



Image: Sela Andreu

WITH MUD IN THEIR BACKPACKS

*Impact of the October 2024
floods on children and adolescents in
the province of Valencia:
paths to reconstruction
from a rights-based approach.*

October_2025

savethechildren.es

To all those who will never be the same again, especially the youngest.

And to those who are no longer with us.

“With mud in their backpacks” is the result of the research carried out in collaboration with an academic team from the Faculty of Philosophy and Education Sciences at the University of Valencia. The product presented below is the result of the commitment, sensitivity and tireless work of Margarita Bakieva, Verónica Bustamante, Alba González, María Jesús Perales, Piedad Sahuquillo and Joan Maria Senent.

With 2,349 anonymous and voluntary responses to a questionnaire given to families with children and adolescents living in one of the 103 municipalities affected by the floods, according to the list defined by the Resolution of 16 December 2024, of the Presidency of the AVSRE (DOGV No. 10008 / 18.12.2024). Open from May to July 2025. 92% of the responses obtained come from families living in ground zero. All the graphs presented below have this quantitative reference source.

With qualitative contributions from children and adolescents, families, professionals (social entities, municipal technicians, teachers, etc.) and policymakers in discussion groups and in-depth interviews conducted between April and October 2025.

With the review of official and secondary sources considered relevant.

With evidence drawn from our own direct intervention in the field.

Director of Influence and Territorial Development **Catalina Perazzo**
Head of Political and Social Advocacy **Carmela del Moral**
Director of the Comunitat Valenciana Office **Rodrigo Hernández**
Author and Coordinator **Yohara Quílez**
Layout Designer **Ricardo Gómez**



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Collaborator:



GOBIERNO
DE ESPAÑA

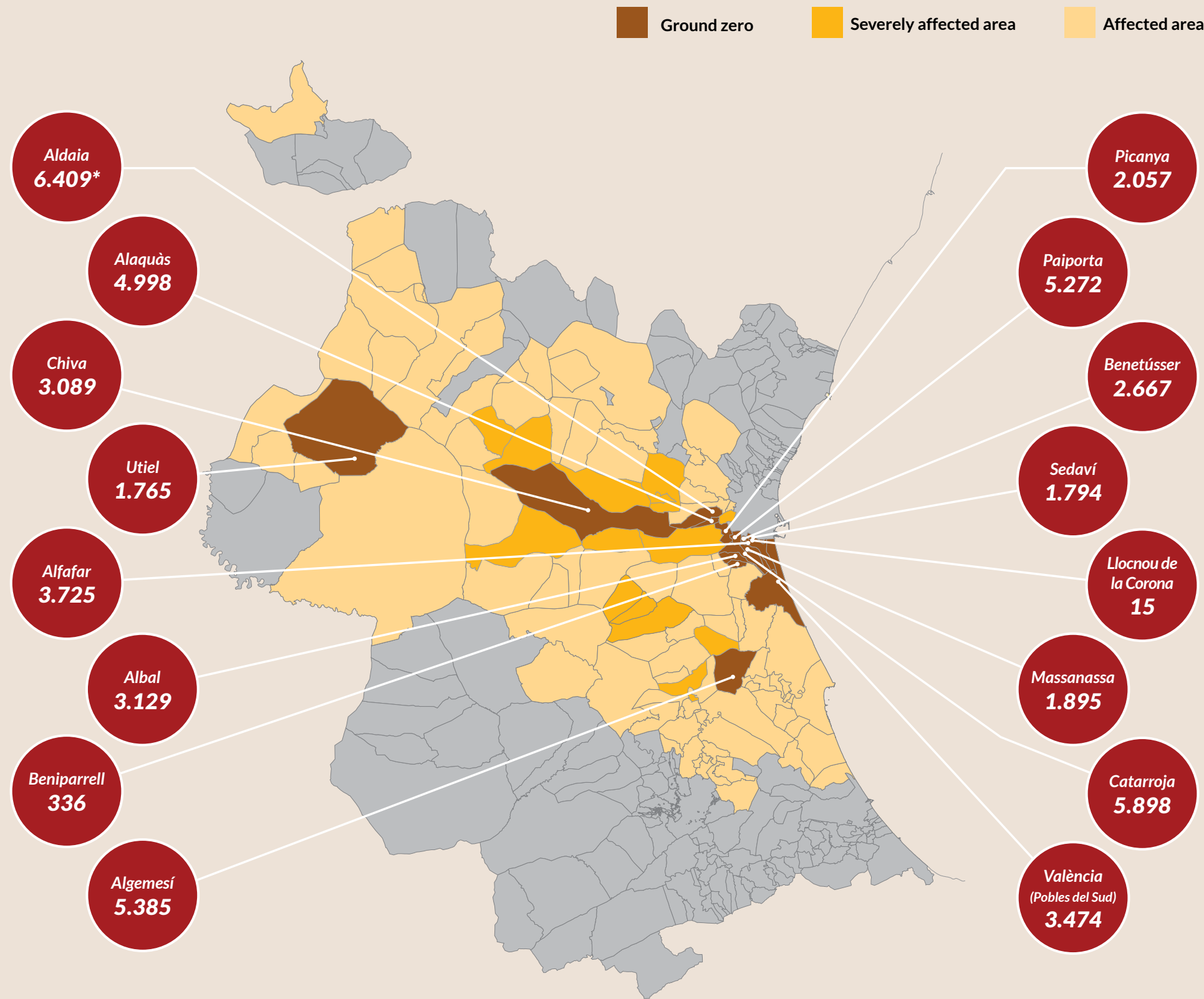
MINISTERIO
DE JUVENTUD
E INFANCIA

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Municipalities in the province of Valencia affected by the floods (dana¹) on 29 October 2024.

- 200,000 children and adolescents (aged 0 to 17) in the 103 affected municipalities
 - 89,000 in ground zero² and other severely affected municipalities (19.7% of the provincial total)
 - 46,000 girls
 - 36,000 adolescents (aged 12 to 17)
- 600,000 people without drinking water, 150,000 without electricity, 87% of municipalities in ground zero without telephone coverage
- 16,000 homes damaged
- 144,000 vehicles unusable (85% of them a total loss)
- 31,000 people on temporary layoff (ERTE) due to force majeure, 64,000 businesses in affected areas
- 36,000 children and adolescents under the age of 16 at risk of poverty or social exclusion (child AROPE rate: 29.5%³) live in the affected areas
- 16,000 people receiving the Valencian Inclusion Income in affected municipalities as of 1 October 2025
- 115 schools damaged, 8 declared in a state of disaster (in the process of demolition)
- 48,000 pupils unable to attend school for weeks
- 18,000 recipients of school meal grants in affected regions as of 29 October 2024
- 229 confirmed fatalities, 9 of them between the ages of 0 and 18

1 Acronym for Isolated Depression at High Levels in Spanish, a meteorological phenomenon also known as a "cold drop".
2 Typology defined by the Valencian Regional Government in the Endavant Plan (April 2025).
3 Valencian Institute of Statistics. Poverty indicators (2024 Living Conditions Survey) at the subregional level: At Risk Of Poverty and/or Exclusion (AROPE) rate from 0 to 16 years old for the aggregate of the regions of Plana de Utiel-Requena, Hoya de Buñol, Horta Sud and Ribera Alta



* Number of children and adolescents per municipality in Ground zero.

EMERGENCY PREVENTION AND RESPONSE: A REFLECTION FROM A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

According to the guiding principles of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations), emergency prevention and response should be guided by:

