

## FOREWORD

---

The year 2008 has seen significant global humanitarian challenges ranging from devastating natural disasters, escalating food and oil prices to worsening conflict situations.

In recent decades, the number and severity of natural disasters has increased significantly. In 2008 alone, there was a devastating hurricane season affecting the Caribbean, catastrophic earthquakes in China and Pakistan, a worst-ever cyclone disaster in Myanmar's history, floods and landslides in South Asia, and drought and floods in the Horn of Africa. Humanitarian situations have also deteriorated in several ongoing and protracted emergencies, including renewed fighting in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and worsening food insecurity in Zimbabwe.

Increasingly complex humanitarian crisis situations require emergency preparedness, rapid response, capacity-building of all actors involved and sound partnerships with governments, UN agencies, NGOs and communities. UNICEF is committed to further improving its capacity to protect children and women around the world and alleviate their suffering.

The *Humanitarian Action Report (HAR)* is UNICEF's annual appeal for children and women affected by emergencies around the world. The 2009 report comprises 36 countries in the six UNICEF regions.

Children and women suffer most from conflict, war, natural disasters and dire health and nutrition situations. We rely on your support to be able to respond effectively and efficiently to the needs of children and women affected by emergencies and to ensure their protection and well-being.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Ann Veneman'. The signature is fluid and extends to the right with a long horizontal stroke.

**Ann M. Veneman**  
*Executive Director*