*"During the second earthquake my friend died and I feel very sad. He died because he went inside the house as in school we were taught to go under the table."*

*– boy aged 8-12, Rasuwa*

Girls and boys saw schools and teachers as having a critical role to play in ensuring better preparedness, but also saw it as a much wider project to be integrated into building design, development planning and school curriculums.

Children suggested a range of measures that should be taken to prepare and protect themselves from future earthquakes. Some of these related to actions that they and/or their family could take and others to actions they wanted others to take. They identified:

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**Actions that children should take for earthquake preparedness:**

- Move to a safe, open space
  - Avoid going near old trees or damaged buildings
  - Avoid landslide-prone areas
  - Remain alert
  - Prepare a bag ("Jhatpat jhola") with emergency items including clothes, food and medicines
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**Actions that others should take for earthquake preparedness:**

- Ensure that all homes and other buildings are earthquake-resistant
- Ensure that homes and other buildings are designed with children in mind, for example door handles and latches should be low enough to reach
- Schools and houses should have big gardens and compounds so there is safe space to run to
- Earthquake preparedness should be included in the school curriculum
- Teachers should receive training in preparedness/safety and share it with their students
- School course books should have a chapter on earthquakes

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**Information we would like so that we can be more prepared for earthquakes:**

- How to protect ourselves during an earthquake
- How to build earthquake-resistant homes
- What an earthquake is and why it happens
- The impact of previous earthquakes in Nepal

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**How we would like to receive that information:**

- Via radio and television
  - Through our teachers and parents
  - Internet and newspapers (mainly in Kathmandu Valley)
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# CONCLUSION

*"I still have hope. For now we can study under tarps and I believe that after a year the school building will be reconstructed, so I won't stop chasing my dreams."*  
– girl aged 8-12, Nuwakot

The earthquakes and continuing aftershocks have had a devastating impact on the lives of children in Nepal. Those who participated in this consultation identified many immediate and longer-term challenges and concerns that must be addressed to ensure the well-being and safety of children in the months to come and ensure a more secure future for them.

Despite the disaster, the children consulted also showed remarkable levels of hope and optimism that their lives would return to normal or even improve with continued help and support. It is now beholden on national and international stakeholders to ensure that these hopes are fulfilled. However, in order to do so, children must be informed and be able to participate in decisions that affect them, their families and their communities.

As this study clearly shows, consulting with children brings unique perspectives and views that can enrich decision making and planning. This consultation was the first of its kind in Nepal in the context of an emergency, but it is hoped that it will be replicated as part of all national and local level policy development and planning processes in relation to post-earthquake recovery and reconstruction.

The children's experiences and recommendations should also be taken into consideration in the design and implementation of disaster preparedness programs across the whole of the country to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children in the event of future earthquakes or other emergencies.

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# ANNEX I

## FURTHER DETAIL ON THE METHODOLOGY FOR THE CONSULTATION

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**The following criteria guided the selection of communities for the consultation:**

- Districts that had been identified by the Government of Nepal as the most severely affected by the two earthquakes
- District headquarters were determined on the basis of operational presence of the participating agencies or based on existing links with child clubs and other children's networks
- Most affected VDC in the district
- VDC with high density of disadvantaged or marginalized groups

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The aim was to have diversity across the field sites and to limit bias of results towards the worst case scenarios or most affected communities.

In each district, two lead facilitators (one male and one female) and two documenters (in most cases, one male and one female) from the agencies conducted FGDs with the children. Facilitators were chosen based on their knowledge and skills. These facilitators and documenters were supported by local volunteers from the community. The lead facilitators and documenters received enhanced training on child participation, child safeguarding and child consultation methods and tools.

Child participants were identified by the assessment teams who randomly selected households using an agreed-upon systematic approach. They explained the purpose and process of the children's consultation to the parents/caregivers and children, and asked if one child from the household would be available to participate in the FGD. Sampling was completed in advance of the FGD, which was scheduled at a time and location convenient for the children. The assessment teams aimed to conduct two to three FGDs in each community with different age and sex disaggregation.

Data was collected in the form of notes taken by staff throughout the FGDs, documenting key points of discussion, quotes from the children and observations on children's behaviours. After each consultation, the assessment teams regrouped to discuss key findings and any challenges encountered during the FGDs. The team then wrote up their findings on template reporting forms

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highlighting priority issues and solutions identified by the children and supporting these with related quotes.

Forms were submitted to the children's consultation Project Manager (from Save the Children) for analysis. Reporting forms were submitted in English and, where necessary, translated from the Nepali language by the assessment teams.

Four different tools were used to identify the three main issues affecting children in the context of the earthquake. As the three main issues were identified and emerged from the groups, these were then discussed in detail with the children. The assessment teams selected the tools to be used before starting the FGD depending on the age group, resources available and the facilitators' observations of the children's mood or energy. All tools were used with all age and sex groups.

