



**Save the Children®**



## **Save the Children's Response and Recovery for Children and Families after Hurricane Harvey**

### **Six-month Donor Report - March 2018**

Save the Children staff member Erin Taylor holds Samantha\*, age 2, at a large shelter in Houston. With your support, we distributed baby cribs and other essential supplies to families in shelters throughout Texas to help them care for their children while they waited to return home.

*Photo: Susan Warner/Save the Children*

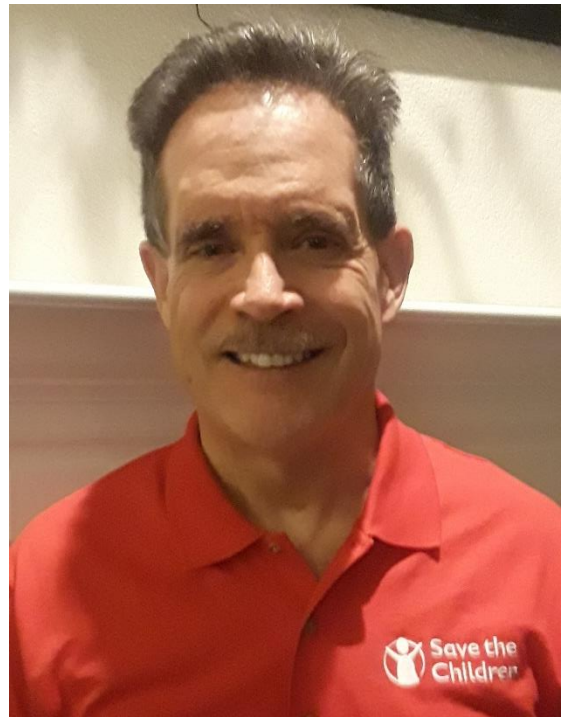
*\*Name changed for child protection*

## A Note of Thanks

As I approach my two-month anniversary as Save the Children's Texas state director, my heart is full and my mind is whirring. I wasn't affected by Hurricane Harvey, but I have friends who were. I've seen how devastating it's been to our community and the trauma it inflicted on our children.

Although the piles of debris are mostly gone, the lingering affects the hurricane has had on children and families is just below the surface in homes, schools, child-care centers and afterschool programs.

This is where Save the Children comes to the table. We are helping child-care programs, schools and afterschool programs get back on their feet and become even stronger. These are the programs children and parents count on for stability. Parents cannot return to work without knowing their children are cared for in a safe, clean and nurturing environment.



Through our model program Journey of Hope, we are helping children and caregivers deal with the fears, losses and stresses they experienced and begin to establish some normalcy in their lives. Our experience with disasters all over the world tells us that children are often the most vulnerable and the effects of trauma may not reveal themselves until many months later.

I saw the healing that Save the Children has brought to southeast Texas in the smiling face of a staff member at a child-care center we had restored while she was holding a child now being cared for in a safe and welcoming environment. And, when I helped a little boy with his homework at an afterschool program that we equipped with new computers and learning materials. It's during these visits that I'm grateful for our wonderful supporters and thankful to be at Save the Children, where we believe that every child deserves a future.

Warmly,

John Bracken, State Director

## The Crisis at a Glance

Hurricane Harvey's destructive winds and historic floods from days of relentless rain in late August 2017 carved a 300-mile path of destruction across Texas and displaced more than 1 million people. Harvey was the most powerful hurricane to strike Texas in more than 50 years. It affected some 4,000 child-care programs, afterschool programs and schools in the Houston area alone; schools closed for weeks and some facilities have yet to reopen. Companies in the Houston area estimated the average cost to homeowners to repair the damage from Harvey at \$111,000 per household.<sup>1</sup>

The storm had a devastating effect on all aspects of children's lives: their homes, their schools their emotions and their future.

At the six-month mark, damaged child-care and educational services are being restored. Families are returning to work and children are starting to resume a normal routine.

Less visible but equally damaging was Harvey's impact on children's emotional well-being. To most adults, the signs of child trauma may not be easily recognizable, and though children are naturally resilient the impacts of Harvey-related trauma may be deep and long-lasting. Displacements created extreme distress for children trying to cope without the comfort of their normal routines, favorite toys, pets or friends. They were in strange surroundings, adapting to new routines, new people and new places, knowing that their homes or apartments had been damaged or destroyed.