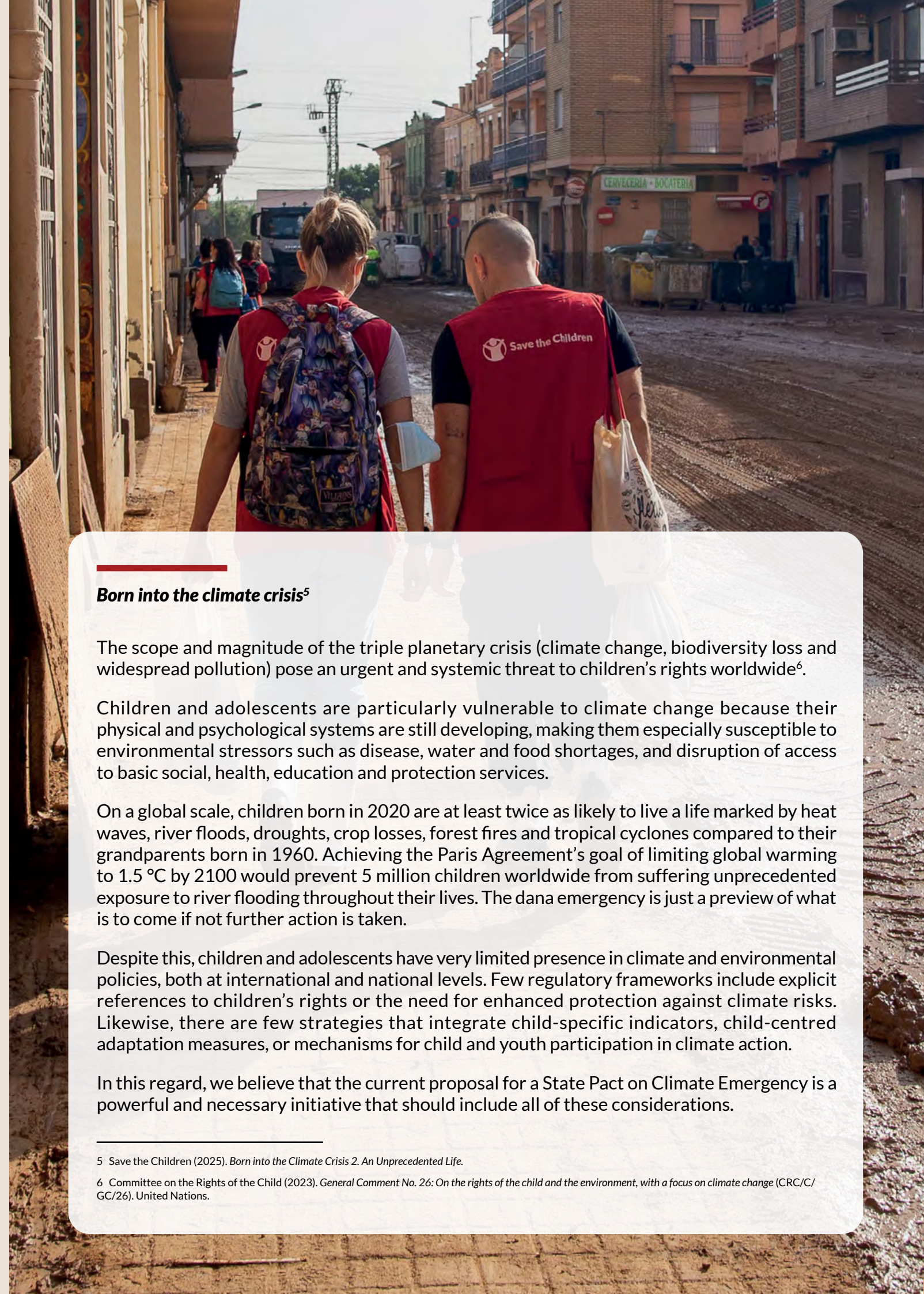
Best interests (Art. 3): The interests and rights of children must always be a primary consideration. This also applies in the context of disasters and catastrophes and in the public policies designed and implemented to address them.

Survival and development (Art. 6): All actions must ensure that children and adolescents have the necessary elements to survive and develop fully and safely, allowing them to reach their full potential.

Non-discrimination (Art. 2): In order to compensate for situations of disadvantage caused by factors of discrimination, public authorities must pay special and tailored attention to children and adolescents who are more likely to be excluded from post-emergency aid and resources⁴.

Participation (Art. 12): Children and adolescents, especially those living in municipalities most affected by the disaster, are directly concerned. Therefore, formal channels and processes must be established to promote and guarantee the participation of children and adolescents in the reconstruction process.

⁴ Committee on the Rights of the Child (2003). *General Comment No. 5: General measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC/GC/2003/5). United Nations.



Born into the climate crisis⁵

The scope and magnitude of the triple planetary crisis (climate change, biodiversity loss and widespread pollution) pose an urgent and systemic threat to children's rights worldwide⁶.

Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to climate change because their physical and psychological systems are still developing, making them especially susceptible to environmental stressors such as disease, water and food shortages, and disruption of access to basic social, health, education and protection services.

On a global scale, children born in 2020 are at least twice as likely to live a life marked by heat waves, river floods, droughts, crop losses, forest fires and tropical cyclones compared to their grandparents born in 1960. Achieving the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 °C by 2100 would prevent 5 million children worldwide from suffering unprecedented exposure to river flooding throughout their lives. The dana emergency is just a preview of what is to come if not further action is taken.

Despite this, children and adolescents have very limited presence in climate and environmental policies, both at international and national levels. Few regulatory frameworks include explicit references to children's rights or the need for enhanced protection against climate risks. Likewise, there are few strategies that integrate child-specific indicators, child-centred adaptation measures, or mechanisms for child and youth participation in climate action.

In this regard, we believe that the current proposal for a State Pact on Climate Emergency is a powerful and necessary initiative that should include all of these considerations.

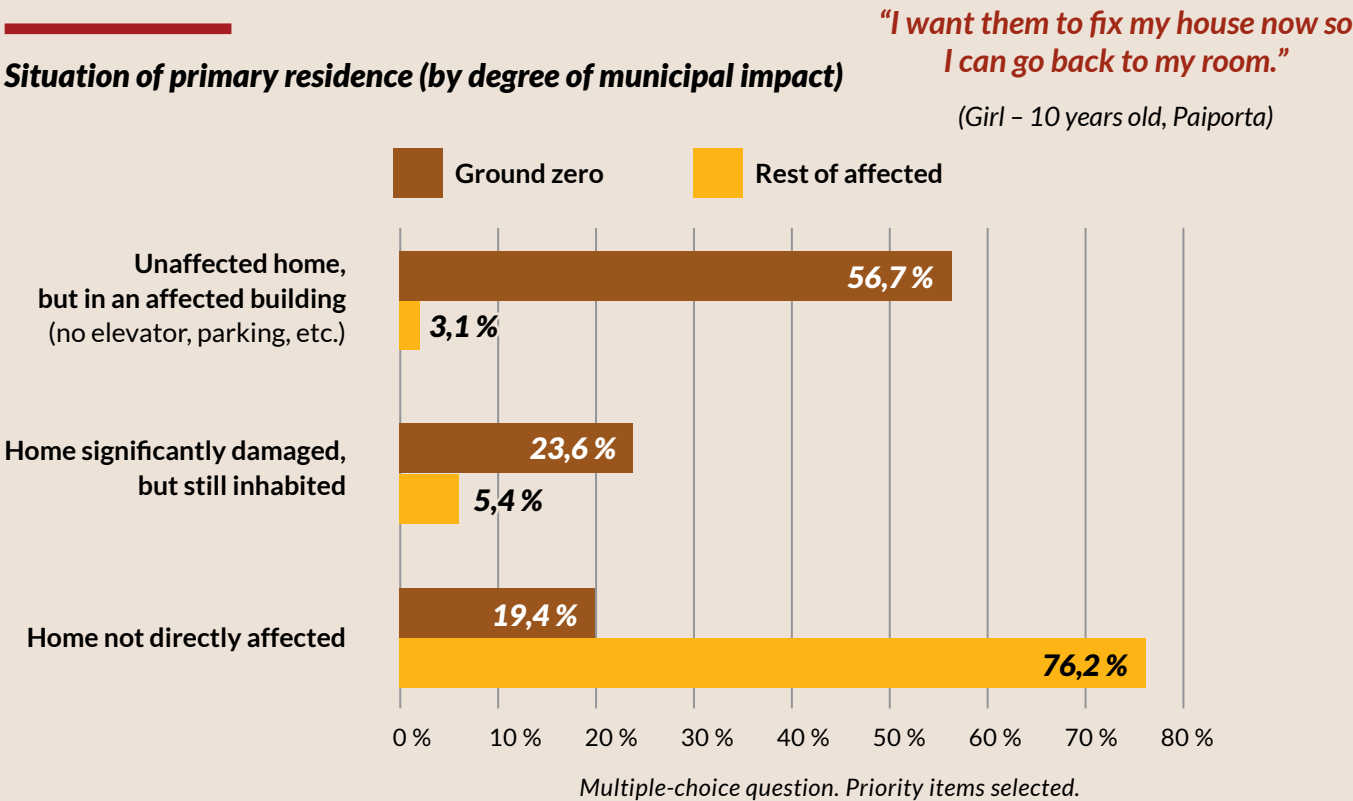
⁵ Save the Children (2025). *Born into the Climate Crisis 2. An Unprecedented Life*.

⁶ Committee on the Rights of the Child (2023). *General Comment No. 26: On the rights of the child and the environment, with a focus on climate change* (CRC/C/GC/26). United Nations.

