

INDONESIA

Standing with Girls and Families: One Month After the Flores Earthquake

Stories of Hope, Protection and Resilience



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30 Days

have passed since a magnitude 7.7 earthquake struck Flores, East Nusa Tenggara, on August 15, 2026. The impact of the disaster is still felt by hundreds of thousands of residents, especially women and children. Yet, step by step, together we move forward toward recovery.

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Foreword



An earthquake strikes in a matter of seconds. Yet, its impact can linger for much longer.

On August 15, 2026, a magnitude 7.7 earthquake struck Flores, East Nusa Tenggara. Homes were damaged, schools were impacted, families were forced to leave their homes, and thousands of children lost their safe spaces to learn and play.

Behind every damaged house, there is a family striving to start anew. Behind every affected school, there is a child eager to keep learning. And at every displacement site, there are people working tirelessly to ensure that basic needs, protection, education, and psychosocial support remain available.

During the first month of the earthquake response in Flores, Plan Indonesia's emergency response team—alongside partners and local communities—mobilized to meet these critical needs. Our efforts ranged from providing essential supplies and clean water access, to supporting temporary learning spaces, and delivering psychosocial support and protection for children, especially girls.

We believe that humanitarian response is about showing up, listening, and walking alongside those affected.

This publication brings together stories from that one-month journey. Stories of survivors navigating the days following the earthquake. Stories of volunteers and team members who chose to step up in challenging circumstances. Stories of loss, courage, solidarity, and a hope that is slowly rebuilding.

To us, these stories serve as a reminder that resilience is the ability to keep moving forward, especially when we do not walk alone.

And for children, resilience must be built by ensuring their rights remain fulfilled, even in the most difficult situations. They still have the right to learn. They have the right to feel safe. They have the right to be heard. And they have the right to hold hope for the future.

One month may seem short compared to the long journey of recovery ahead. However, this past month has shown us one vital truth: when communities, governments, humanitarian organizations, volunteers, and partners move together, hope can emerge even in the darkest times.

May this collection of stories serve as a reminder of humanity's strength to care for one another and rise together.

Because after the ground stops shaking, our journey is far from over.

From Flores, we learn that amid the rubble, hope always finds a way.

Dini Widiastuti
Executive Director
Plan Indonesia

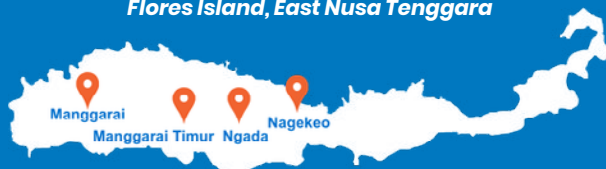


Plan Indonesia Emergency Response

Within less than 24 hours after the magnitude 7.7 earthquake struck Flores, East Nusa Tenggara, Plan Indonesia initiated a disaster response that encompassed:

- Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA)
- 16 Emergency Response Team personnel
- 4 Regencies
- Distribution of Non-Food Items (NFIs)

Flores Island, East Nusa Tenggara



 **Plan Indonesia Emergency Response
Focus Areas**



Immediate Response



Child Protection in Emergencies

Safe & Child-Friendly Spaces:

8 safe space tents for children and female youth

60 psychosocial sessions for:

- 372 girls
- 324 boys

Distribution of NFI:

1,000 protection kits (flashlights, solar lamps, whistles)

267 solar lamp kits

370 shelter/tent kits (mats, blankets)

Education in Emergencies

Emergency Learning Spaces:

4 emergency school tents in safe, easily accessible locations for children.

Distribution of School Supplies:

48 school kits (books, pencils, bags)

110 school kits in boxes

55 Early Childhood Education (ECE) material kits to replace damaged supplies

Training for Educators:

Training for teachers and facilitators on integrated psychological support in daily learning activities

Advocacy:

2 coordination meetings with government education sector officials

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

Hygiene Kits:

1,478 family hygiene kits (soap, toothbrushes & toothpaste, towels, buckets)

1,524 menstrual hygiene kits (sanitary pads, underwear, seals for waste disposal)

10 portable toilets

Clean Water:

466.500 liters of clean water

10 water filters

22 water storage tanks

Mobilization of clean water trucks, emergency storage tanks, and water filters

Safe Sanitation:

Separate emergency toilets for men and women equipped with adequate lighting





Ibu Erna and her child waiting out the emergency at an evacuation site. Plan Indonesia/Ahmad Semar

Shelter of Survival: Ibu Erna's Story from the Evacuation Camp

20 August 2026

It was the third night Ibu Erna evacuated in a temporary shelter, following the powerful earthquake that struck Flores Island.

Saturday, August 15 began unlike any other morning. Instead of starting her usual household chores, Ibu Erna's morning began in sheer panic. The ground shook violently. Belongings fell, dishes shattered into pieces, and fear filled every corner of the house. Holding her toddler, Ibu Erna and her husband rushed outside, desperately searching for a safer place.

Left with no choice, residents gathered in open fields to set up temporary shelter. Crude emergency tents were raised,

with everyone hoping they would prove sturdy enough against harsh weather. Aftershocks continued into the next day, leaving Ibu Erna and her community with no breathing room to catch their breath.

