

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Immediate Needs for Children and Women
Affected by the Pacific Ocean Tsunami

APRIL – JUNE 2007



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Map created on 02 April 2007.

URGENT REQUEST: US \$500,000

1. CRITICAL ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

On Monday 2 April at 7:40 am local time, an earthquake measuring 8.1 struck off the coast of the Solomon Islands, some 345km northwest of the capital, Honiara, triggering a deadly tsunami that swept through coastal villages on the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. Western Province (capital Gizo), Choiseul Province and Northern Isabel were heavily damaged. The New Georgia Islands and Shortland Islands were also severely affected. As of 4 April, the National Disaster Management Office of the Solomon Islands had confirmed at least 34 dead, many more missing and more than 900 homes destroyed. However, these figures are expected to rise as assessments begin to reach remote fishing villages along the coast. Current estimates are that up to 2,500 homes may have been destroyed, displacing approximately 25,000 people. Up to 50,000 people are believed to have been affected by the disaster.

In any disaster, it is children who suffer most. Of the estimated 50,000 people affected by this crisis, approximately 30,000 are children, and 15,000 are under the age of five. Vulnerable to hunger, disease and trauma, children and women in the affected areas require urgent life-saving assistance to survive. Initial assessments indicate priority needs for food, water and sanitation, shelter, medical supplies and non-food items, including mosquito nets and cooking utensils. Of particular concern are possibly worsening weather conditions affecting the displaced, the limited supply of fresh water leaving many to resort to surface sources that may be contaminated, and the abundance of mosquitoes in the bush where many displaced are located.

UNICEF began responding within hours of the disaster, drawing on pre-positioned emergency medical supplies for up to 10,000 people. Along with its partners, including sister UN agencies and international and national non-governmental organisations, UNICEF is working closely with the Government of the Solomon Islands to respond swiftly and effectively to the crisis. To support these efforts, UNICEF is requesting an initial **US\$ 500,000** to meet the urgent needs of children and women throughout the affected areas.

2. UNICEF'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE: ISSUES & ACTIONS

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Issues

Those families that have been displaced by the tsunami will be especially vulnerable to hunger and the spread of disease. Malaria is endemic in the area, and standing water is an ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes. It will be vital to ensure that displaced families have access to insecticide-treated nets and malaria prophylaxis. In addition, 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.

Urgent Actions

- Distribution of medical kits including emergency drugs;
- Immunisation against measles for children aged 6 – 59 months, as well as Vitamin A supplementation;
- Operational support for medical teams; and
- Monitoring to ensure that women and girls have access to health services.

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.

WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION

Issues

Natural disasters often result in contaminated water sources and destroyed sanitation systems, leading to a high risk of water-borne diseases like cholera and dysentery. Faced with water shortages, people often resort to unsafe sources, placing their health at great risk. The 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. The vulnerability of children in these affected regions is

exacerbated by their underlying degree of under-nutrition that reduces their ability to cope with diarrhoeal diseases or parasitic infections.

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.

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.

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, 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 tsunami 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

- Establishment of 'child-friendly' spaces where children can feel safe, play, and receive psychosocial support;
- Sensitisation of communities to the increased risk of exploitation and abuse;
- Distribution of recreation kits including toys and games.

3. ESTIMATED FUNDING REQUIREMENTS FOR PLANNED ACTION APRIL-JUNE, 2007

In order to respond quickly and effectively to this disaster, UNICEF is requesting an initial **US \$500,000** to meet the immediate needs of children and women throughout the affected areas for the next three months.

Table 1: Funding requirements

Sector	US\$
Health and Nutrition	220,000
Water and Environmental Sanitation	120,000
Education	120,000
Child Protection	40,000
Total*	500,000

* The total includes a maximum recovery rate of 7 per cent. The actual recovery rate on individual contributions will be calculated in accordance with relevant Executive Board decisions.

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

Isiye Ndombi Representative Suva Tel: +679 330 0439 Fax: +679330 1667 Email: indombi@unicef.org	Pierrette Vu Thi Deputy Director EMOPS, Geneva Tel: + 41 22 909 Fax: + 41 22 909 Email: pvuthi@unicef.org	Gary Stahl UNICEF PFO New York Tel: + 1-212 326 7009 Fax: + 1-212 326 7165 Email : gstahl@unicef.org
--	---	--