MATERIAL CONDITIONS, LIVELIHOODS AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT OF FAMILIES

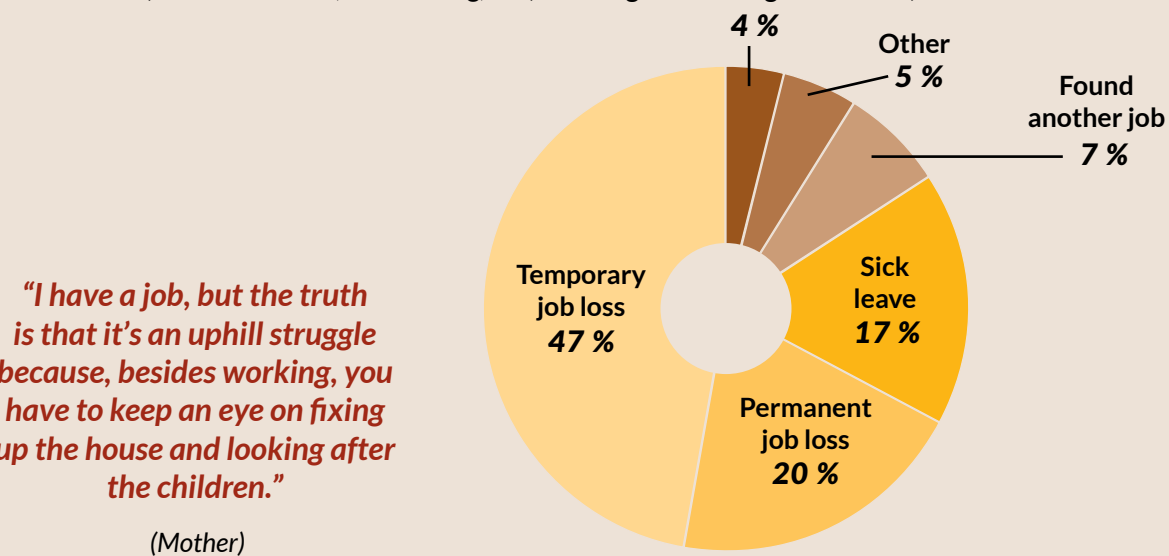
Families with dependent children and adolescents were suddenly forced to confront the consequences of a devastating blow that destroyed their homes and deeply disrupted the local productive fabric. In this context, it is important to highlight both the role of social benefits and aid programs that were implemented, as well as the crucial contribution of support networks in the recovery process.

Situation of primary residence (by degree of municipal impact)

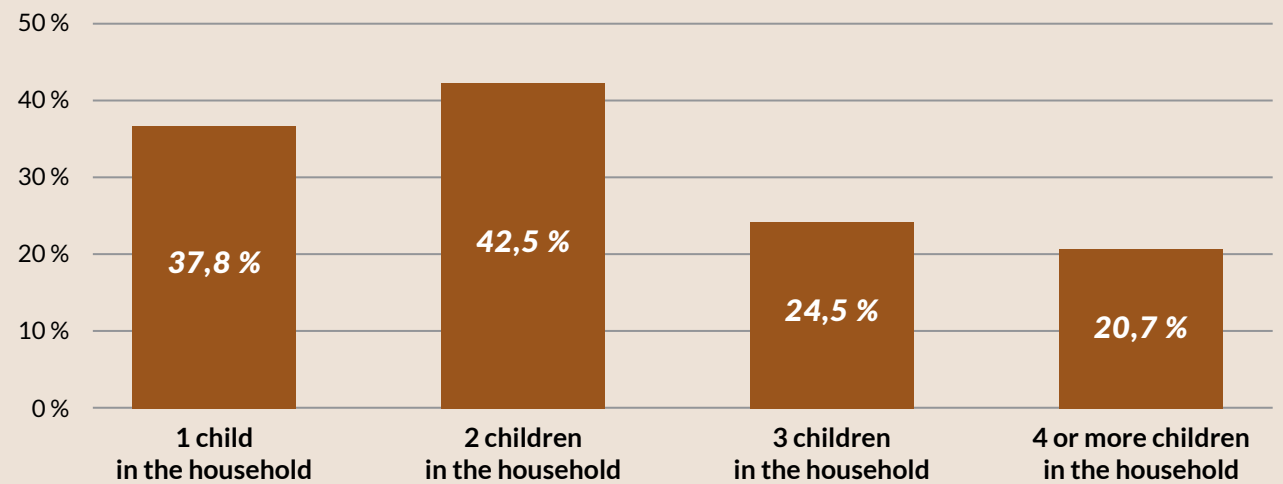


Employment situation affected by the floods

Relocation (to another office, teleworking, etc.) or change in working conditions (increase or decrease in workload)



Saving capacity for at least two months based on the number of children and adolescents in the household⁷

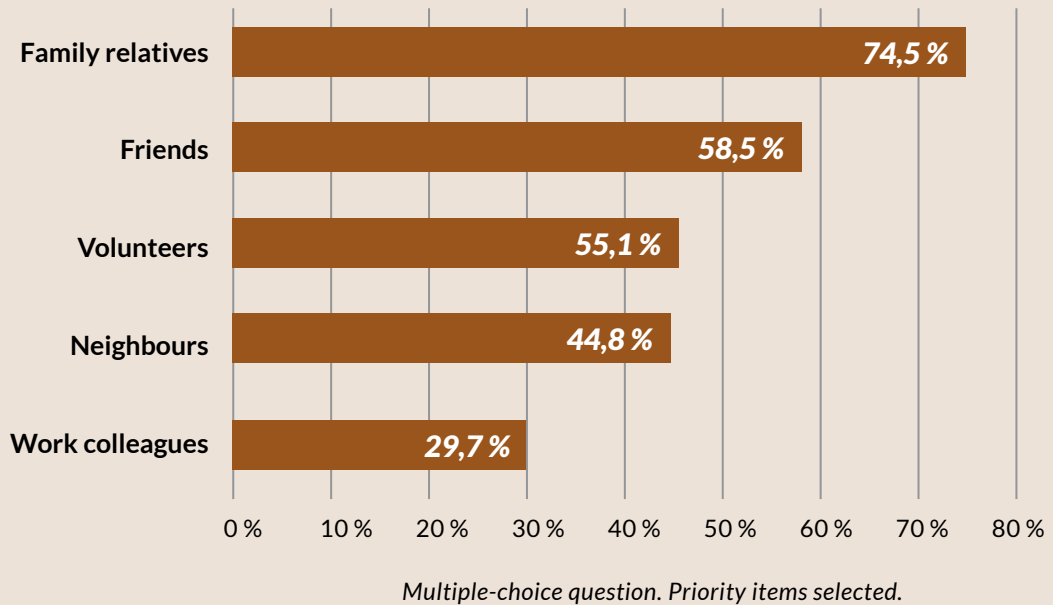


7 Percentage of families (differentiated by number of children and adolescents in the household) who claim to have sufficient savings for two months.

"Social protection mechanisms are not reaching all groups equally."

(Policymaker)

Community agents who have provided support to the family



"It's really good that the community helped, that we all supported each other."

(Teenager – 14 years old, Utiel)

HOUSING

- 15,969 homes affected (of which 1,530 were declared uninhabitable and 524 were evacuated due to structural damage). Almost 15% of the families surveyed (355 out of 2,398) reported losing their homes as a result of the floods.
- One in four families (24.6%) consider their home to be less safe for children and teenagers than before the floods. In this regard, four out of five families surveyed (80.3%) in municipalities in ground zero live in buildings that are still awaiting repairs (without a lift or a garage) or directly in homes that have been severely affected, but in which they have to continue living.
- At the time of writing this report, many families are still unable to return to their homes, with temporary rehousing that depends mainly on their family and friends' networks and places a greater burden on them in terms of daily travel and stress (both psychological and financial).
- This situation has highlighted the specific vulnerability of families with irregular migration status: homes (some shared) on the ground floor (mostly affected) without a certificate of occupancy, as well as facing obstacles and difficulties in receiving related aid.

EMPLOYMENT

- 31,000 people were affected by temporary layoffs due to force majeure.
- Of the total number of people surveyed who reported a change in their employment status due to the floods, 47% managed to recover their jobs after a period of unemployment, while 20% have not yet been able to do so.
- Several related problems have been identified, such as a significant loss of purchasing power (situational poverty and reinforced poverty) and increased burdens related to work-life balance (which often stem from the need to juggle paid employment, home repair tasks and care responsibilities), especially in the case of single-parent households.
- 21.9% of families with dependent children in the Valencian Community were already affected by working poverty (below the poverty line despite having a job)⁸ before the floods. With the socio-economic and productive fabric torn apart, job and life instability in the most affected areas have reached even higher levels.

⁸ National Institute of Statistics (2025). Living Conditions Survey (ECV) 2024.

SOCIAL BENEFITS AND AID PACKAGES

- The Valencian Regional Government has mobilised €55 million for specific aid to families and children affected by the emergency. However, many of those surveyed reported difficulties in accessing and/or obtaining various benefits and aid due to lack of information, procedural complexity or eligibility requirements they cannot meet or prove. In some cases, problems have been identified regarding delays in the disbursement of financial aid and the insufficiency of the amounts granted.
- Families' capacity to save has been greatly affected, with the intensity of this impact directly related to the number of children and adolescents in the household (large families are the most affected).
- The Administration is focusing on simplifying procedures to remove access barriers and on adopting a comprehensive approach to the issue. This includes streamlining emergency aid and benefits, but also providing them with employability and community support measures.
- Two particularly vulnerable groups have been identified: single-parent families (with an AROPE rate of 56.2% in the Valencian Community) and families of migrant origin (more than 22,000 of whom were able to benefit from the extraordinary regularisation process open between February and May 2025).