Night after night, Ibu Erna, her husband, and their young child tried to sleep alongside other displaced families. Yet, basic comfort remained a luxury under such severe limitations. Low tent roofs and poor airflow made the living quarters stiflingly hot. Young children grew restless inside, prompting parents to keep them outdoors as much as possible.

Sanitation conditions were equally distressing. Sanitation and washing



Condition of emergency tents in the emergency area. Plan Indonesia/Ahmad Semar

facilities were far, forcing residents to queue for public toilets. Due to the high number of evacuees, clean water often ran out, leaving many to wander elsewhere just to wash or change clothes.

Despite physical discomforts, fear of ongoing aftershocks remained the sole reason families chose not to return home immediately.

“It feels safer up here. Down below near our house, the area is much more vulnerable and too close to the sea. Even though staying in this shelter is far from comfortable, safety comes first,” shared Ibu Erna.

During emergencies, women and children are always the most vulnerable. A lack of private spaces and inadequate sanitation facilities in evacuee sites

often heighten feelings of insecurity. Worse yet, amid such resource-deprived crises, children face an increased risk of violence and psychological trauma.

Seeing these critical conditions, Plan Indonesia is taking swift action on the ground alongside various partners. Plan Indonesia is dedicated to ensuring that children, especially girls and vulnerable groups, receive the essential protection and safety they need during times of emergency.

By establishing child-friendly spaces, providing psychosocial support, and distributing essential hygiene and sanitation kits, ongoing assistance is being delivered so children can smile again and feel protected. Together, let us ensure that no child is left behind or deprived of their right to feel safe during these difficult times. (ND)



Kori receives a Menstrual Hygiene Package. Plan Indonesia/Agus Haru

Behind the Evacuation Tent, Kori Voices the Needs of Adolescent Girls

24 August 2026

Kori (12) gazes quietly toward the evacuation tent that has become her temporary home, where she now lives with her parents and siblings. The youngest of seven children from a village in Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), she is one of the survivors of the magnitude 7.7 earthquake that struck Flores on 15 August 2026.

Since the earthquake, Kori and her family have remained at the evacuation site because they are still afraid to return home. The continued aftershocks have heightened their concerns for the safety of their family. Amid the limited

conditions, meeting basic needs has become a daily challenge, particularly for children and adolescent girls.

When visited by Plan Indonesia's Emergency Response Team (ERT), Kori initially appeared quiet and withdrawn. However, her smile slowly returned when she and other children her age were invited to take part in psychosocial support activities. They were divided into four groups and participated in various games, including guessing songs, moving balloons, singing together, and other group activities designed to help them temporarily forget the fear and anxiety caused by the earthquake.

In between the activities, Kori shared some of her most urgent needs as an adolescent girl currently in her second year of junior high school. In a soft voice, she told a member of Plan Indonesia's ERT that she urgently needed sanitary pads, bathing soap, and other personal hygiene supplies.

"Those items are very important to us, especially while living in an evacuation tent," she said.

Kori's story reflects the reality faced by many adolescent girls living in evacuation sites following a disaster. Beyond food and safe shelter, access to menstrual hygiene products and personal hygiene supplies is an urgent need that can often be overlooked. Yet limited access to

these essentials can affect the health, comfort, and confidence of adolescent girls during their time in evacuation shelters.

To address these needs, Plan Indonesia's ERT distributed menstrual hygiene kits to Kori and other adolescent girls at the evacuation camp. The kits contained essential supplies to help them maintain their health and hygiene while living in the evacuation site. Children also received educational play kits containing drawing books, coloured pencils, pens, rulers, and other learning materials.

The distribution of menstrual hygiene kits and educational play kits was part of a Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA) conducted by Plan Indonesia's ERT.



Psychosocial Support Service with the children in refugee camps. Plan Indonesia/Agus Haru



Psychosocial Support Service with the children in refugee camps. Plan Indonesia/Agus Haru

The assessment aims to identify urgent needs and ensure that the specific needs of women, girls, children, and other vulnerable groups are addressed quickly and appropriately.

Although she is still living in an evacuation site, Kori is beginning to find hope. She shared that her school has announced plans to resume classes on 28 August. The news is something she is eagerly looking forward to.

As the daughter of a farmer, Kori dreams of becoming a nun. She hopes to follow in the footsteps of one of her older brothers, who is now a Catholic brother

serving in a church in Jakarta and previously served in the Philippines.

Amid the uncertainty caused by ongoing aftershocks, Kori says she longs for life to return to normal. She misses having a safe home, studying with her friends at school, and going through her days without fear. For now, urgent needs such as menstrual hygiene products, bathing soap, and psychosocial support remain essential in helping adolescent girls like Kori stay healthy, safe, and hopeful during an emergency. (AH)





Kori with her recreational kit. Plan Indonesia/Agus Haru

A Safe Space for Karla Amidst the Aftermath of the Flores Earthquake

26 August 2026

Amidst the sea of displacement tents erected after a powerful 7.7-magnitude earthquake struck the northern region of Flores, children's laughter is slowly returning. For nine-year-old Karla, that laughter is a gentle reminder that hope remains, even though her young life has been tested repeatedly by loss and disaster.

Karla is a young girl with big dreams. One day, she wants to become a doctor so she can help people in need. She lives in a village in Manggarai Regency, one of the areas hit hard by the quake.

