

Humanitarian response activities are an essential part of the overall work and cooperation of UNICEF. Our role and mandate to respond to emergencies is well articulated in the 2004 Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies (CCCs) document and well understood by partners in Government, international organisations and civil society. UNICEF systematically integrates commitments to respond to the urgent needs of children, women and families in emergency situations into programming and operations. UNICEF builds and retains institutional capacities to meet the CCCs and ensures that its staff and all programmes of cooperation are able to adapt to emergency situations that require humanitarian response. The extensive field experience and presence, neutrality, human rights-based mandate and operational capacities of UNICEF are particularly important assets.

Looking back

Pacific Emergency Response Team (PERT)

A Pacific Emergency Response Team (PERT) was formed in July 2008 - comprised of 16 members from Programmes, Operations and PAPE sections. PERT focuses exclusively on programme preparedness and response. In October 2008, a workshop facilitated by the Regional Emergency Advisor was held to build understanding amongst PERT members of UNICEF's Emergency Preparedness and Response principles and tools. The 2006 UNICEF internal Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan was reviewed and revised by the PERT at the capacity building workshop in October.

Pre-positioning of emergency supplies

The pre-positioning of emergency health, water and sanitation, education and recreation supplies in the Pacific is currently supported by two project agreements – one a 4-year agreement with AusAID focusing on health, water and sanitation supplies (and associated capacity development) and the second, a one year agreement with NZAID for the development of early childhood emergency kits and the strengthening of education and recreation kits. An Emergency Supply and Logistics Assistant (ESLA) joined UNICEF Pacific in October 2008 to manage the procurement of emergency supplies and the establishment of warehousing. As such, warehouse assessments have been undertaken in Port Vila, Vanuatu and Honiara, Solomon Islands as well as a review of the current Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Project (RARP) warehouse procedures in Gizo. In selecting warehouse options, preference has been given for those which offer possibilities of partnership – with NGOs (i.e., Red Cross) or Government.

A list of materials for a Pacific Early Childhood Education kit has been produced following extensive consultation with Ministries of Education, National Disaster Management Offices and NGOs in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. 50% of the materials for these ECE kits have been ordered and a set of facilitator guidelines are ready for translation. In addition, an international consultant has drafted a revised set of facilitator guidelines for recreation kits, based on materials developed for the Safe Play areas in the Solomon Islands.

Cluster Coordination

The Pacific Humanitarian Team, led by UNOCHA, was formed in mid 2008 and has replaced the UN Disaster Coordination Team in the Pacific. As agreed in July, UNICEF is lead agency in the Pacific for cluster coordination in the areas of: Water and Sanitation; Nutrition (sub-cluster); Child Protection (sub-cluster) and co-leads alongside Save the Children Alliance for the Education cluster. In addition, UNICEF is a partner with OHCHR and UNHRC in the informal protection working group which has recently been formed. One of the tasks of the Pacific Humanitarian Team over 2008 has been the development of a multi-cluster rapid assessment (RA) tool, currently being spearheaded by a smaller working group. UNICEF is a member of this working group and in addition to providing technical support, has committed to providing financial support in the drafting and piloting of RA tools.

Mapping of Core Commitments for Children (CCCs) Against National Disaster Plans
Technical assistance is being provided to assess existing national emergency response plans to determine areas requiring attention and to provide information on subsequent emergency management planning and response training required. A range of NGOs and CSOs in Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu have been assessed in 2008 to examine their capacities for emergency response. TORs were developed in consultation with key partners to assess national emergency response plans and their alignment to UNICEF's Core Commitment for Children (CCC) and with consideration to the humanitarian imperative, neutrality, impartiality, less harm, accountability, participation of affected communities and respect of local customs and culture.

Moving forward

In 2009, a significant arrival of emergency materials is expected in Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Fiji. The Emergency Supply and Logistics Assistant will support the capacity development of staff in the Field Offices and National Disaster Management Offices tasked with maintaining and monitoring the warehouse. Furthermore, a mapping of supply channels and possible contracted as well as community based distribution mechanisms will be undertaken in 2009. Further work will be conducted with national partners on the development of a multi-cluster rapid assessment (RA) tool. A consultant will be mobilized in early 2009 to assess national plans and make recommendations for ways to improve plan-CCC alignment and strengthen national and sub-national emergency response capacities in relation to implementing CCCs at times of emergency. The consultancy will be carried out in five countries: Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.