

1. CRITICAL ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

The Government of Namibia declared a state of emergency on 5 March 2008 in light of the current localised floods in North and North-East Namibia, particularly in the regions of Omusati, Oshikoto, Oshana, Ohangwena and Caprivi. The floods are due to the above average rainfall during January and February 2008 and the inflow of water from the Cuvelai river system in southern Angola. The Northern regions of Namibia are the most densely populated areas in the country with an estimated 529,000 people living in the five regions. In addition, HIV rates across these regions vary between 20-40%. As a result the North has an estimated number of 170,000 orphans and vulnerable children, the majority of whom are affected by the current emergency. Overall, it is estimated that over 65,000 people could be displaced as their livelihoods and immediate environment have been badly affected, while another 200,000 people could be affected indirectly.

Due to the flooding health concerns are rising. According to the Director of Health in Oshana region, mosquitoes are breeding in the increasing numbers of pools of standing water. The outreach programmes of the Ministry of Health have been affected in Oshana, Ohangwena and Omusati. Nearly 70% of outreach points and 50% of health clinics have been cut off thus halting critical health services to the populations in these areas. In Engela district, the district hospital has been cut off due to incessant rains and flooding which has washed out the one bridge connecting the hospital to the main road. This prevents any vehicles from reaching the hospital. The Ministry has also reported a cholera outbreak in the flood-affected areas. So far a total of 30 cases have been confirmed out of a total of 188 suspected cases and two deaths have been reported. In Omusati region 8 of the 12 constituencies are under water and many of the people whose houses are under water are still living nearby their marooned or inundated homes with minimum shelter and means for subsistence.

In addition, there have been reports from a constituency in the Caprivi region of a drastic upsurge in the number of reported skin disorders and other diseases such as conjunctivitis, ringworm, respiratory tract infections and chicken pox. The issue of safe drinking water is paramount because drinking water sources have likely been contaminated. With the flooding, pit latrines, which are the most commonly used form of sanitation in the rural areas, have become unusable.

There has been substantial damage to roads and other vital infrastructure with a large number of people being affected:

- At least 44 schools in Omusati, 33 schools in Ohangwena and 20 schools in Oshana region are temporarily closed
- More than 26 clinics are inaccessible in one of the regions
- Loss of livestock is adversely affecting the livelihoods of people

The Emergency Management Unit in the Office of the Prime Minister has been monitoring the situation. Since the road network has been severely affected, government and military helicopters have already had to air-drop essential food commodities to the affected regions.

The state of emergency was declared while the Government and humanitarian actors including UN agencies were undertaking a joint assessment mission in the affected regions in order to quantify the extent of the damage and assess the most critical needs. The assessment was completed on the 11th of March 2008. A report with preliminary results and findings has been released and the UN consolidated response will be based on the joint Government – UN assessment report. While the government has pledged available resources to the tune of 37 million Nam dollars (5.3 million US dollars), there is a dire need for quality technical assistance in the area of water and sanitation, nutrition, logistics and coordination in order to ensure that any funds earmarked by government and donors is utilised properly.

As the rains continue, it is likely that the number of people in need will dramatically increase within a very short period of time. The affected population will require assistance including food and basic services in areas such as health, water and environmental sanitation and hygiene, education and protection.

In any disaster, including these floods, children suffer the most from waterborne diseases such as diarrhoea and malaria as well as from hunger, trauma and disruption in their learning process, and require urgent assistance in order to survive. Orphans and vulnerable children form significant numbers in these regions and require protection, access to schools and daily needs such as food and shelter.

Under the coordination of the Emergency Management Unit, UNICEF and its partners, including sister UN agencies and international and national non-governmental organisations, are working closely with the Government of Namibia to respond effectively to the developing crisis. Individual UN agencies including UNICEF are reprogramming available funding in order to meet the immediate needs of the population in these areas. A Situation Centre is currently being established within UNICEF and in the next week this unit is expected to expand to serve the emergency response plans of the UN.

UNICEF through this proposal is requesting an initial US\$ 1,200,000 to meet the immediate and medium-term needs of children and women throughout the affected areas.

2. UNICEF'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND ACTIONS

HEALTH AND NUTRITION & HIV/AIDS

Issues

Many children are without sufficient support to maintain their often already fragile health and nutrition condition. Overcrowding in resettlement and accommodation centres and lack of access to safe water and sanitation will increase the risk of water-borne diseases and acute respiratory infections. Namibia continues to be afflicted by health hazards and has serious potential threats of typhoid, malaria and cholera in the Northern parts of the country. Due to the disruption in outreach services and inaccessibility of health clinics there may be a rise in childhood diseases, especially in the absence of routine immunisation services. Other essential services such as maternal and newborn health will also suffer. Urgent medical supplies, nutrition support and preventive activities such as the provision of water purification tablets, malaria nets and key life-saving messages are needed to avert the loss of life.

In addition to the above health issues a cholera outbreak has been reported in the Onhangwena region. A total of 188 suspected cases have been reported and two deaths have been confirmed. The Government has set up Cholera Treatment Centres to curb the outbreak, but additional support is needed in the form of technical assistance and supplies for cholera treatment as well as cholera prevention. The army has been mobilised to do aerial surveys, provide supplies and set up tents and treatment centres together with the Ministry of Health.

Nutrition

The Northern region has the highest malnutrition rates in the country, with nearly one in four children stunted and wasting averaging 14% in the two worst affected areas. With increasing numbers of people displaced as well as the effects of the floods on the arable land, it is envisaged that malnutrition rates might increase over the coming months. Support for nutritional screening (MUAC) is needed and an assessment is necessary to measure the possible impact of the floods on the nutritional situation in the flood-affected regions.

