

**IMMEDIATE NEEDS:
FOR CHILDREN AND WOMEN AFFECTED BY THE
SOUTH ASIA EARTHQUAKE**



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URGENT REQUEST: US \$20,000,000

1. THE EARTHQUAKE EMERGENCY

At approximately 8:50 am on 8 October 2005, just as children in Pakistan, India and Afghanistan were beginning their classes, a massive earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale struck near the Pakistan-India border, causing widespread devastation and triggering a humanitarian catastrophe. It rapidly became clear that northwestern Pakistan was the hardest hit; early reports indicate a large loss of life in what appears to be the most devastating earthquake to strike the region in a century.

The worst affected areas are some of the most mountainous, inaccessible, and impoverished in the region. Sparse roads have been cut off, and entire villages wiped out by landslides. Government buildings and health clinics have been destroyed, and schools have collapsed killing hundreds of children and staff. As of 9 October, the estimated number of deaths ranged between 18,000 and 30,000 people.

UNICEF has mobilised swiftly in support of the Government of Pakistan's response to this tragedy. Within hours of the disaster, UNICEF was loading emergency stockpiles from its Karachi warehouse into trucks and aircraft destined for the earthquake zone. By Saturday night, UNICEF and WHO had supported seven government health teams sent by helicopter to reach remote villages, and another seven teams followed the next morning.

Having operated in Pakistan since 1947, UNICEF has a large number of staff and supplies already in-country, including an office in Peshawar, situated in the badly-affected North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). UNICEF has worked closely with the Pakistani authorities in previous disasters, such as the devastating floods that struck Sindh province in 2003, affecting more than 800,000 people. Adding to this experience, UNICEF has assisted in literally hundreds of earthquake relief efforts, including the massive earthquake in Bam, Iran, where recovery is ongoing almost two years later.

In any disaster, it is children who suffer most. Of the estimated 4 million people affected by this crisis, approximately half are children, and one fifth are under the age of five. Vulnerable to cold, hunger and trauma, children and women in this poverty-stricken region require urgent life-saving assistance.

UNICEF and its partners, including sister UN agencies and international and national non-governmental organisations, are working closely with the Government of Pakistan to respond swiftly and effectively to the crisis. To finance these efforts, the United Nations will launch a joint appeal in the coming days. In the meantime, in order to fund its immediate response, UNICEF is requesting an initial **US \$20,000,000** to meet the urgent needs of children and women throughout the affected areas.

2. UNICEF'S ACTIONS TO DATE

UNICEF has already emptied its Peshawar warehouse of pre-stocked relief supplies, including:

- ✓ 17,000 blankets;
- ✓ 570 pairs of rubber boots and 500 sweaters for children;
- ✓ 840 jerry cans of 70L each; and
- ✓ 8,400 metres of plastic sheeting.

These supplies are now en route to Mansehra, one of the most affected areas, where they will be distributed by UNICEF's Government and NGO partners.

Meanwhile, in order to re-stock the warehouse in Peshawar (which will act as UNICEF's base of operations for the relief effort), pre-positioned supplies have been mobilised from our warehouse in Karachi, including:

- ✓ 300,000 water purification tablets;
- ✓ 10,000 blankets, 1000 pairs of rubber boots for children, and 12,000 sweaters; and
- ✓ 375 cartons of high-protein biscuits.

These supplies will be flown to Peshawar on Monday; in addition, a convoy is en route by road, carrying 15 water tanks of 10m³, 20,000 metres of plastic sheeting, 7,000 bars of soap and 5,200 jerry cans.

The United Nations Disaster Management Team (UNDMT) has constituted three UN inter-agency rapid assessment missions to establish the most urgent needs in affected areas. One of these is being led by UNICEF, which will field six teams to NWFP. In addition, UNICEF is leading the international response in water and sanitation, nutrition and education, and is already deploying senior experts from neighbouring countries and its headquarters in New York in support of these efforts.

3. URGENT ACTIONS PLANNED IN THE NEXT 6-8 WEEKS

UNICEF staff are on standby all over the world, pending the outcome of the rapid assessments. In line with its Core Commitments to Children in Emergencies, UNICEF will support national and local authorities, complementing their core capacities with technical assistance, operational support, and coordination and logistics support in health and nutrition, water and sanitation, education, and child protection. Other partners on the ground include sister UN agencies, international NGOs such as Oxfam, International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Save the Children, and World Vision, as well as local NGOs including the Aga Khan network.

3.1 HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Issues

In the aftermath of the earthquake, many children are without shelter or food. Winter temperatures are dangerously cold, and the past forty-eight hours have seen heavy rains and hail. Children and their families remain exposed, and many of the injured do not have access to medical treatment. Hospitals and clinics have collapsed, further reducing service delivery in remote areas where health care was already scarce. Overcrowding in displacement shelters and lack of access to safe water pose the threat of acute respiratory infections, water-borne diseases and the spread of deadly diseases such as measles. Urgent medical supplies and nutrition support are needed to avert further loss of life. In addition, it will be crucial to pay special attention to the needs of women and adolescent girls.