Data analysis has undertaken a thematic content analysis approach, inductively drawing out the themes from the data collected through expressive drawing. Emerging themes have been identified based on the frequency in which they feature in the FGDs, and the severity of the issue; these themes have then been mapped to see how the issues link together. Direct quotes have been used to support the themes where available. Furthermore, data from the H-assessment/body mapping/visioning exercise have been tallied and analysed to provide further supportive evidence for the key themes already identified from the inductive content analysis.

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### **Strengths and limitations of the assessment**

#### **Strengths:**

- The children's consultation was able to reach a large number of children of different ages across a wide range of communities affected by the earthquake
  - It was children's enthusiasm and support that made such a large assessment successful at short notice
  - Children easily comprehended the activity tools which were context and age appropriate
  - Children with limited literacy were successfully engaged during the activity. Facilitators had tools they could choose from depending upon the age, mood and energy of the children
  - The support of the local communities, local authorities, teachers, national and district level representatives helped smooth the implementation of the consultation
  - The use of common training and toolkits helped ensure consistency in data collection approaches across the agencies and field sites
  - The cooperation and coordination of the working partners, and the trained and experienced staff and volunteers was also a contributing factor to the reliability of the data and the overall success of the assessment
  - Immediate data collection after the earthquake ensured real and valid data
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**Limitations:**

- The intention was to apply random sampling in every location to cover a wide range of children from the selected communities. In the district headquarters, however, the consultation was conducted in child friendly spaces and temporary learning centres which may have excluded those children who do not participate in these centres
  - As per the criteria, the aim was to select the most affected VDC and a second VDC where the majority of the affected population was from a marginalized community. In most cases, however, this was not achieved as hoped due to time constraints. This therefore impacted upon the ability to identify differences between children in differing communities
  - There was a language barrier – Nepali was used by the facilitators and not all children in the FGDs would have this as a first language, in particular those from indigenous communities. However, this was only an issue in a few FGDs and facilitators started to use translators to minimise the impact. These children still understood a certain level of Nepali and were able to take part in the consultation to a certain level at least
  - Efforts were made to ensure all children in each FGD participated but due to differences in characters, shyness and unfamiliarity with types of exercises, some of the children hesitated to communicate or copied from others. Therefore, their views may not have been successfully captured
  - Children enjoyed some of the tools very much, for example the body mapping, but due to time limitation, it could not be continued for a longer period of time and so some of the articulation may not have been recorded
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# ENDNOTES

1. Nepal Earthquake 2015 Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA), Government of Nepal, National Planning Commission, June 2015
2. 2011 National Census
3. Nepal Earthquake 2015 PDNA, Government of Nepal, National Planning Commission, June 2015
4. Nepal Earthquake 2015 PDNA, Government of Nepal, National Planning Commission, June 2015
5. Nepal Earthquake 2015 PDNA, Government of Nepal, National Planning Commission, June 2015
6. Nepal Earthquake 2015 PDNA, Government of Nepal, National Planning Commission, June 2015
7. Plan International, Anticipating the Future: Children and Young People's Voices in Haiti's Post Disaster Needs Assessment, March 2010; Plan International, Save the Children and World Vision International, After Yolanda, What Children Think, Need and Recommend, December 2013; and Plan International, Save the Children, World Vision International and UNICEF, Children's Ebola Recovery Assessment: Sierra Leone, June 2015
8. UNOCHA, Nepal Revised Flash Appeal, April-September 2015
9. Nepal Earthquake 2015 PDNA, Government of Nepal, National Planning Commission, June 2015
10. Nepal Education Cluster, Nepal Earthquake: Education Dashboard, 6 June 2015
11. According to the Education Cluster, Nepal Earthquake, Education Dashboard, 6 June 2015, up to 2.3 million children are at risk of remaining out of school.
12. The exams have since resumed and provisions have been put in place to ensure that students affected by the earthquake are provided with health and psychosocial support in examination locations, and that those who are unable to sit them will have an opportunity to do so at a later date.
13. Following the earthquake government and public buildings including schools are required to be structurally assessed. Those that are assessed as safe receive a green sticker, those in need of repair a yellow sticker, and those that are unsafe a red sticker.
14. UNOCHA, Nepal Revised Flash Appeal, April-September 2015
15. The only districts where this issue was not raised were Makwanpur and Ramechhap.
16. UNOCHA, Nepal Revised Flash Appeal, April-September 2015
17. According to a report by the Food Security Cluster, the earthquakes have severely impacted food security particularly in remote mountainous areas. According to the report, an estimated 1.4 million people were in need of food assistance (excluding Kathmandu Valley). See Food Security Cluster, Nepal, A Report on Food Security Impact of the 2015 Earthquake, May 2015
18. According to UNICEF's, State of the World's Children, 2015 (based on data available in August 2014) 33.9 percent of children in Nepal aged 5 to 14 years were involved in child labour activities; 10 per cent of girls were married by the age of 15 years; and 41 per cent of girls were married by the age of 18 years. According to the CCWB's, The State of Children in Nepal, 2014, 587 cases of rape and other forms of sexual abuse against children were reported to the police in 2013 and 66 cases of trafficking. However, there is significant underreporting of such cases to the authorities.
19. All child safeguarding concerns raised during FGDs have been reported to local authorities and are being followed up