HIV/AIDS

An estimated 20-40% of the population in the Northern regions suffer from HIV/AIDS. The current floods have further weakened the already fragile family coping mechanisms, social support systems and health services for people living with HIV/AIDS. Health services including the provision of ARV drugs have been severely disrupted and fear is mounting that in the absence of ARVs, a large part of the population will suffer from HIV related diseases.

Urgent Actions

- Distribution of life-saving and critical relief supplies such as ORS, malaria nets;
- Cholera treatment response including tents, cholera beds, and other support for service-delivery;
- Cholera prevention activities through social mobilisation including radio spots and distribution of IEC materials

- Nutritional surveillance to ensure continuous monitoring of the nutritional situation of the vulnerable groups particularly <5 year old children and to assess the nutritional needs of the population.
- Ensuring capacities to resume the immunization activities and incorporate distribution of Vitamin A.
- Provision of high-protein biscuits;
- Distribution of medical kits including emergency drugs;
- Communication of life-saving messages including breast-feeding, danger-signs related to ARI, etc.
- Operational support for medical teams
- Monitoring to ensure that women and girls have access to health services.
- Facilitate continuation of care for people living with AIDS

UNICEF will work closely with the Health Sector and WHO and WFP to determine the medium and longer-term actions as needed.

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

Issues

Ensuring access to water and sanitation for the affected populations is the key immediate challenge. Although access to safe water in the country averages 87%, the current floods have disrupted the water supply in flood-affected areas. Faced with limited options, people will therefore often resort to unsafe sources, which will affect children in particular and put their already fragile health status at great risk. With the increased pressure from expanding population in often crowded conditions, the lack of sanitation facilities means that hazardous water can breed disease. Dysentery and other water-borne diseases pose a particularly grave risk to children.

Urgent Actions

- Distribution of water purification tablets, jerry cans, water tanks;
- Trucking of potable water to flood affected areas;
- Establishment of safe water source including rehabilitation of existing water points;
- Provision of hygiene materials, including soap, buckets;
- Communication of life-saving messages including hand-washing and other hygiene messages;
- Provision of latrines;

EDUCATION

Issues

Schools have been affected by the flooding and ensuring children are able to continue the school year will be an important component of the humanitarian response. UNICEF's long experience in disasters has demonstrated that returning children to school as quickly as possible is one of the most valuable emergency interventions that can take place. Education is key to children's long-term opportunities, and must not be interrupted. In addition, schools provide children with a sense of normalcy, which is crucial to their psychological well-being. Schools will also provide a very important forum for communicating key life-saving messages, especially on protection of children and women and on HIV/AIDS.

Urgent Actions

- Provision of learning materials, school-in-a-box, didactic materials, play materials and teacher's kits;
- Provision of tents for temporary schools to ensure children can continue classes
- Provision of transportation
- HIV/AIDS prevention activities for the population in the flood-affected areas with specific emphasis on activities for adolescents.

PROTECTION

Issues

With the movement of the population into temporary areas, there is an increased risk to children and women to various forms of abuse and neglect. Additional support must therefore be provided to ensure populations which have already been devastated by floods are not also affected by violence or other forms of abuse which are often seen to increase in these situations.

Urgent Actions

- Provision of basic household kits to the most vulnerable families;
- Promote and spread messages on preventing abuse, neglect and violence and providing a supportive environment – through traditional leaders, media and local organisations.
- Support to local authorities to monitor incidences of gender-based violence and abuse and also provide a protection environment in resettlement and accommodation centres.

COORDINATION AND LOGISTICS

Issues

Coordination and logistics are critical components of the response to the floods in Namibia. UNICEF will consult with other UN partners and decide on the lead role for UNICEF after the receipt of the assessment report. UNICEF will continue to participate in monitoring the situation and will keep abreast of needs and respond accordingly.

Regarding the logistics in the flood-affected areas, the Government of Namibia has already allocated a number of helicopters through the Ministry of Defence to affected regions. As of now, roads are still accessible by car, but with the rising water levels alternative options need to be looked at including boats for transport of supplies and expansion of the helicopter fleet. UNICEF and WFP are currently consulting on the support to be provided to the Government to ensure all areas remain accessible and supplies can be delivered.

Urgent Actions

- Participation in monitoring and support of water and sanitation, nutrition, education and protection sector as well as in the timely and efficient delivery of supplies and management of data communication in key field bases;
- Facilitation of follow up assessments in these sectors;
- Procurement and distribution of communications and other operational equipment.

3. ESTIMATED FUNDING REQUIREMENTS FOR PLANNED ACTION FROM MARCH TO JUNE 2008

UNICEF is preparing to work with partners and sister agencies on a United Nations joint appeal that may be launched in the near future.

In the meantime and in order to respond quickly, UNICEF is requesting an initial US \$1,200,000 to meet the immediate needs of children and women throughout the affected areas for the coming five months.

Table 1. Estimated funding requirements from March to June 2008*

Sector	US\$
Health and Nutrition	250,000
Water and Sanitation	300,000
Education	200,000
Child Protection	150,000
Programme Communication	150,000
Coordination and Logistics	150,000
Total**	1,200,000

*Funds received against this appeal will be used to respond to both the immediate and the medium-term needs of children and women as outlined above. If UNICEF should receive funds in excess of the medium-term funding requirements for this emergency, UNICEF will use these funds to support other, under-funded emergencies.

** The total includes a maximum recovery rate of 7%. The actual recovery rate on contributions will be calculated in accordance with UNICEF's Executive Board Decision 2006/7 dated 9 June 2006.

Details of the Namibia emergency programme can be obtained from:

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