Parents' stresses over housing, transportation and reduced incomes from lost jobs can also affect children. Some schools are overcrowded as they accommodate students whose own schools remain closed, increasing the risk that children who struggle in class will not receive the extra help they need. Harvey also exacerbated social-emotional stress among families in poorer communities, where long-term "toxic stress" can lead to mental health concerns. Access to mental health services in these places may be limited, as are the capacities and staffing of community groups who support children and families.

As Texas faces a long road to recovery in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, we continue to provide much-needed programs and services to those who need it most.

## Our Response at Six Months: Your Support Has Made a Significant Difference

As the national leader in child-focused disaster preparedness, response and recovery, Save the Children is working to make sure Texas children and families who were most affected by

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<sup>1</sup> <http://houston.culturemap.com/news/home-design/10-30-17-new-study-shows-the-financial-impact-of-this-summer-devastating-hurricanes/#slide=0>

Hurricane Harvey have access to early childhood education and afterschool services, and emotional support programming to help them cope with the aftermath of the storm.

To date, 55,100 children and adults have benefited from our responses. We have committed to the long haul and, over the next two years, will support the ongoing recovery of the catastrophic hurricane's most vulnerable survivors – children.

Save the Children continues to prioritize areas where we are needed the most. We are focused on communities where Harvey was the most destructive, where families are among the most impoverished and where needs are overlooked and resources are low. Our teams are directly implementing programs or working with partners in the greater Houston area, including Harris, Montgomery, Liberty, Waller and Fort Bend counties; in the southeast, including Beaumont and Port Arthur; along the central Texas coast, including Rockport and Victoria; and the counties of Aransas, Brazoria, Calhoun, Chambers, Galveston, Matagorda, Nuances, Orange, Refugio, and San Patricio.



Two girls enjoy a moment of play at one of our child-friendly spaces in San Antonio. Such spaces provided children affected by Hurricane Harvey with activities in safe, designated areas led by trained adult facilitators.

*Photo: Susan Warner/Save the Children*

Here are highlights of our response at the six-month mark of the disaster:

### **Meeting Immediate Needs through Distributions**

- We conducted 109 distributions of materials to local partners and in communities around Houston, Beaumont and Rockport. These distributions directly benefited 18,193 children and 5,652 adults. As we continued to receive requests for much-needed items such as hygiene supplies, household supplies and toys and school supplies for children, we procured many of these items from our corporate partners.
- Recent distributions included school kits for some 2,141 children. We also provided over 2,600 home library kits (each with 14 age-appropriate books) for families and 900 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) kits to children to replace educational materials lost in the storm and to support their learning.



- We are currently partnering with the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation to distribute 50,000 books to local child-care and community partners, and this work has already benefitted over 14,200 children.

## **Ensuring Children's and Caregivers' Psychosocial Well-being**

- Our signature psychosocial programs, including Journey of Hope<sup>2</sup>, will help children and adult caregivers cope with their losses, fears and stresses. This work began in Houston in the fall of 2017. We have trained nearly 180 social workers, therapists and counsellors to serve as program facilitators in our Caregivers' Journey of Hope, Junior Journey of Hope, Elementary Journey of Hope, Adolescent Journey of Hope and Teen Journey of Hope. By training local facilitators, we are building the capacity of communities to support children's and adult caregivers' psychosocial needs now and into the future. Lamar University faculty and students from the school of social work and counselling have also been trained as facilitators to further expand the program's reach in southeast Texas.
- To date, over 80 children and adult caregivers have completed Journey of Hope programs.
- We are building multi-partner collaborations to help deliver Journey of Hope to scale in Harvey-affected areas. We are partnering with thought leaders in Texas including Texas Children's Hospital, Communities in Schools and the University of Houston to roll out Journey of Hope across the region. Through these collaborations and by training local counselors, therapists and social workers, we will serve more than 100,000 children and adults over the next 18 months.