Having lost her father when she was just a baby, Karla now lives with her grandfather's sister, while her mother works far away on Java Island to support the family.

Before the earthquake, Karla walked over a kilometer to school every single day. To her, distance was never a barrier to learning. School was her favorite place—a sanctuary where she could meet her friends and take small steps toward her dream of becoming a doctor.

On the morning the major earthquake

struck, Karla was already awake when violent tremors began shaking her home. In a moment of panic, she ran outside to save herself. But as she rushed through the door, falling debris from a collapsing wall hit her leg, leaving her with minor injuries.

“I just ran straight outside,” she recalled softly.

Although her physical injuries were not severe, the experience left a lingering fear behind. Like many other children in her community, Karla had to adapt to life around the displacement camp while waiting for stability and safety to return.

In the midst of these challenging conditions, Plan Indonesia’s Emergency Response Team (ERT) stepped in to provide psychosocial support for children affected by the earthquake. When the team visited the displacement site, Karla and several other children were gathered near the camp.

They were invited to join in games, sing songs, and participate in various

activities carefully designed to help them express their emotions, ease anxiety, and reclaim a sense of safety after such a traumatic event.

At first, Karla appeared shy and reserved. But as the activities went on, her smile began to blossom. She sang along with her friends, joined in the games, and giggled as the facilitators from Plan Indonesia warmly engaged with them.

Here is the English translation of the final section, maintained in the same warm, narrative, and inspiring NGO tone:

During that moment, Karla also received a recreational kit handed out by Dini Widiastuti, Executive Director of Plan Indonesia, to be shared with the other children at the displacement site.

To many, a kit filled with games and toys might seem simple. But for children like Karla, play offers a dedicated space to rediscover joy amidst uncertainty. Playing helps them rebuild self-confidence,



Delivering psychosocial support to children through art and creative expression. Plan Indonesia



Plan Indonesia Executive Director Dini Widiastuti handing out recreational and educational packages. Plan Indonesia/Agus Haru

strengthen bonds with their peers, and briefly leave behind the fears brought on by the disaster.

In between activities, Karla opened up about how deeply she missed going back to school. In the aftermath of the earthquake, classes had been temporarily suspended until August 29. What she missed most was not just the classroom lessons, but her friends who accompanied her every day to study and play.

“I really want to go back to school soon,” she said.

Her simple wish serves as a poignant reminder that in any emergency, children’s needs go beyond just food, clean water, and safe shelter. They also require emotional support to heal from experiences that turned their lives upside down.

Through psychosocial support services, Plan Indonesia strives to ensure that children affected by the earthquake continue to have a safe space to play, learn, and rekindle hope. Post-disaster recovery is not merely about rebuilding destroyed homes; it is about restoring the spirit and mental well-being of the children who represent our future.

Amidst the lingering uncertainty enveloping the quake-affected region, Karla chooses to keep dreaming. She still wants to become a doctor. And behind the smile that is slowly blossoming once more lies a quiet conviction that one day soon, she will put on her school uniform again, study alongside her friends, and take another step closer toward her dream. (AH)



Families receiving emergency hygiene kits during relief operations. Plan Indonesia/Alfred Ike Wurin

A Pack of Sanitary Pads at the Shelter

28 August 2026

That afternoon was scorching hot. After distributing clean water at the hilltop shelter, we stopped by the main post located at the highway intersection. This location served as one of our clean water distribution points, set up to support the community kitchen and sanitation needs across the displacement camp.

Noticing that many displaced residents were asking about the acronyms labeled on our relief kits, Maria took the opportunity to explain our distribution process—focusing particularly on the MHM (Menstrual Hygiene Management) kits that we had been delivering to various locations since August 16, 2026. Without interrupting, the residents

listened attentively to Maria's story.

However, a crowd of diverse perspectives naturally brought varied reactions. While the majority were understanding, quite a few remained confused, sending a wave of quiet whispers through the crowd.

"Why sanitary pads? Why not rice? Or second-hand clothes? Our wardrobes were crushed under fallen concrete."

Suddenly, a young girl around 15 years old stepped forward, approached Maria, and whispered in her ear:

“Sister, do you still have any sanitary pads left? May I ask for one right now?”

Without hesitation, Maria opened her bag, pulled out a pack of sanitary pads, and handed it to her.

“Use this for now, okay? In a bit, I’ll head to Ruteng to buy more so you have enough stock here at the shelter!”

“Thank you, Sister. I am having my period right now, but I didn’t have any pads. My house across the street was completely destroyed,” she shared softly.

Everyone who heard her words froze—or

rather, their awareness was suddenly jolted by that fleeting moment.

The crowd fell completely silent.

“Thank you so much, son, daughter,” a raspy voice from an elderly mother at the post broke the silence.

“For us mothers and young girls, we desperately need these pads and clean water during our periods. Even with earthquakes, even with our houses and wardrobes crushed, our periods don’t stop. Thank you for remembering this need of ours,” she expressed with deep gratitude. (AI)



Distributing menstrual hygiene kits to women affected by the Flores earthquake. Plan Indonesia/Alfred Ike Wurin





Maria engaging with affected community members in an emergency tent. Plan Indonesia/Alfred Ike Wurin

Maria: The Heart and Meaning of a Humanitarian Mission

29 August 2026

That afternoon, right after handing a small pack of sanitary pads to a menstruating teenager at the displacement shelter, Maria immediately urged the rest of us—members of the Emergency Response Team (ERT)—to head to Ruteng. It was about thirty kilometers from our basecamp in North Lamba Leda.