SUPPORT NETWORKS AND VOLUNTEERING

- Volunteer work, although uncoordinated, was a differentiating factor during the early days of the response. The solidarity shown still stands out as a very positive aspect. Families continue to express their appreciation and gratitude to those who helped.
- Sixty-eight per cent of young people (aged 12 to 21) have participated or continue to participate in volunteer work or emergency response. This active role in the recovery of their immediate environment has been a significant source of empowerment and emotional well-being for the adolescent population.
- In the ground zero municipalities, only 41.7% of surveyed individuals reported having been able to rely, without difficulties, on support from family and friends (such as housing rehabilitation, childcare, and care for other dependents) during the first weeks of the emergency.
- More than one in four (26.7%) of the families surveyed consider that they still require external support, but do not currently have it.

“The best help came from neighbours and volunteers; without them, it would have been impossible to get through this.”

(Mother)

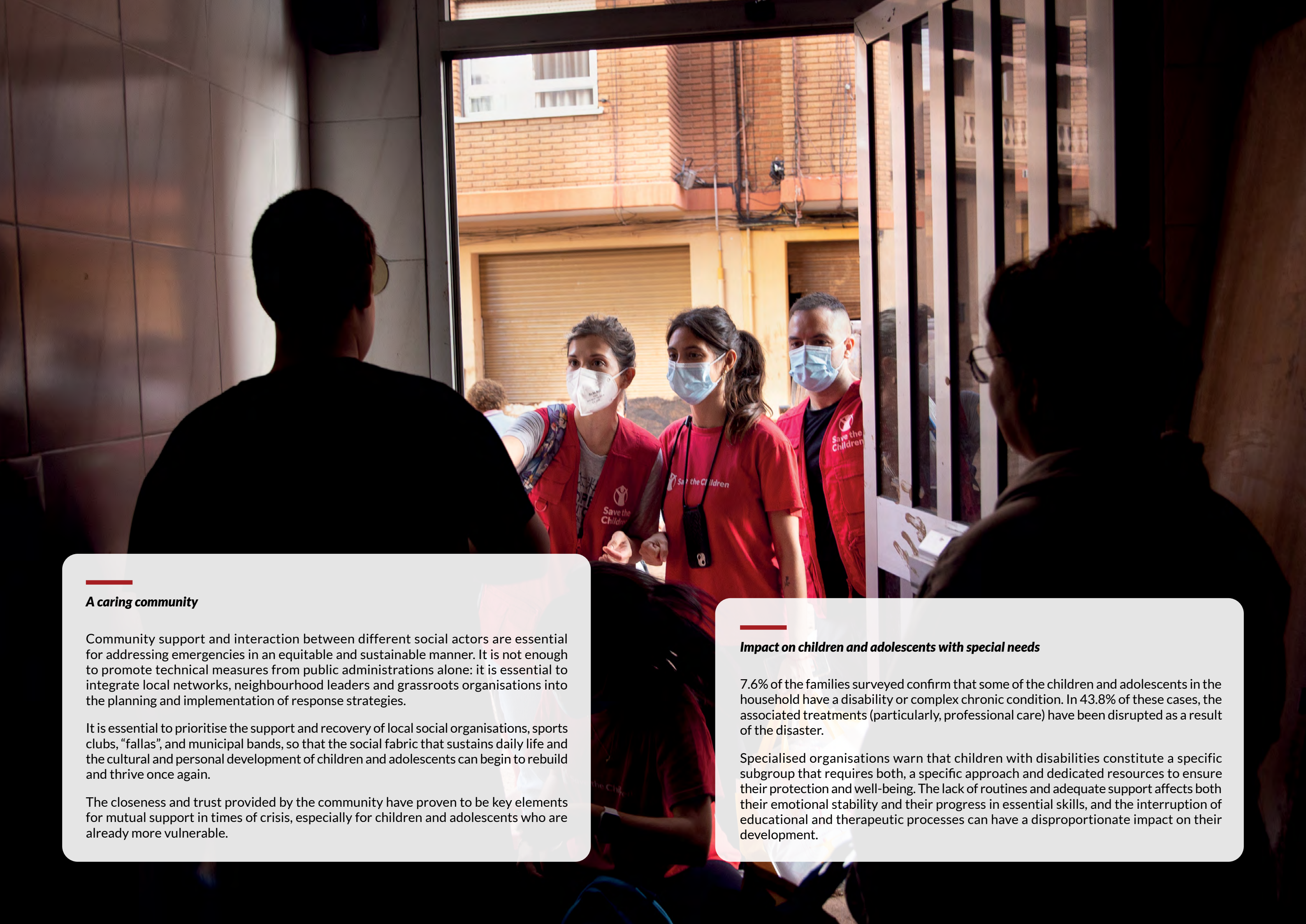
Save the Children's cash transfer model

Our programme to restore the livelihoods of affected families through cash transfers has been implemented and adjusted in different phases:

1. **Emergency:** Coverage of the most urgent immediate and priority needs, with no requirement to justify expenditure (€702,800 - 584 families, 1,082 children and adolescents).
2. **Autonomous economic reconstruction:** Programme developed jointly with the Carmen Gandarias Foundation to provide significant financial support to families directly affected by the floods. Lines of action included housing, vehicles and livelihoods/employment (€518,500 - 55 families).
3. **Recovery:** Natural evolution of our intervention model, with differentiated amounts depending on the specific needs of each family. It includes support lines for livelihoods/chronic vulnerability, housing and child wellbeing (from 1 September 2025, estimated reach of 60 families).

“In the end, the aid doesn't even cover half of what we've lost.”

(Mother)



A caring community

Community support and interaction between different social actors are essential for addressing emergencies in an equitable and sustainable manner. It is not enough to promote technical measures from public administrations alone: it is essential to integrate local networks, neighbourhood leaders and grassroots organisations into the planning and implementation of response strategies.

It is essential to prioritise the support and recovery of local social organisations, sports clubs, “fallas”, and municipal bands, so that the social fabric that sustains daily life and the cultural and personal development of children and adolescents can begin to rebuild and thrive once again.

The closeness and trust provided by the community have proven to be key elements for mutual support in times of crisis, especially for children and adolescents who are already more vulnerable.

Impact on children and adolescents with special needs

7.6% of the families surveyed confirm that some of the children and adolescents in the household have a disability or complex chronic condition. In 43.8% of these cases, the associated treatments (particularly, professional care) have been disrupted as a result of the disaster.

Specialised organisations warn that children with disabilities constitute a specific subgroup that requires both, a specific approach and dedicated resources to ensure their protection and well-being. The lack of routines and adequate support affects both their emotional stability and their progress in essential skills, and the interruption of educational and therapeutic processes can have a disproportionate impact on their development.