## **Returning Children to Learning**

- Save the Children is partnering with Collaborative for Children, a trusted community child-care network, and other local partners to help restore and improve more than 1,000 child-care, early learning and education programs, and afterschool programs in Greater Houston, the Coastal Bend and the Golden Triangle areas. We made this a priority because child-care and early learning programs are essential to children's growth, development and well-being, and because for-profit child-care programs are ineligible for Federal Emergency Management (FEMA) public recovery assistance. Child care is also critically important to overall community resilience, as some families are unable to return to work without it.
- To date, we and Collaborative for Children have helped 228 child-care programs that serve 14,123 children.

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<sup>2</sup> Journey of Hope helps children and their adult caregivers build resiliency skills while helping them understand their feelings after experiencing a disaster. Created after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Journey of Hope has to date reached over 85,000 U.S. children and has been proven by third-party academic evaluators to promote critical protective factors post-disaster.

- We continue to build partnerships with local school districts including in Houston, Spring, Galina Park and Aransas Pass to identify school needs and play a role in strengthening education recovery programs.

## Building Preparedness and Resilience with Local Partners

- Save the Children is working hands-on with partners such as the Collaborative for Children, Communities in Schools and other organizations to strengthen emergency plans and protocols and leading training modules to help caregivers plan for and recover from disasters. In addition, through outreach to schools, we plan to implement our *Prep Rally* program, which helps schools and child-care centers teach children in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade basic preparedness and resilience skills through interactive games and activities.

## Our Unique Role in the Response

Save the Children brings to Texas a unique attention to emergency related child-focused services and advocacy around the well-being of every child, while simultaneously working on the ground and with local organizations in communities where Harvey's impact was most severe. We understand the importance of supporting the most vulnerable children and their families and are providing a range of proven programs and technical assistance. Save the Children is also serving as a facilitator and convener for all those who serve children.

We are the only organization supporting child-care restoration and recovery across the region and are one of the only organizations continuing to support long-term recovery work in overlooked areas such as Port Aransas and Rockport in the Coastal Bend region—an area that was hard-hit but whose needs received little media attention in the days after Harvey.

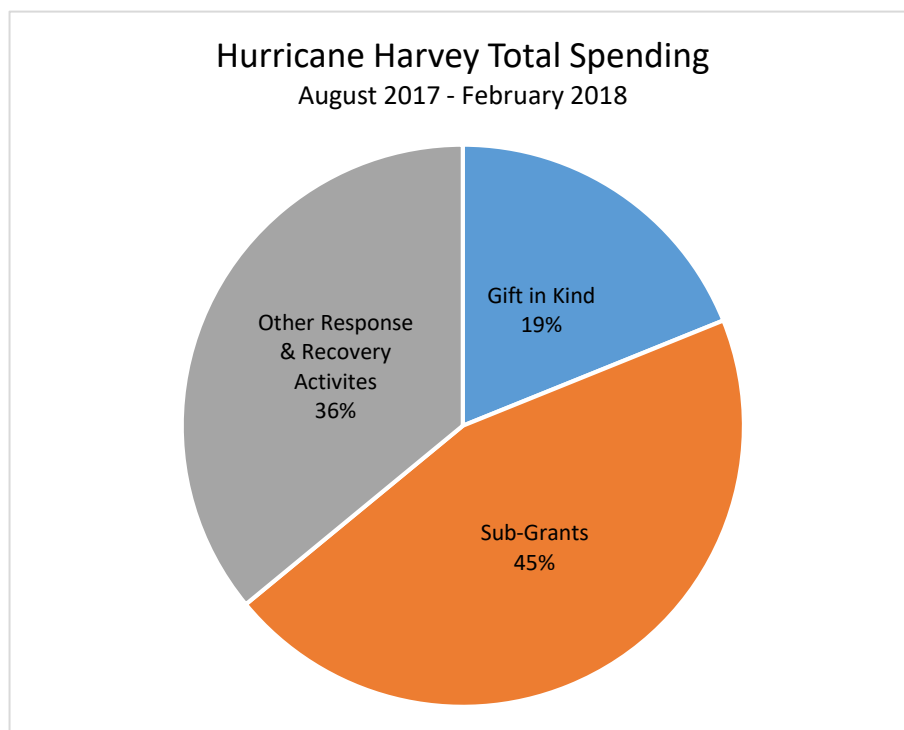
Save the Children also has a robust advocacy presence and is building a strong network of state governmental and non-government partners in Texas. We are members of children's coordination working groups in the state to help ensure children's needs are prioritized throughout the response and recovery. We are advocating for state legislation that will protect the needs of children and implement the lessons already learned in the state's response and recovery to Hurricane Harvey. Our staff are also engaging local champions for children and providing them opportunities to vocalize their support of the work that we have done in response to Harvey.