“We also need to buy baby supplies in a bit. There’s a three-week-old baby at the mountain shelter born via C-section, so we need to get a baby mattress and a mosquito net. Her mother told me earlier that they desperately need telon oil and baby clothes,” Maria said, breaking our daydreaming during the ride. As usual,

her enthusiasm burned bright, like a bonfire on the 14th of August.

Maria was a true warrior—endowed with fierce spirit and incredible stamina. Yet behind the resilience she displayed while navigating the displacement camps, she carried a vulnerable side that she shared with us in complete honesty. Early in her assignment, her heart was plagued with layers of anxiety. She had to leave her family behind in Nagekeo, the epicenter of the 7.7-magnitude earthquake.

Yet, amid the turmoil of longing and worry, one thing kept her grounded and drove her to keep serving: seeing the joyful smiles of the children in the shelter.

"You know, the baby's older sibling was playing with us at the PSS (Psychosocial Support) post earlier. Their house was right behind the school," she recalled.

Maria also shared that the family's home was completely destroyed. Of course, it wasn't just theirs; every single house in that neighborhood had been reduced to rubble.

Upon arriving in Ruteng, we immediately shopped for all the essentials: MHM (Menstrual Hygiene Management) kits, hygiene kits, mosquito nets, mats, sarongs, and blankets. For Mama Ophy and her baby, Maria searched for a baby mattress complete with an integrated mosquito net, several sets of baby clothes, telon oil, baby soap, as well as clothes and blankets for the mother. With everything packed, we headed back to North Lamba Leda.

The next day, as evening approached, we returned to the mountain shelter. After wrapping up a long distribution across two shelters, Maria quickly grabbed the package meant for the mother and baby. Our team approached them and handed the items directly to Mama Ophy and her little one.

An emotional hush fell over the scene. No one said a word—neither us nor the small family. We all just gazed at the tiny blessing lying down and playing on her bed, occasionally letting out a soft chuckle. Watching her antics, everyone smiled. A quiet sense of relief washed over us, as if the tragedy and immense hardship had vanished for a moment.

"Thank you so much. During the first earthquake, a neighbor gave us a bottle



Maria handing over support items for a mother and her newborn. Plan Indonesia/Alfred Ike Wurin



Maria leading a drawing activity with children. Plan Indonesia/Alfred Ike Wurin

of telon oil for the baby, but it ran out. Thank you... now there's a little mattress to keep her cozy when she sleeps," Mama Ophy said with a trembling voice.

We returned to the basecamp. It was our final day of duty for the emergency response in North Lamba Leda. That night, accompanied by steam rising from cups of hot Arabica coffee, we organized all the documents and gear we needed to bring home.

As we finalized our tasks, Maria's mind wandered back to her hometown. In truth, Maria was also a survivor of the earthquake in Nagekeo. Yet that painful experience served as the fuel that kept her dedication to this humanitarian mission burning strong.

"How are you feeling right now?" I asked in between our busywork.

Maria paused for a moment, staring at the hot cup in front of her, before replying, "It is heavy, but after going through all this, I feel happy. I also feel valuable because despite this disaster—despite the earthquake—my family survived, and I am able to help the people here too."

We simply smiled at her, and silence settled over the room. Everyone stayed busy—or pretended to be busy—so as not to seem overly sentimental in front of Maria.

Then Maria spoke again, her voice thick with emotion.

"I am deeply fulfilled, and I know my husband must be proud of me! The impact back home was severe, but as you can see, it is devastating here—nothing is left. I truly believe that when we help people in need with a sincere

heart, their prayers will guide our path and bring us blessings!”

The night at the basecamp suddenly fell quiet, letting the cool wind of Lamba Leda carry away the day’s lingering fatigue. After a few minutes, Maria spoke once more, her tone much softer.

“This is my first time taking on an assignment like this. I realized that we truly can be present to help fellow human beings who are hurting and struggling. I remember when we were playing with the children, their parents would often watch. Sometimes, tears would stream down a parent’s face just seeing their child play so happily again.”

She shared how the parents expressed their deep gratitude, thanking her for taking the time to play with their little ones and bringing laughter back into their lives amidst the adversity.

We smiled in silence, continuing our light conversations while reminiscing about the dynamic 14 days of our deployment in North Lamba Leda. She said that once she returned home, she would tell her husband and family that this humanitarian mission was beautiful, leaving a profound meaning on her journey through life.



Maria leading a play session for children at the response site. Plan Indonesia/Alfred Ike Wurin





Om Nus and Mama Yulita standing outside their house in the affected area. Plan Indonesia/Ahmad Semar

The True Power of Humanity: Lessons from Nus and Yulita's Humble Abode

1 September 2026

Nestled high on a hillside in Nagekeo, surrounded by their farm, lived a small, humble family. Nus and his wife, Yulita, were simple farmers who cherished their quiet life.

"We chose to live up here so we could stay close to our farm and protect our crops," Nus shared. For years, their hilltop home was a sanctuary of peace.

Until disaster struck.