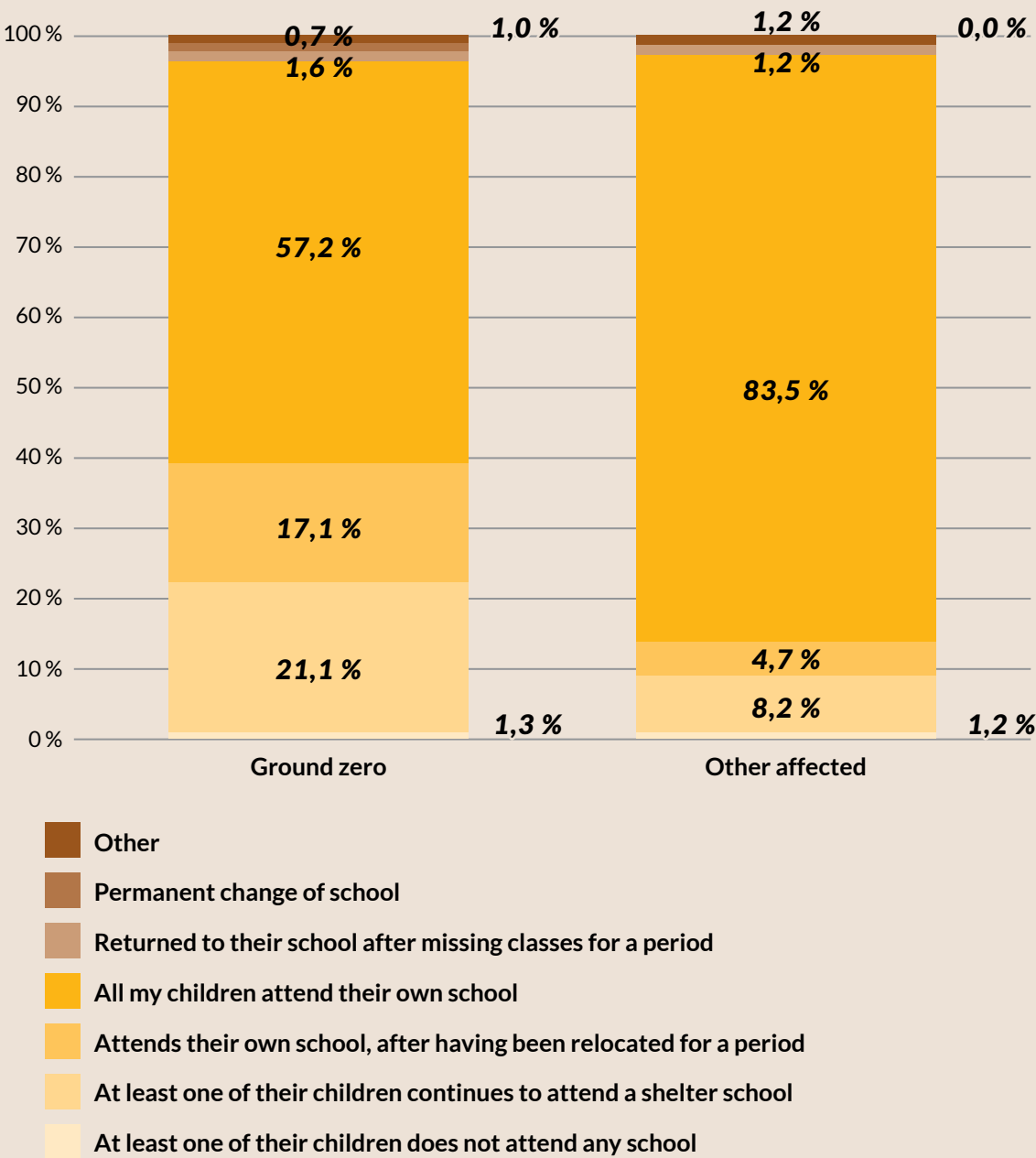
EDUCATION SYSTEM

"It has been impossible for the children to catch up on the curriculum; they are way behind."
(Mother)

Suddenly, everything was reduced to rubble and mud. Schools had to close. Students took at least several weeks to return to in-person classes, resuming an educational process that, under the circumstances, could no longer be considered the central focus.

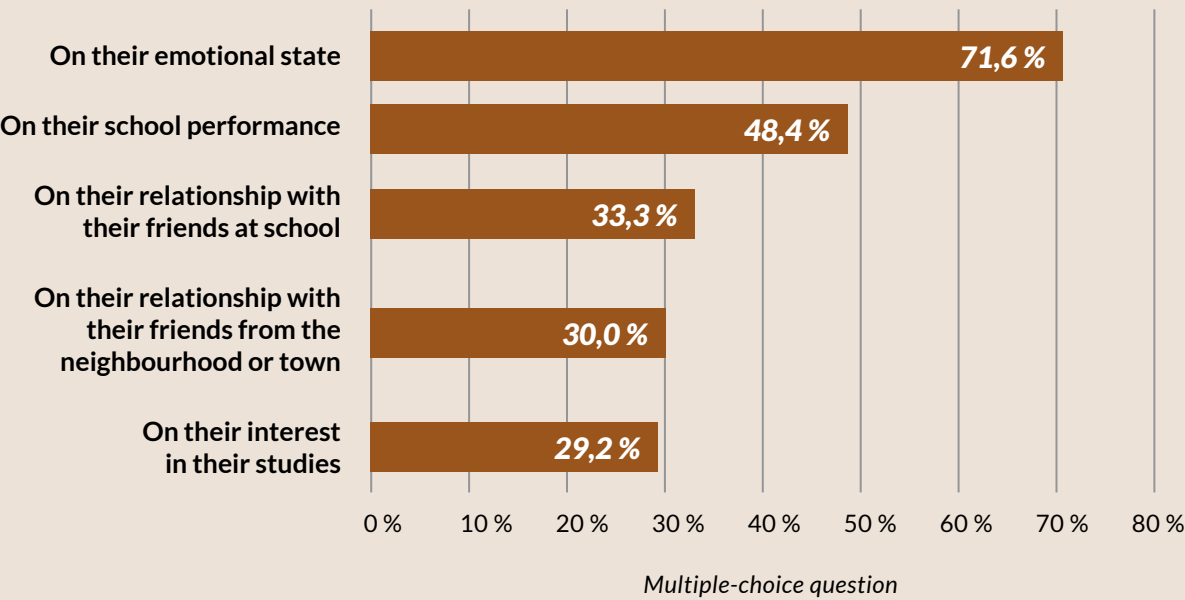
Educational centres have proven to be one of the key pillars of normalisation after the emergency, providing environments for socialisation and protection that still await to be a priority in the reconstruction process.

Most affected school situation at home (by degree of municipal impact)⁹



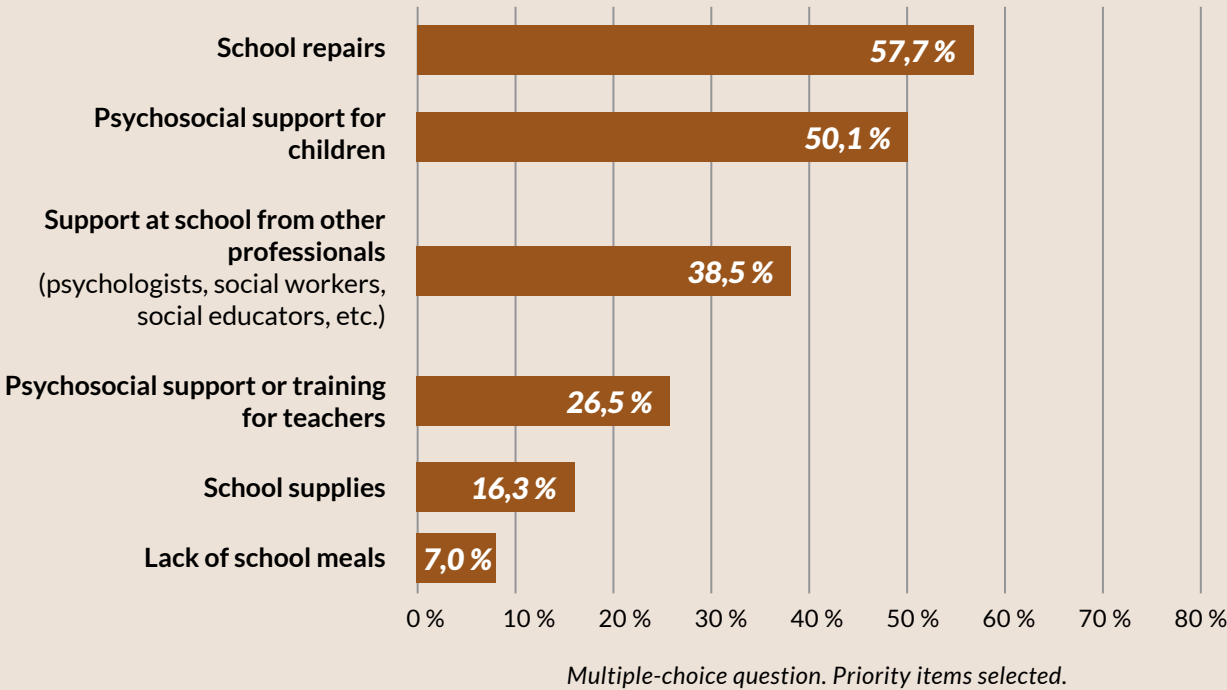
⁹ Situation that the family perceives as the most serious in relation to the schooling of the children, girls and adolescents in the home.

Impact of educational discontinuity



"When classes resumed, it was like breathing again. The children needed that routine."
(Mother)

Main current educational needs



INTERRUPTION AND DISCONTINUITY

- More than 48,000 non-university students in the affected areas experienced disruption of the 2024/2025 school year, with weeks and even months with schools remaining closed for weeks, and in some cases, months. Most students were able to return to class before Christmas. These prolonged interruptions have deepened existing inequalities and increased the risk of school dropout.
- One in five families (21.1%) in municipalities in ground zero reported that, by the end of last year, at least one child or adolescent in the household was still attending a temporary school facility. Meanwhile, 17.1% had returned to their original school after a period of relocation.
- The effects of the floods have had a direct impact on the quality of education, with the lack of school materials (in the initial phase) and the absence of socio-emotional emerging as key barriers. Approximately half of the families (52.4%) report that their children have fallen behind in their learning: inability to cover the syllabus, lack of preparation for assessment, etc.

"At first I said, 'Look, there's no way we're going to class tomorrow,' but when I saw that the school was destroyed, I thought, 'What am I going to do now? Where am I going to study?'"

(Teenager – 16 years old, Utiel)

SCHOOLS: BEYOND LEARNING

- Education centres offer more than academic knowledge: they provide an environment of stability, security and psychosocial support. In a context of crisis, attending school helps to restore a sense of normality and hope.
- The reopening of schools and high schools also brought relief to many families, who were finally able to reconcile their work and family life and focus more on recovery efforts, in a broader sense. There is widespread recognition of teachers as key agents of support in the recovery process.
- Not being able to attend school has had a particularly negative impact on the emotional (71.6%) and relational (33.3%) well-being of pupils.
- Schools also provide other essential services, such as school meals, which guarantee the right to healthy food for the most socio-economically vulnerable pupils. In October 2024, 18,000 children and adolescents in the areas affected by the floods were beneficiaries of school meal grants.

"Schools have done much more than just teach; they have been attentive to how the children were doing."