Urgent Actions

- Coordination of nutrition sector;
- Distribution of life-saving and critical relief supplies such as blankets, sweaters, boots and plastic sheeting;
- Provision of high-protein biscuits;
- Distribution of medical kits including emergency drugs;
- If appropriate, immunisation and Vitamin A supplementation;
- Operational support for medical teams, with special attention to the need for a sufficient number of female medical staff; and
- Monitoring to ensure that women and girls have access to health services.

UNICEF and its partners will work to strengthen local capacities to restore health and nutrition service delivery. UNICEF and WHO have already provided technical and operational support for Government-fielded health teams dispatched to the affected areas, and will support the establishment of temporary health facilities. Working closely with the Ministry of Health and WHO, UNICEF will help assess the damage to health facilities to determine what longer-term actions may be necessary.

Expected Impact

- Children and women are shielded from the elements;
- Children's urgent nutritional needs are met;
- Cases of diarrhoea in children and women are adequately managed with home or facility-based treatment with oral re-hydration salts, or in severe cases, IV fluid;
- Cases of other infectious diseases in children and women, particularly acute respiratory tract infections, urinary tract infections, and skin infections are adequately managed; and
- Outbreaks of measles, polio and other infectious diseases prevented.

Funds Required: US\$5 million

3.2 WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION

Issues

Earthquakes often devastate water and sanitation facilities, cutting off access to safe water supplies and preventing proper hygiene practices. Faced with water shortages, people often resort to unsafe sources, placing their health at great risk. Lack of sanitation facilities means that hazardous waste is left out in the open, where it can breed disease. Dysentery and other water-borne diseases pose a particularly grave risk to children.

Urgent Actions

- Coordination of water and sanitation sector;
- Distribution of water purification tablets, jerry cans and water tanks;
- Provision of hygiene materials, including soap, buckets and educational materials containing hygiene messages in local languages; and
- Establishment of latrines and water points as necessary.

In collaboration with partners and the authorities, UNICEF will assess the damage to water and sanitation infrastructure to determine what longer-term actions may be necessary. UNICEF will work to strengthen local partners and Government authorities to restore water and sanitation services.

Expected Impact

- Children and their families have access to safe water and sanitation facilities that meet or exceed SPHERE standards; and
- The affected population is aware of the risks associated with contaminated water and poor hygiene.

Funds Required: US\$5 million

3.3 EDUCATION

Issues

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.

Urgent Actions

- Coordination of education sector;
- Procurement of schools-in-a-box, including materials like chalk, workbooks, pencils, knapsacks; and
- Provision of tents for temporary schools to ensure minimum interruption to children's classes.

In close collaboration with national and local authorities, UNICEF will facilitate the work of partners and participate in assessment missions to establish affected children's educational needs and plan future interventions.

Expected Impact

- Children suffer minimum disruption to their classes; and
- Sense of well-being and normalcy among children and teachers restored.

Funds Required: US\$5 million

3.4 CHILD PROTECTION

Issues

Natural disasters exact a terrible toll on children's psychological health. Confused and traumatised, they turn to parents who are themselves suffering from severe emotional distress. Faced with frightening memories and continuing aftershocks, children exhibit signs of stress such as the fear of returning indoors or the inability to sleep. Psychosocial support for these children will be crucial to their long-term well-being.

Amid the chaos of natural disasters, children can become separated from their families. If this happens, they are at heightened risk of exploitation and abuse, especially where entire communities have been devastated. Although it is too early to say whether the earthquake has resulted in children becoming separated from their families, if this proves to be the case such children will need to be protected and cared for, and their families traced.

Urgent Actions

- Distribution of recreation kits including toys and games;
- Establishment of 'child-friendly' spaces where children can feel safe, play, and receive psychosocial support;
- Prevention of family separation and, if necessary, identification and support of unaccompanied and separated children, including family tracing mechanisms; and
- Sensitisation of communities to the increased risk of exploitation and abuse.

Expected Impact

- Psychosocial distress in children and caregivers mitigated or prevented;
- Children have access to recreational activities; and
- Separation, exploitation or abuse of children prevented.

Funds Required: US\$2.5 million

4. COORDINATION AND LOGISTICS

Issues

In any disaster, coordination and logistics form a critical component of the overall response. UNICEF has assumed sector leadership in water and sanitation, nutrition, and education, and is providing key support in health and child protection. Sector coordination groups, led by an agency acting as cluster leader, map out needs and identify the most appropriate response, ensuring efforts are complementary and preventing overlap or gaps in the overall response.

Urgent Actions

- Coordination, monitoring and support of nutrition, water and sanitation and education sectors;
- Facilitation of assessments in these sectors;
- Establishment of up to four satellite offices to act as staging grounds for UNICEF operations;
- Establishment of central transit warehouses at airports in Peshawar and Islamabad;
- Procurement and distribution of telecommunications and other operational equipment; and
- Performance monitoring and evaluation.

Expected Impact

- Development of local and partner capacity within UNICEF-led sectors;
- In coordination with UNJLC and UNDP, efficient and rapid transport to the affected population is ensured;
- Commonly accepted standards for timely, adequate and effective humanitarian action in these sectors fulfilled.

UNICEF will continue collaborating closely with the UNDAC mission and the UNDMT to keep abreast of needs and plan sector response.

Funds Required: US\$2.5 million

Further information on the UNICEF emergency programme in Pakistan can be obtained from:

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