When the Earth Shook Flores

"It was a quiet morning. Some of the children hadn't even woken up yet. I was preparing my tools to forage for livestock feed when, suddenly, a massive shock hit. We couldn't even stand—we had to crouch low to the ground. As soon as it stopped, an even violent tremor followed. It was terrifying," Nus recalled.

On August 15, 2026, at 05:55 AM WITA, a powerful 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck Flores Island, followed by a devastating 7.7 magnitude quake shortly after at 06:20 AM.

Panic and terror gripped the community. Tsunami warning sirens blared across the coast, sending a sea of frightened people running for their lives—heading upward, toward the mountains, searching for higher ground.

Amidst the chaos, Nus and his family stood in their yard, positioned safely away from large trees. Then, Nus witnessed a heart-wrenching sight: a crowd of terrified faces fleeing uphill without a clear destination.

Without hesitation, Nus called out to Yulita. Together, they raised their voices to call the fleeing survivors into their yard.

“*Mai!* Come in, rest here!” they called out. (Mai means ‘come’ in the local language)

“*Mona!* It doesn’t matter who you are. We are all human. Even if we aren’t blood

relatives, I am a human being just like you. Come, let’s take shelter together where it’s safe,”* Nus reassured them. (Mona means ‘no’ or ‘it doesn’t matter’)

Social status and background did not matter. Nus and Yulita saw only fellow human beings in desperate need of safety and warmth.

“If they kept running further up, there was nothing but wild overgrown grass. My heart broke thinking about how they would survive or what they would eat up there,” Yulita expressed softly.

That day, the modest hilltop home transformed into a beacon of hope, welcoming families seeking refuge from continuous, frightening aftershocks.

Sharing Whatever Little They Had

By midnight, Nus realized their water supply was far from enough for the large



Distributing shelter kits to Om Nus and community representatives. Plan Indonesia/Ahmad Semar



Om Nus and Mama Yulita together with their family. Plan Indonesia/Ahmad Semar

group. Braving the pitch-black night and rugged terrain, he rode his motorcycle with water jerrycans to fetch clean water from a distant source. He brought it back so everyone could cook and survive another night.

Mama Yulita showed equal grace and fairness. She shared whatever meager bedding and supplies they owned. Under simple tarps that barely blocked the cold night winds, the displaced families lay side-by-side on plastic mats, looking up at the sky, sharing the same cold air, but warmth in their hearts.

Food, however, was a growing crisis. External aid had not yet reached this remote shelter on the hill. Yet, it was in this scarce moment that the true depth of Nus and Yulita's generosity shone brightest.

They had no deep savings nor a grand granary. All they owned was a small

cassava patch behind their house. To feed everyone through the crucial first 72 hours post-disaster, Nus invited his guests to join him in harvesting his cassava crop.

Mama Yulita worked alongside the other displaced mothers to boil the freshly dug cassava, serving warm meals to everyone staying in their yard.

"We eat whatever we have. To hold us over, we dig up the cassava we planted and share it together," Nus said humbly.

Together, sitting on the dirt yard, hosts and displaced neighbors ate boiled cassava, comforting and lifting one another up. In the face of disaster, lines blurred; they were no longer hosts and strangers, but one big family bound by pure human solidarity.



Om Nus's home kitchen, utilized to meet the food and clean water needs of the community. Plan Indonesia/Ahmad Semar

A Light in the Dark

Om Nus and Mama Yulita are ordinary people. They, too, were victims of the earthquake. Their own home was damaged, and their livelihood was impacted. By all rights, they could have closed their doors to protect their own family's survival.

Instead, Yulita simply stated: "We are all human beings. Those who ran here, those whose homes collapsed—we are all the same. We must help each other, with whatever little we have."

When Plan Indonesia's Emergency Response Team (ERT) identified the makeshift emergency post at Nus's home, they moved swiftly to deliver emergency shelter support—including heavy-duty tarpaulins, sleeping mats, blankets, emergency lamps, as well as dignity and hygiene kits.

"We are deeply grateful for these tarps and supplies, Sir. Most importantly, we can now build a proper shelter to protect the children and mothers, as it gets freezing cold here at night," Nus expressed with heartfelt gratitude.(AI)



Youth tended to the crops. Plan Indonesia

Built for Climate Resilience, Tested by an Earthquake: The Story of Youth Organisation Kebun Lestari Salama

10 September 2026

In the village of Salama, Reok, on the northern coast of Flores – Indonesia, three young women and four young men under 30 had been quietly building something ambitious. With support from IKI Small Grants through Plan Indonesia, they founded Kebun Lestari Salama (KELAS), an organic vegetable garden meant to double as a climate mitigation and adaptation classroom: composting, water-efficient beds, drip irrigation, and crops chosen for Flores' shifting rainy seasons. The long-term vision was economic as much as environmental: a

business incubator that could give village youth a stake in sustainable farming and, eventually, put Salama on the map as a new tourism spot.

They didn't know their garden was about to be tested in a completely different way.

On August 15, 2026, a magnitude 7.7 earthquake struck off the northern coast of Flores, one of the strongest to hit the island in years. Reok, in Manggarai regency, was among the areas hit hardest. Homes collapsed, water and



Vegetable beds across displacement camp. Plan Indonesia

power lines went down, and thousands of families across Manggarai and neighboring regencies were forced from their homes into evacuation sites and makeshift camps of tarpaulin and wood.