(Mother)

PLANS TO REINFORCE AND RECONSTRUCT INFRASTRUCTURE

- 115 schools suffered damage, 8 of which were declared in a catastrophic state (currently in the process of demolition). 3,000 students from ground zero will attend prefabricated classrooms for several academic years.
- As of today, the most important educational needs identified by families are the repair of schools (57.7%), psychosocial support for students (50.1%) and staff reinforcement (38.5%).
- The emergency has reduced effective learning time and will have a "summer slide" effect among the students in most disadvantaged situations due to unequal access to other educational and cultural activities. The return to the classrooms in this first post-dana school year must prioritise both equity and the psychosocial well-being of all students.

"I want to know when they are going to rebuild my children's school."

(Mother)



Gender dimension

The extra care work required by the emergency has fallen mainly on mothers and other women in the family (40.9% compared to 5.5% fathers). This disproportionate burden on women is confirmed by professionals working in direct intervention, who report many cases of girls taking over the role of “older sister” and mothers facing serious difficulties in combining productive work and recovery tasks (including, of course, childcare).

Furthermore, our international analyses indicate that extreme weather events do not impact boys and girls equally; girls are more vulnerable to the consequences in terms of health, education, and social and economic security.

All participants in the discussion groups conducted for the research that informs this report were mothers.

Growing up in a state of constant emergency

Many children, and particularly, adolescents, in the regions affected by the floods are reliving symptoms they already experienced during the COVID-19 lockdown. Faced with a succession of crises, they were not particularly surprised by the widespread power outage in April 2025, while continuing to be exposed to the insecurity conveyed by television and social media, including the news of armed conflicts such as those in Ukraine and Gaza.

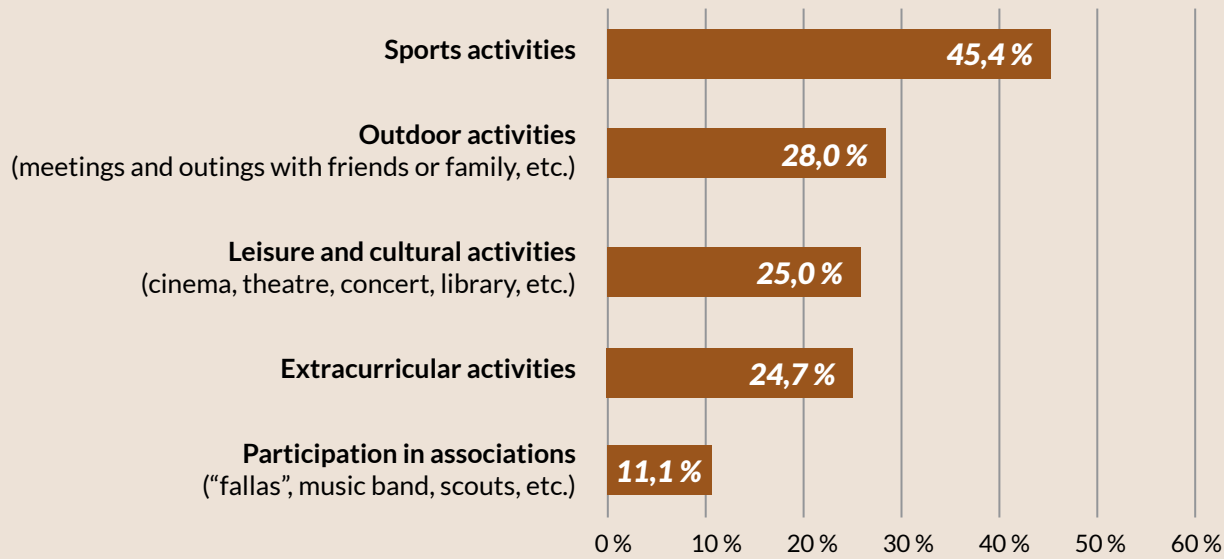
Ultimately, they are forced to adapt to a situation of continuous emergency, internalising a permanent state of uncertainty and alertness, and anticipating new crises or episodes of violence.

This accumulated burden of successive emergencies takes a toll on their mental health: repeated or multiple exposure to disasters significantly increases the risk of psychosocial and mental health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder.

PROTECTION AND MENTAL HEALTH

There is broad consensus among specialists working in emergencies response, such as the one we experienced on 29 October 2024, that the wounds that last the longest are psychological and emotional. Children and adolescents are always a vulnerable group, but in these contexts, it is particularly important to focus on their mental health and protection.

Activities that children and adolescents have stopped doing as a result of the floods

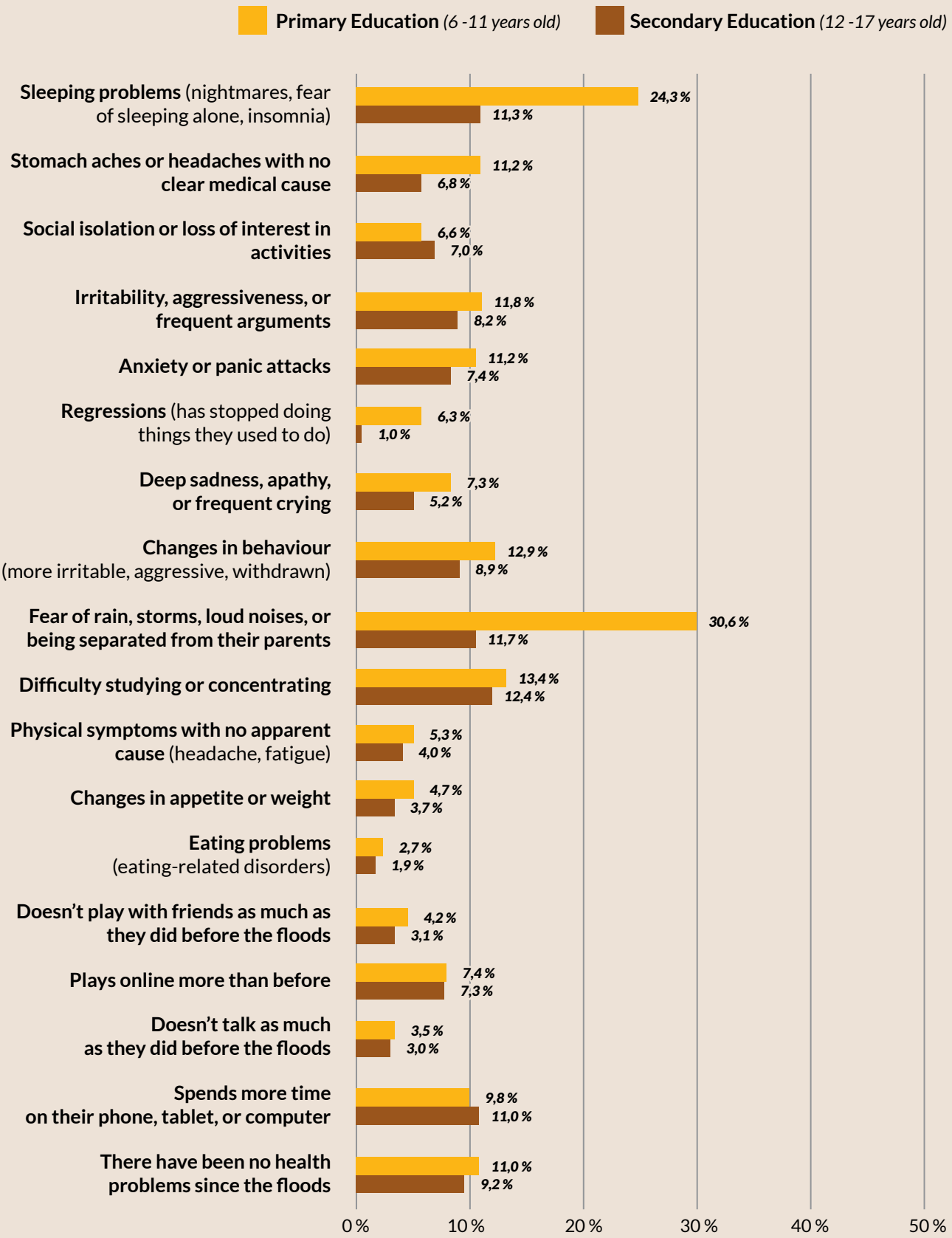


Multiple-choice question. Priority items selected.

"We need to rebuild spaces where children can feel safe and play without fear."

(Mother)

Main health and behavioural problems of children and adolescents (by educational level)



Multiple-choice question. Priority items selected.

CREATING FRIENDLY
AND SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

- By order of relevance, children and adolescents in the municipalities affected by the emergency have stopped participating in sports (45.4%), outdoor activities (28.0%), recreational or cultural activities (25.0%) and extracurricular activities (24.7%).
- Professionals do not understand why, even today, many of the spaces where children and adolescents interact and develop have still not been rehabilitated. During these months, many recreational activities have had to be organised outside the affected municipalities.
- The creation of safe, protective and nurturing environments for children and adolescents, both in the immediate response and in the long term, goes beyond a regulatory requirement; it is essential to provide a multidisciplinary alternative that reduces the psycho-emotional impact of the emergency on younger populations.