We seek to utilize local resources and build off community strengths by partnering with established partners, which increases our credibility. Some of these trusted local partners, including Premier, Legacy, Communities in Schools, Collaborative for Children and local universities, are helping to multiply our impact for children.

Our Houston recovery team is comprised mostly of locally hired staff, many of whom were personally affected or had friends and family affected by Harvey. It is their love for their community and its future that is driving the success across all of our recovery efforts and providing a friendly and familiar face to our partners.

## Hurricane Harvey Financial Snapshot

Save the Children has received \$30.8 million in contributions and in-kind donations for its response to Hurricane Harvey. The total spending to date is \$9.9 million.



## A Story from the Field: Your Support Helps Inclusive School in Texas Recover

The Bertha Alyce Early Childhood School in southwest Houston was damaged by the floods brought on by Hurricane Harvey. The school is a vital community asset—its STARS program enables preschool children with special needs to acquire essential skills to help them transition into traditional schools. Harvey destroyed the school’s fully equipped, occupational therapy gym and all the equipment and materials.

Save the Children learned of the damage at Bertha Alyce and the importance of its gym and equipment to its students. A partnership was developed to help restore the gym, library and playground, so that children like Bowen, age 2, can get back to learning and reaching their full potential.

Watching Bowen, running around in the playground with her friends, you would never guess the challenges she has faced in her young life.

When Bowen was just 15 months old, she suffered a massive seizure attack, leading to the diagnosis of a rare brain disorder called Hemimegalencephaly, which causes one side of her brain to grow abnormally larger than the other.

Due to Bowen’s condition, her development is slowed. She suffers frequent seizures and has some physical limitations. Since learning of their daughter’s diagnosis, Bowen’s mother, Ryann, and her husband, Brett, have made it their mission to get her the best help possible. That is how they found the Bertha Alyce school.



Bowen at play outside the Bertha Alyce School.  
*Photo: Laura Gomez/Save the Children*

Once enrolled, Bowen began to flourish with the therapies she needed to gain strength and develop her fine motor skills. Occupational therapy is crucial for children like Bowen because it addresses their performance in the areas of sensory processing and fine motor skills. The therapist provides very purposeful activity that promotes self-help, social skills, and movements.

“The occupational therapy gym has helped with her brain—the right side is abnormal so the opposite side is affected. Her left side should be minimally working—it should not be strong. But through the gym equipment and the fine motor skills therapy, and everything that they



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work on, she prefers her left hand to color and draw,” said Ryann. “Every doctor who has seen her is shocked by the way she is using her left hand.”

Bowen’s progress came to a halt when Hurricane Harvey’s floods submerged parts of Houston—until our staff learned of the school and the service it provides and stepped in to help.

The director of Bertha Alyce, Bonnie, described the school’s reconstruction experience as a “painful, but joyous story.” The school was determined to serve the most susceptible in their time of need, she said.

“We are a very unusual place – I like to call it the joyful and inclusive community, because we have some vulnerable populations here,” said Bonnie. She admits to losing sleep thinking about what would become of children like Bowen, who depended on the school's programs, and got right to work with the help of Save the Children staff.

Bowen’s family was also affected by the floods, and lost everything. The family of seven—including Bowen’s two older siblings, ages 3 and 4, along with her grandparents and her parents—were rescued by the National Guard and transported to an evacuation shelter after a gruelling 36-hour journey.

Bowen continues to bloom, playing with her classmates and with her family as they continue to recover and build strength in the wake of Hurricane Harvey.