

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Wednesday, 10th September, 2008

Disease kills children in India flood camps

Children who fled their homes to escape floods in northern India are dying from disease because of dirty contaminated water and a lack of decent toilets and washing facilities in the camps where they are living.

Save the Children has heard reports that 32 children have died from diarrhoea, vomiting and fever in Araria and Sapaul camps in Bihar province. The international children's charity fears that without more help this number will rise.

Thomas Chandy, head of Save the Children in India said: "Conditions in these flood camps are terrible. People use the same stagnant water for bathing as well as washing their clothes and utensils. With little else to occupy them, children are playing around in this water and inadvertently drinking it and getting sick."

It is now three weeks since floodwaters first breached the banks of the Kosi River and many areas are still submerged. Families have officially been warned that they shouldn't return home while the threat of flooding continues, even in areas where water levels are receding. The Indian meteorological office predicts further rain in the next few days.

Mr Chandy said: "This emergency is far from over. Some children will be living in relief camps for another six months and without big improvements more of them will die of disease. Young children are particularly susceptible to water-borne diseases, like diarrhoea, which are a huge risk in a situation like this."

The flooding in northern India is currently affecting five million people, including three million children. Save the Children is calling on world governments to donate money to this emergency to help aid agencies respond to the needs of these children.

Save the Children has started a relief operation in Araria, one of the worst affected districts bordering Nepal, and is currently reaching 1,500 families, including around 6,000 children with food distribution and clean drinking water. The charity has opened a community kitchen in the relief camps so that families that lost all their belongings including cooking utensils can cook for themselves.

For more information or to make a donation please visit www.savethechildren.org.au.

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Save the Children has spokespeople available in Australia and India. For more information and interviews, please contact the Save the Children media unit:

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Notes to Editors:

- The International Save the Children Alliance fights for children's rights to deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children's lives.
- Save the Children has existed in India since pre-independence days and is currently working in 11 states and union territories of India.
- A report by ASTEC and UNICEF for the Department of Women and Child Development found that approximately 2,500 children were trafficked in 2007 during the flood season.

For more information about Save the Children, please visit the website:
www.savethechildren.org.au