A garden becomes a shelter

Five houses stood directly in front of the KELAS garden. When the ground stopped shaking, their occupants had nowhere sturdy to go, so they came to the garden. The unplanted front plot, originally set aside for a flower garden, became the site of emergency tents; it remains standing there today. As one KELAS member put it, home yards in the area simply weren't big enough for shelter, and the garden was one of the few open spaces large enough to hold a crowd.

The timing carried a note of luck: the day before the earthquake, the garden's water tank had been fully filled. With piped water and electricity down across the area, and most residents' bore wells useless without power, that full tank became an emergency water source. Large buckets meant for storing organic fertilizer were repurposed to store rice aid, alongside water gallons and a dispenser pressed into service to store water too.

Feeding people when the market couldn't

Local markets stayed closed through the first week after the quake. In that gap, vegetables already close to harvest. Kale, water spinach, and spinach were picked straight from the beds by displaced residents and eaten. All of it was given away free; KELAS asked



One of the volunteers tended to water spinach crops. Plan Indonesia

nothing in return and told residents to take as much as they needed.

While the three KELAS members themselves couldn't get to the garden to tend it, the displaced families sheltering there kept the plants alive. They watered and weeded, led by the village head's wife. In effect, the community that had taken shelter in the garden ended up growing its own food supply and reaping it.

Today, the garden and its harvest reach three evacuation posts in Reok, totaling 71 people: Posko Kebun Lestari Salama (33 people, sited at the garden itself), Posko Gadong (7 households, 29 people), and Posko Mandiri Wae Selung (9 people). Together spanning infants, toddlers, children, adults, and elderly residents.

An unplanned lesson in food security

For communities, the garden also became an unexpected classroom. Residents encountered vegetables many had never grown or eaten before, such as cosmos plant, radishes, edamame. The residents got a hands-on look at the drip irrigation system KELAS had built. One resident marveled that the garden's short tomato plants, grown with organic fertilizer, still produced fruit so abundantly. The communities also learned that vegetables which seem impossible to grow in the lowlands such as spring onion, curly lettuce, and radish, can actually thrive here with the right care.

KELAS's founders say they hope the experience and the harvest would grow

lasting awareness in Salama about food security at the village level, so the community isn't left solely dependent on the market when the next shock hits. It's a hard-won silver lining: the group has struggled since the start to attract participation from local village youth, most of KELAS's own members being from outside Salama. During recent visits, that condition has been changed. Parent started asking whether their child could join the group managing the garden.

It's a small-scale response to an enormous need. Tens of thousands of people across East Nusa Tenggara remain displaced, but it makes a point Plan Indonesia's climate programming has argued from the start: resilience isn't hazard-specific. The grants let youth experiment with diversified, low-input local agricultural systems — and when the earthquake hit, that same diversification held, bringing communities together around a shared lesson.

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Rani and Fino proudly holding up their creative work. Plan Indonesia/Agus Haru

Playing and Healing Together: Psychosocial Support Helps Children Recover After the Flores Earthquake

11 September 2026

**Playing and Healing Together:
Psychosocial Support Helps Children
Recover After the Flores Earthquake**

Laughter and joyful voices have returned to schoolyards and displacement sites across Manggarai Regency. Through interactive games, creative activities, and engaging psychosocial care, children are gradually recovering from the traumatic experience following the magnitude 7.7 earthquake that struck major parts of Flores Island on August 15.

Beyond damaging infrastructure and disrupting daily life, the disaster took a significant psychological toll on young minds, leaving many struggling with fear, anxiety, sleeplessness, and lost routines. Schools—normally safe havens for learning and play—were forced to close for over two weeks to ensure community safety.

Like many of their peers, 11-year-olds Rani and Fino directly experienced the terrifying moments of the earthquake. Alongside their fear, both shared a deep



Primary school students coloring together inside an emergency shelter tent. Plan Indonesia/Agus Haru

longing: to return to school and reunite with friends.

In response, Plan Indonesia moved quickly to deliver psychosocial support to affected children across 60 locations in schools and evacuation centers. In Manggarai Regency specifically, activities ran for a full month, led by ten trained facilitators. Using child-friendly approaches—including group games, singing, drawing, and storytelling—facilitators created safe spaces for children to express their feelings and rebuild their sense of security.

This initiative provided a vital space for children to rediscover joy amidst a situation that had not yet fully recovered.

“We are so happy to be playing with our friends again,” shared Fino, an 11-year-old student who participated in

the psychosocial support activities in his area.

Fino still clearly remembers the moments when the massive earthquake struck. At the time, he had just woken up from sleep when the powerful shaking began. “When the earthquake happened, I had just woken up. I immediately ran out of the house,” he recalled.

Although he felt afraid at first, Fino is now regaining his enthusiasm after taking part in the various organized activities. For him, playing with friends helped ease his anxiety while bringing back his happiness.

Behind his smile, Fino holds a big dream. He aspires to become a famous singer, drawing inspiration from Manggarai-born singer Bertrand Peto, who is his idol.



Primary school students coloring together inside an emergency shelter tent. Plan Indonesia/Agus Haru

“I want to be a singer like Betrand Peto,” he said enthusiastically. Aside from enjoying singing, Fino actively participates in group games and activities guided by the facilitators. Through these sessions, he has learned to regain his self-confidence and interact bravely with his peers after experiencing such a shocking event.

