

Article

## Displaced families face aftermath of Indonesia earthquake and tsunami

Helping children and families who have lost almost everything.

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[English](#)

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**INDONESIA, Central Sulawesi, 17 October 2018** – Yuda, 11, holds on tightly to his six-year-old sister Ence's arm. The siblings are walking home, not to their house.



to a tent where their family has been staying since the earthquake and tsunami devastated Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, on 28 September.

“Our house and school were destroyed. We live here now,” says Yuda as we arrive at a small, blue tent. Their house, along with an entire neighbourhood, disappeared into the muddy soil due to earthquake liquefaction.

Ence and Yuda’s family is far from alone.

*Around 1.5 million people have been affected and more than 80,000 displaced in Central Sulawesi.*



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*Ence and Yuda's house and neighbourhood were completely destroyed by the earthquake.*





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*A rescuer searches for tsunami victims in the rubble in Balara, West Palu, Central Sulawesi.*

## The aftermath

Like many children, the two siblings were separated after the disaster. Ence and her mother ran as fast as they could, while Yuda was saved by his uncle. Less than two hours after their village disappeared in the mud, the children and their family gathered safely at an area for displaced people.

The family lost almost everything. Their neighborhood was destroyed, the siblings lost all their toys, and their friends, except for one or two playmates, aren't around.

Their mother, Ms. Heriyanti, describes how Ence cries before falling asleep at night: "I believe she's afraid, but since she started visiting the [Happy Child Space] tent, she has started smiling again."

UNICEF, together with the Ministry of Social Affairs, has set up these Happy Child Spaces where social workers provide psychosocial support, as well as helping to identify, trace and reunite children with their families.

The children's anxiety is clear. While playing and singing together at the Happy Child Space, Yuda is never far from Ence. When they get separated by even a few meters,



Yuda exchanges his position with other children to return to Ence's side.

"Mama told me to hold on tight to Ence, whether we're playing or walking home," says Yuda who aspires to become a football player.



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*Affected children participate in fun activities aimed at helping them cope with issues such as displacement.*

## Supporting children and families

During an emergency, children are especially vulnerable and can get lost or separated from their families in the chaos. UNICEF and the Indonesian Government are working to reunite children with their families. Since the disaster, many children have been reported missing by their parents. To date, four children have been reunited with family members.

UNICEF is working with the Government to ensure that the affected children and their families have what they need to get their lives back on track. This not only includes reuniting children with their families in the short-term, but staying with them to provide the support they need to rebuild their lives.

"I don't know how long we'll stay in a tent like this. But what matters is that the children are safe with me and their father, not separated," says Ms. Heriyanti.

