

What is it like to be an earthquake-affected child in Haiti?



The earthquake in Haiti left thousands of children separated from their parents and families.

The earthquake struck at the end of the work day, which means many children were not with their parents or families at that time. Some children were still in school or just returning home. If children or their parents were injured, they may have gone to different places for help. They may have lost their birth certificates to identify who they are and who their parents are. Sadly, some children's parents may also have died in the earthquake.

Even before the earthquake, there were already thousands of children separated from their parents and families.

Parents and families may have placed children in orphanages because they didn't have enough money to provide them with adequate food, shelter or education. Thousands of children were also living alone in the streets or working as domestic servants in other families' homes.

What are the challenges?

Right now there are children in Haiti who don't know where their parents are, or whether they are alive or injured. And there are parents wondering the same thing about their children.

Without caring adults to protect these children and because Haiti is in a state of emergency, children are in danger of being neglected, abused or taken advantage of.

How are children helped?

If you were a child separated from your parents, family or other adults in charge of you, your community, friends and neighbours would help, just as they would have done before the earthquake. World Vision is also there to help. Here is what we do for children in Haiti separated from their families.

- 1. Find you and provide help:** Our priority is to make sure you are found and that you receive food and water and, if hurt, medical attention.
- 2. Reunite you with your family:** We make every effort to find and reunite you with your parents or family if this is the safest option for you. We input all your important information (name, age, family history, etc.) into a computer system to see if there are any matches with family members currently registered in clinics, hospitals or emergency relief camps. If and when we find a match, we will bring you to your parents or family.
- 3. Locate a safe place for you to stay:** While trying to find your parents or family we also find a temporary safe place for you to stay, maybe with an aunt or uncle or neighbours. If after a thorough search we can't find any members of your family, we will work to find you a permanent home in your community. You will be an active participant in this process.
- 4. Create child-friendly spaces:** We put up tents, or use existing buildings in safe areas, where you can get back to normal routines, like playing and learning with other children. We'll provide you with food, water and medical help. We'll also help you deal with feelings of fear, anger or grief.