“We have seen an increase in cases of violence, in the detection of cases. Many families were already in situations of prior vulnerability, where there were existing indicators of potential risk.”

(Professional – Third Sector)

PROTECTION
AGAINST VIOLENCE

- Our work as an international NGO provides us with solid evidence of an increased risk of violence, abuse, exploitation or neglect arising from the vulnerability that follows disasters and emergencies. This issue is closely linked to the closure of public spaces for children (such as educational centres), which reduces opportunities to detect these situations.
- Various professionals working in direct intervention in response to disasters confirm this hypothesis: they note a rise in suspected cases of violence, particularly within the family environment. The psychological strain and high levels of stress faced by households in crisis contexts can lead to the use of negative coping mechanisms, which increases the risk of domestic violence towards children and adolescents. The first weeks of home confinement tend to intensify these family tensions, creating unsafe environments for children.
- Child victims are still not placed at the centre of the response: there is neither specialised professional intervention nor a holistic and comprehensive approach to their care. Regional systems are still in the process of implementing the measures established by Organic Law 8/2021 of 4 June, on comprehensive protection for children and adolescents against violence.

“When it thunders, I get very nervous and can’t sleep.”

(Boy, 9 years old – Paiporta)

CHILD AND
ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH

- In terms of health and behavioural issues detected by families, children mainly report fear of rain and loud noises (30.6%), nightmares and insomnia (24.3%) and even regression (no longer using skills they had already acquired) (6.3%).
- Similarly, adolescents report difficulty concentrating (12.4%), spending more time with electronic devices (mobile phones, tablets and computers) (11.0%), or withdrawing into social isolation (7.0%).
- These behavioural changes, such as fears of new floods and darkness, persistent anxiety or stress, and screen dependency on screens as coping mechanisms, are also being detected by professional teams.
- Social and emotional support for children and adolescents has been very poor, with too much reliance on and everything has been left to their individual resilience. Currently, the main concern of families (45.7%) is the emotional state of their children.
- The mental health care system lacks a sufficient number of professionals capable of addressing these issues in a comprehensive manner (beyond the purely clinical intervention) and who specialise in children and adolescent care.

“It is essential to maintain specialised psychological support programmes and integrate them into the educational and social system.”

(Professional – Third Sector)

Save the Children’s Child-Friendly Spaces Model

In the emergency caused by the floods, our Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) are playing an essential role in mitigating risks and protecting children and adolescents, providing them with emotional, recreational and educational support in a safe environment. So far, we have intervened in different areas considered to be priorities due to the extent of the damage: Benetússer, La Torre, Massanassa, Sant Marcel·lí, Paiporta (2) and Sedaví.

Through the specific adaptation of the international We Thrive methodology, which combines protection, education and psychosocial support approaches, these spaces promote children’s well-being and the recovery of a sense of normality and control over their lives. Our CFS have provided support to 584 children and adolescents, intervened directly with 406 families and ensured the educational continuity of 1,899 beneficiaries.

These established resources have demonstrated their ability to function simultaneously as centres for protection, education and wellbeing, with evidence of multiplier effects that transcend direct intervention.

Training professional teams

During the first weeks of the response, we developed training capsules that offered fundamental notions on psychosocial intervention and child protection in emergency contexts to 438 professionals from the Social Services of the Generalitat Valenciana. Later, we extended this training to a total of 203 volunteers and workers in direct intervention with key insights on child safeguarding.

We are currently designing a specific training project at the municipal level, with the aim of incorporating a child and adolescent rights approach into the review of policies and protocols being carried out in the disaster zone.



Image: Pablo Martí

CONCLUSIONS: ONE YEAR AFTER THE MUD

Twelve months after the disaster, Save the Children raises two clear and pressing questions: Are the rights of children and adolescents being guaranteed in this post-disaster reconstruction phase? Will children and adolescents be taken into account and prioritised in the review of protocols and policies for a better response to future emergencies?

Some of the regulatory and strategic elements that have recently been implemented across different levels of governance (from national to local, including regional) highlight key and necessary elements such as specialisation in target groups, coordination among actors to leverage synergies and a comprehensive, inclusive action to ensure no one is left behind.

*“The emergency has reminded us that social policies must be preventive, not just reactive.
Permanent coordination is the best way to protect the population.”*

(Professional – Third Sector)

Good practice:

Information adapted to children and adolescents, and an inclusive culture of self-protection

In Chile and other coastal countries, the UNESCO-led initiative on tsunami signage and evacuation routes strengthens public preparedness. Through standardised, easy-to-understand signs, everyone can identify hazard zones, safe routes and meeting points. The strategy is complemented by risk maps, information brochures and training programmes. Regular drills ensure that communities practise organised evacuation. The initiative also promotes the recognition of natural warning signs such as the receding of the sea. Altogether, these measures foster a culture of effective and sustainable self-protection, which also includes children and adolescents.

However, reconstruction efforts continue to focus primarily on the condition of major damaged infrastructure and on mitigating the impact on the province's economic and productive fabric.

These issues are important and fundamental. But so is prioritising students and repairing and rebuilding new schools and educational centres as soon as possible, expanding child and adolescent mental health sources, and ensuring support for families, particularly the ones in most vulnerable situations, so that they can recover their livelihoods.

“It will never be possible to speak of a return to normality because the needs of these students, of these children, in terms of the experience they have endured and overcoming it, have never been addressed.”

(Professional – Education)

At Save the Children, we will continue working to ensure that public administrations are prepared for the effects of the climate emergencies we will face in the future, both in Valencia and across the country.

We do so by promoting a preventive approach, but also from the deep conviction that a better response is possible. That we hold the keys to placing children, adolescents and their families at the centre of the response, ensuring that all their rights are upheld.

Good practice:

Non-Take-Up in Emergency Contexts

In the case of Hurricane Katrina (USA, 2005), thousands of displaced families did not access housing aid due to administrative complexity. In response, mobile Disaster Recovery Centres were established, providing multilingual services and free legal advice. This measure facilitated the inclusion of African-American and Latino communities who had initially been excluded from official aid.

Good practice:

Reconstruction of schools: applying the Build Back Better principle

During the floods in **Germany (2013)**, several Länder rehabilitated nursery schools and kindergartens applying the **Build Back Better criteria**. Priority was given to the construction of elevated infrastructures, reinforced drainage systems and the use of renewable energy, which reduced vulnerability to new floods and improved the sustainability of educational facilities.

“Many of the psychological phenomena children are experiencing now are not pathologies, they are natural and normal reactions to a catastrophe they have suffered. Therefore, this is a structural issue that can be addressed.”

(Professional – Third Sector)

Let us try to prevent that future floods and torrential rains from once again covering our towns and cities with mud. Let us work to be prepared as a society that is aware of the risks we face. Let us show mutual support and resilience if tragedy strikes.

We owe a debt to the children and adolescents who, with surprise and innocence, lived through an unprecedented disaster. Let us act now, and never again forget those who need us the most.

Good practice:

Addressing Mental Health Impacts – Towards Greater Specialisation in Child and Adolescent Care

After the **tsunami in Japan (2011)**, the government and Tohoku University implemented a programme specialising in child and adolescent mental health. **Mobile teams of child psychologists and psychiatrists** were deployed to offer group therapy, resilience-building activities with teachers, and family support. In addition, a **long-term follow-up system** was established, helping to prevent the chronic effects of trauma in children and adolescents.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Take decisive action in the face of the climate crisis and its consequences on the rights of children and adolescents, strengthening the long-term response to reconstruction.

- **Assess the effectiveness and impact of public policies implemented** in both the initial response and reconstruction phase, **gathering evidence and lessons learned** to avoid mistakes in future emergencies. Establish a realistic and applicable prevention plan in the short term.
- **Recognise the right of children and adolescents to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment**, defining mitigation and adaptation measures in the face of climate change.
- Develop awareness campaigns to **strengthen citizens' self-protection capacity**, with adapted and easily understandable materials and information for children and adolescents.
- **Train technical teams in emergency response**, incorporating child and adolescent rights-based, participatory and gender-sensitive approaches.
- Establish and maintain long-term **interdepartmental and inter-administrative coordination mechanisms**, open to civil society participation, to define and monitor reconstruction tasks.
- **Identify specific situations of vulnerability affecting children**, adolescents and their families that require the establishment of concrete support measures.
- **Prioritise** the rehabilitation of leisure facilities, spaces and resources, such as green spaces, parks and sports areas, **to restore the social dynamics of children and adolescents as soon as possible**.
- **Invest in urban planning that is adapted to the needs of children and adolescents and resilient to climate change**. Ensure that new neighbourhoods, schools and urban public spaces are inclusive, sustainable and future-ready, incorporating a gender perspective in their design.
- Promote the **systematic collection of disaggregated data by age and gender** to monitor the impact of reconstruction measures on children and adolescents in the affected regions.
- **Encourage the participation of children and adolescents in response and recovery activities**, fostering their sense of belonging and resilience. Through participatory processes such as the creation of youth committees, dialogue sessions and group dynamics, adolescents can express their ideas, set priorities and design initiatives that benefit both themselves and their community.