Similarly, 11-year-old Riani also vividly remembers her experience when the earthquake shook her home. At that moment, she was fast asleep and unaware of the disaster unfolding. “I was still sleeping when the earthquake happened. My older sibling immediately pulled me out of bed so we could get out of the house quickly,” she remembered.

The incident left Riani feeling frightened. However, the presence of psychosocial support activities helped her gradually feel calmer. One of her favorite activities

is drawing, as it allows her to channel her imagination while expressing her feelings.

Riani dreams of becoming a fashion designer. Ever since she was young, she has enjoyed drawing various shapes and colors. To her, studying diligently and practicing drawing regularly are the keys to achieving her dream. “If you want to be a designer, you have to study hard and draw often,” Riani shared.

The psychosocial support provided not only helps children overcome their post-disaster fears, but also gives them room to keep dreaming about their future. Through engaging activities, children are encouraged to recognize their abilities, build confidence, and maintain their enthusiasm for learning despite facing difficult circumstances.

For many children, the opportunity to play with peers serves as an essential

part of the healing process. Through positive games and social interaction, they can experience togetherness once again, reduce stress, and rebuild routines that were temporarily disrupted by the disaster.

Throughout the program's implementation, facilitators ensured that every child received attention suited to their individual needs. They created safe and comfortable environments where children felt free to speak, play, and express their feelings.

Plan Indonesia's psychosocial support program demonstrates that disaster response extends beyond meeting physical needs to encompass children's

mental health and emotional well-being. Psychological recovery is a crucial element so that children can return to their daily lives smoothly.

Now, amid the ongoing post-earthquake recovery process, Riani and Fino's smiles have returned.

They play, laugh, and learn together with their friends. Behind the difficult experience they endured, both continue to hold onto big dreams for the future. Fino wants to become a singer who inspires many, while Riani aims to become a creative designer. With the right support, children like them have the opportunity to heal, grow, and pursue their aspirations with hope. (AH)



Children learning self-expression through psychosocial support sessions. Plan Indonesia



Novela excited to return to school. Plan Indonesia/Agus Haru

Under a Tarpaulin Roof, Novela Chases Her Dreams Once Again After the Flores Earthquake

11 September 2026

That morning, August 15, was supposed to be just another ordinary day for 11-year-old Novela and her friends. She is a primary school student in a small village in Manggarai Regency, Flores. Like many children her age, she started her morning by helping her parents fetch water before getting ready for school.

However, in a matter of seconds, that routine turned into an experience she will never forget.

“At that time, I was scooping water and getting ready for school. Suddenly, the

earthquake happened. I immediately ran away from the water tank because I was scared,” she recalled.

The powerful magnitude 7.7 earthquake that struck the Flores region and several parts of East Nusa Tenggara sent residents panicking into the streets. Numerous buildings suffered heavy damage, including public facilities and schools that served as daily spaces for children to learn and play.

For Novela, the earthquake did not just shake buildings; it halted her



Students eagerly looking forward to continuing their education at school. Plan Indonesia/Agus Haru

favorite activity: learning alongside her classmates.

For nearly two weeks following the disaster, teaching and learning activities were suspended because the school was no longer safe to use. Classrooms were damaged and required thorough safety inspections before anyone could enter.

“We couldn’t go to school for almost two weeks. I missed learning at school, playing with my friends, and seeing my teachers so much,” Novela said, her face reflecting her sadness.

For many adults, a school might simply be seen as a place of instruction. But for children like Novela, it is a crucial space to grow, dream, and experience community. Missing school for days left a heavy toll that was just as impactful as the visible physical destruction.

Yet, their determination to return to learning never faded.

Recognizing the urgent need to restore children’s right to education, teachers, parents, and community members joined forces to find a solution. By early September, they agreed to construct a temporary emergency school using materials available around the village.

Starting September 2, the school grounds echoed with activity once again. Bamboo was cut, support poles were raised, and tarpaulins were stretched out to form a temporary roof. Parents worked side by side with teachers to recreate a learning space for their children.

“The teachers and all the parents started working together to build an emergency school made of bamboo with a tarpaulin roof,” Novela shared.

Amid these limited resources, assistance began arriving from various groups dedicated to supporting affected children. Among the support received were tarpaulins used to build the temporary classrooms.



Students back to studying inside an emergency shelter tent. Plan Indonesia

“So far, we have received tarpaulins from Plan Indonesia. Thank you so much to everyone who cares about us,” she added.

Now, even though it consists of simple bamboo structures topped with tarpaulins, the emergency school stands as a symbol of renewed hope. Under tarpaulin roofs that occasionally sway in the wind, children open their textbooks once more, listen to their teachers’ lessons, and write down their dreams.

The School Principal, Ardianus Suhardi Temot, expressed his appreciation for the support that allowed the school to resume lessons.

“We extend our deepest thanks to Plan Indonesia for their quick response and empathy toward our situation. The donation of six tarpaulins was extremely helpful in constructing the emergency

school, enabling us to restart teaching and learning activities quickly,” he stated.

Despite this progress, challenges remain. Due to space constraints, the temporary facility cannot accommodate all students at the same time. To ensure every child still receives an education, the school implemented a shift system.

