

This programme focuses on immunization, care of pregnant women and newborn, children's balanced diet, hygiene and good sanitation.

The key objectives of the Health and Sanitation Programme during 2008 were to work with governments and partners to increase childhood immunisation coverage, to ensure that implementation of evidence-based maternal and child health programmes was intensified in Kiribati, Samoa and Vanuatu, to support the community-based hygiene and water safety plans in these three prioritized countries and Fiji, and to begin the recovery and reconstruction phase in areas affected by the 2007 tsunami in Solomon Islands.

## **Looking back**

### **Immunization**

With the support of UNICEF and key partners, the Pacific's polio-free status was maintained and there was steady progress towards universal coverage with routine vaccines, measles elimination and Hepatitis B control.

Funds were secured for Solomon Islands and Kiribati to facilitate the introduction of the Pentavalent vaccine, and an additional amount was promised by the Australian government to enable many more Pacific Island countries to introduce the Pentavalent vaccine and other new vaccines in 2009.

UNICEF Pacific, with financial support from the Japanese government, supplied cold-chain equipment to Fiji, Kiribati and Solomon Islands. Over 90% of health facilities in Fiji and Kiribati are now equipped with the chain of freezers and fridges needed to maintain the correct temperature of vaccines.

UNICEF supplied technical support for regional training as part of the expanded programme on immunisation. Ten participants from Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tokelau and Palau attended this training.

### **Care of pregnant women, newborn babies and young children**

UNICEF established partnerships with the World Bank and the governments of Japan, New Zealand and Australia to develop programming for the entire health sector through a coordination known as a sector-wide approach to programming (SWAp) in Samoa and Solomon Islands.

Fiji reached universal baby-friendly status with the award of the UNICEF-WHO Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative to all its 21 hospitals.

In Kiribati, mothers attended training sessions on infant and young child feeding, and more than 10,000 children benefited from a Vitamin A supplementation and de-worming programme in Solomon Islands. In Vanuatu and Kiribati, micro-nutrient awareness

campaigns were held and, in Fiji, UNICEF financial support was provided to a study of the status of micro-nutrients in children 6 – 59 months old.

Regionally, the important role of nutrition was advocated and regional partners were presented with the assessment of the likely impact of higher fuel and food prices on women and children. Additional resources to monitor the impact were secured.

#### Hygiene and water safety

Schools and communities in selected areas were provided with safe drinking water and efficient sewerage systems.

In seven primary schools in South Tarawa, Kiribati, these facilities were repaired and in five primary schools in Rotuma and Nayau Island - an outer island in Fiji, they were improved, benefiting 3,650 children. More than 7,700 people in areas affected by the 2007 tsunami in Solomon Islands were provided with access to safe drinking water. Also in Solomon Islands, UNICEF supported the Provincial Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Department in Western Province to provide 750 people with access to safe drinking water.

#### **Moving Forward**

A KAP (knowledge, attitude and practice) survey will be undertaken in 2009 in Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu to address maternal and child health issues. In these countries there will be training for facilitators and health staff, procurement of medicines, and an improved surveillance system for vaccine preventable diseases. The focus will be on making pre- and post-natal services available, training health workers to assist at childbirth and providing referral services where necessary.

In countries where the need is greatest, measles campaigns will be integrated with vitamin A supplementation, de-worming and promotion of hand-washing; Pentavalent and other new vaccines will be promoted; and cold-chain assessment and interventions will be conducted.

Across the region, breastfeeding will be supported and promoted, and much work will be done to improve water supplies and sanitation in schools and communities. Partnerships will be strengthened for advocacy and obtaining funds for child survival, growth and development. This will include monitoring the health impacts of the global economic crisis and rising food and fuel costs.