Prioritise the recovery of the socio-economic situation of families with dependent children affected by the emergency, incorporating a community-based approach in the response.

- Promote measures to support the rehabilitation of damaged housing, expanding direct financial assistance to affected families to facilitate necessary repairs, **with priority given to households with dependent children. Increase rental assistance and broaden housing alternatives.**
- Ensure personalised plans and **assistance for job seekers, with individual pathways** tailored to each family's circumstances and linked to the needs of rebuilding the socio-economic fabric, **with a focus on single-parent households.**
- **Manage public aid with speed and efficiency**, with a special focus on **tackling the barriers to access** faced by many families in vulnerable situations (lack of registration, migrants and administrative irregularities, etc.).
- **Ensure that information about available aid and benefits reaches families**, through proactive communication (specific campaigns and various outreach channels) and adapted messaging about available resources.
- Increase social protection that is sensitive to the needs of children and adolescents, with the ambition of **progressively achieving universal benefits for children and adolescents**, to protect them from the long-term harm caused by climate and other factors at a critical stage of their human development.
- **Leverage the current reform process of the Valencian Inclusion Income with a child supplement to include the new poverty profiles** that arise from the emergency. Review eligibility criteria and **analyse the non-take-up in this specific situation.**
- **Increase the financial and human resources available and specialised within the social services system**, especially in municipal primary care centres most affected by the emergency.
- In this post-emergency reconstruction phase, **promote the inter-administrative coordination and public-private collaboration to pilot innovative initiatives** that place families and children and adolescents at the centre of a multidisciplinary intervention.
- **Promote collaboration with local entities in the reconstruction, using a community-based approach** to ensure a more sustainable response.

Promote a more resilient education system through the reconstruction of adapted infrastructure and the implementation of post-emergency support plans and financial aid.

- **Avoid educational discontinuity and minimise temporary relocations to other schools.** Mitigate the impact of displacement on students through coordinated efforts among relevant departments and professionals.
- **Design emergency preparedness plans that ensure the safety of educational communities and the continuity of learning,** including teacher training and a flexible, adapted curriculum.
- Support schools in developing and implementing emergency protocols, **integrating a child-centred perspective that guarantees a comprehensive and coordinated response.**
- **Integrate climate resilience into educational planning,** with evidence-based approaches that respond to the needs of children and adolescents.
- **Develop specialised training programmes for teachers and educational teams at all levels,** focusing on emergency education, child protection and adapted methodologies. **Ensure that students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to deal with emergency situations.**
- **Prioritise the reconstruction of damaged educational infrastructure following the Build Back Better principle,** offering greater security against future disasters.
- Recognise in legislation **the importance of early childhood education as an integral part of an equitable education system and an element of work-life balance,** ensuring adequate resources and support for its recovery in municipalities affected by the emergency.
- **Ensure and expand the aid provided through the education system, particularly school meal subsidies,** aiming to reach all students living in poverty

Ensure the protection of children and adolescents, leveraging the post-flood context to strengthen available resources and the training of professional teams, especially in the area of child and adolescent mental health.

- **Develop and implement safe and child-friendly environments** across all spaces where children and adolescents are regularly present, **ensuring their safety, well-being, and protection from all forms of violence.**
- **Establish coordination protocols** between social services, schools, and local organisations **to integrate these spaces as complementary resources** within local child protection systems.
- Strengthen the evidence base to **improve our understanding of the links between climate change and violence against children and adolescents** through an intersectional lens that takes into account age, gender and disability.
- In light of the expected increase of violence cases in emergency-related risks, and based on the implementation of the provisions of Organic Law 8/2021 of June 4 on the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents against violence (LOPVI), **reinforce the training of professionals working with children and adolescents,** especially in the education sector, **focusing on the detection of potential cases of violence and the duty to report any suspicion.**
- Establish communication and reporting mechanisms that are safe, confidential, and accessible for all children and adolescents.
- In this post-emergency reconstruction phase, **strengthen the definition of roles and the specific dedication of key protection figures:** Well-being Coordinators (as defined by Igualtat i Convivència in the Valencian Community) in educational centres, and Protection Delegates in leisure and recreational spaces.
- **Ensure the disaster risk reduction and adaptation plans and strategies at all levels take into account the risks and protective factors affecting children and adolescents, as well as the mental health impacts of climate-related crises and stress.**
- **Continue increasing resources and specialised teams in child and adolescent mental health,** and ensure their long-term sustainability.
- **Guarantee effective coordination** across different levels of care and between prevention and early detection efforts, to provide more effective support. **Address both the immediate needs and the long-term emotional consequences of the emergency** on children and adolescents.

METHODOLOGICAL ANNEX

This study on the situation of families with children and adolescents in the areas affected by the emergency of 29 October 2024 has been developed by Save the Children and the University of Valencia. The research combines quantitative and qualitative approaches with the aim of providing a broad and contextualised overview of the effects of the floods on the daily lives, well-being and access to rights of the affected population.

Research design

The methodology adopted is based on a **mixed approach**, combining:

1. **Online self-administered questionnaire (phase II)**, targeted at families residing in the 103 municipalities declared as emergency areas by the Valencian Regional Government.
1. **Qualitative social research techniques (phases I and III)**, including focus groups and semi-structured interviews with various key actors, such as children and adolescents, families, and professionals in the fields of education, social services, and social entities.

Questionnaire

- **Target population:** adults responsible for households with children and young people residing in affected municipalities.
- **Sampling:** non-probabilistic, based on the snowball sampling methodology with voluntary participation via an online questionnaire¹⁰.
- **Application period:** from 26 May to 29 July 2025.
- **Instrument:** anonymous questionnaire, distributed via digital media and accessible to all families meeting the criteria of connection to an affected municipality interest in participating.
- **Geographical coverage:** although the questionnaire was sent to the 103 municipalities declared emergency areas, most of the responses came from the so-called “ground zero” area, comprising 16 municipalities that were severely affected (Alaquàs, Albal, Aldaia, Alfafar, Algemesí, Benetússer, Beniparrell, Catarroja, Chiva, Llocnou de la Corona, Massanassa, Paiporta, Picanya, Sedaví, Utiel and the southern districts of Valencia, added to the previous 15 based on the research team’s assessment).
- **Number of responses:** over 2,300 questionnaires were collected, providing a broad basis for descriptive and comparative analysis of the situation of families in the affected areas.
- **Multiple-choice questions:** Percentages reflect how often each option was selected. Since multiple answers were allowed, the total may not equal 100%.

Main variables

The online questionnaire collected information on:

- **Socio-economic and demographic context:** municipality of residence, work and children’s school, whenever these coincided with those declared as emergency areas.
- **Household structure:** composition by gender and age of adults and children/adolescents in the household.
- **Key topics:** general family situation, livelihoods, housing, employment, benefits and aid received, support networks, education, protection and mental health, care for children and young people with disabilities, as well as assessments of institutional and social assistance after the emergency.

Description of participants in Phase II

- On average, there are **232 adults per 100 households** (2.32 per household, SD=1.89): 123 men (1.23 per household, SD=0.85) and 130 women (2.3 per household, SD=0.73).
- There are **145 children per 100 households** (1.45 per household, SD=0.93): 91 girls (0.91 per household, SD=0.7) and 104 boys (1.04 per household, SD=0.88).
- Average age of households’ heads: **45 years and 9 months** (SD=9 years and 7 months). Men average of 48 years (SD=10.5), and women, 45 years (SD=9).

Description of participants in Phase I and Phase III

In addition, qualitative techniques were applied to deepen the understanding of the questionnaire results

- **Phase I:** five focus groups were held prior to the survey, with the following participant profiles: two groups with families, two groups with children and adolescents, and one group with professionals involved in social and educational care.
- **Phase III:** after the questionnaire, interviews and new focus groups were conducted to gather perceptions and assessments from different institutional and community actors:
 - **Interviews** with heads of social entities and public administration, including: DG of Inclusion and Development Cooperation of the Generalitat Valenciana, Catarroja Education Service, Paiporta Children and Youth Department, Aldaia Social Services, Benetússer Social Services, UNICEF Valencian Community Committee, FAMPÀ-València and Mancomunitat Intermunicipal de l’Horta Sud.
 - **Focus groups** with specific profiles: adolescents from Utiel, heads of social organisations and professionals from different fields

Ethical considerations

Participation in all phases of the study was voluntary and anonymous. Participants were informed about the objectives of the research and gave their prior consent to respond to the survey or participate in interviews and focus groups. The data is protected by Organic Law 3/2018, of 5 December, on the Protection of Personal Data and Guarantee of Digital Rights (Head of State, BOE no. 294, of 06/12/2018).

10 Goodman, L. (1961). Snowball Sampling. Ann. Math. Statist. 32 (1) 148 – 170.

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