“For now, we only have three emergency classrooms, so learning activities must be rotated. Grades 1, 3, and 5 attend on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, while Grades 2, 4, and 6 attend on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays,” Ardianus explained.

For the teaching staff, this arrangement is far from ideal. However, compared to leaving children without education for even longer, the emergency school is the best immediate solution.



An emergency shelter serving as a temporary space for learning and recreational activities. Plan Indonesia

Amid the post-disaster recovery, the children's resilience has become a vital source of strength for the entire community. They continue to arrive at school with smiles, carrying salvaged textbooks, and sitting side by side in the simple classrooms built through collective effort.

Novela is among them. For her, being back at school—even under a tarpaulin—is a joy that is hard to put into words.

"I'm just really happy to be learning again," she said simply, with a smile.

Novela's story illustrates that post-disaster recovery is not merely about rebuilding physical structures; it is about restoring hope and a sense of security for children. When schools reopen, children regain their daily routines, re-engage with their peers, and receive the crucial emotional support needed after

experiencing trauma.

In Flores, the road to full recovery remains long. Many schools and public services still require major repairs. However, the spirit of mutual cooperation among residents, the dedication of local teachers, and the ongoing support from humanitarian partners show that hope can always flourish, even in the most challenging times.

Under a simple tarpaulin roof, Novela and her classmates are back to spelling words, solving math problems, and nurturing their future ambitions. The earthquake may have damaged their school building, but it could not crush the determination of Flores' children to keep learning and striving for a better tomorrow. (AH)





Azisa standing in front of the rubble of her destroyed house. Plan Indonesia/Alfred Ike

People of the North After the Flores Earthquake

14 September 2026

Northern Communities Rebuilding After the Flores Earthquake

It was early morning on August 15, 2026, when Azisa was straightening up her bedroom.

"I was inside my room when a massive earthquake suddenly struck, and the room collapsed instantly," Azisa recalled. "I hid next to a wardrobe that was pinned down by a wall. Once the shaking stopped, I ran outside immediately."

Her panicked father searched for her among the ruins of their home. Reunited, they gathered with neighbors in an open field and built a temporary emergency tent.

"Every home in our hamlet was damaged, but we are deeply grateful that everyone survived," Azisa shared.

During the initial Emergency Response phase, Plan Indonesia's Emergency Response Team (ERT) conducted Rapid Needs Assessments (RNA) and delivered early relief. Operating across Ngada and East Manggarai regencies, the team navigated the northern coastal route of Flores Island.

On August 16, 2026, the team reached a coastal hamlet defined by its scenic landscape, yet heavily devastated by the quake. Houses, places of worship, granaries, and schools had collapsed. Only a single wooden house remained standing, appearing fragile.

There, the team met Azisa, a young local leader who spoke directly with the responders. Along with conducting the assessment, the ERT distributed temporary shelter tarpaulins, Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) kits, and essential hygiene packs—containing soap, toothpaste, and toothbrushes—providing crucial short-term support for the coming days.

During their conversation, Azisa highlighted the urgent challenges facing women and girls in the camp.

“Honestly, as a young woman, I desperately need a private bathroom and toilet—even a simple one made of tarpaulins or plywood,” she explained. “It is impossible for us to use facilities in open spaces like this. Every home here collapsed. A few bathrooms survived, but we are terrified of standing walls because aftershocks keep happening.”

Azisa also noted a critical shortage of sanitary pads, as families had fled without saving personal items, and local shops were destroyed. Dozens of adolescent girls and women in the hamlet faced the same urgent need.

After completing initial distributions at the camp, the ERT continued west to conduct further assessments. Upon reaching a damaged bridge lined with downed power lines, team members checked in with the camp coordinator, Zainudin, via text message regarding their power situation.

Zainudin confirmed the hamlet had been without electricity since the initial quake, relying solely on two small solar panels from the local mosque.

“The light is dim and doesn’t last until midnight; we remain in the dark until morning,” Zainudin texted back.



Family hygiene kits received by community members to support their daily sanitation needs. Plan Indonesia/Alfred Ike



Local residents meeting to plan the building of emergency homes. Plan Indonesia/Alfred Ike

Days later, the ERT returned with emergency solar lanterns, comprehensive shelter kits—including family tents, mosquito nets, and blankets—as well as expanded MHM supplies, hygiene packs, and baby diapers.

Though Azisa was out during the return visit, the community's proactive spirit was evident. Residents worked together to salvage timber beams and metal roofing sheets from collapsed homes to construct transitional shelters (*hunian sementara*). Women and girls were busy drying harvested rice to secure their family food reserves.

"We know the rainy season is approaching," explained Zainudin. "Staying in basic tents during heavy

rains will be difficult for our families. Furthermore, women and young girls urgently need private emergency sanitation facilities, so we are coming together to build them ourselves."

The coastal hamlet stands as a clear example of active participation and community resilience. Women's voices were heard and prioritized, leading directly to the community-led construction of safe, dignified sanitation spaces.

"We live along a quiet, hard-to-reach northern route," Zainudin reflected. "We are thankful that responders reached us with lanterns, tents, hygiene supplies, and necessities for women. For everything else, we rely on our own strength and unity to move forward." (AI)

Thank You

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