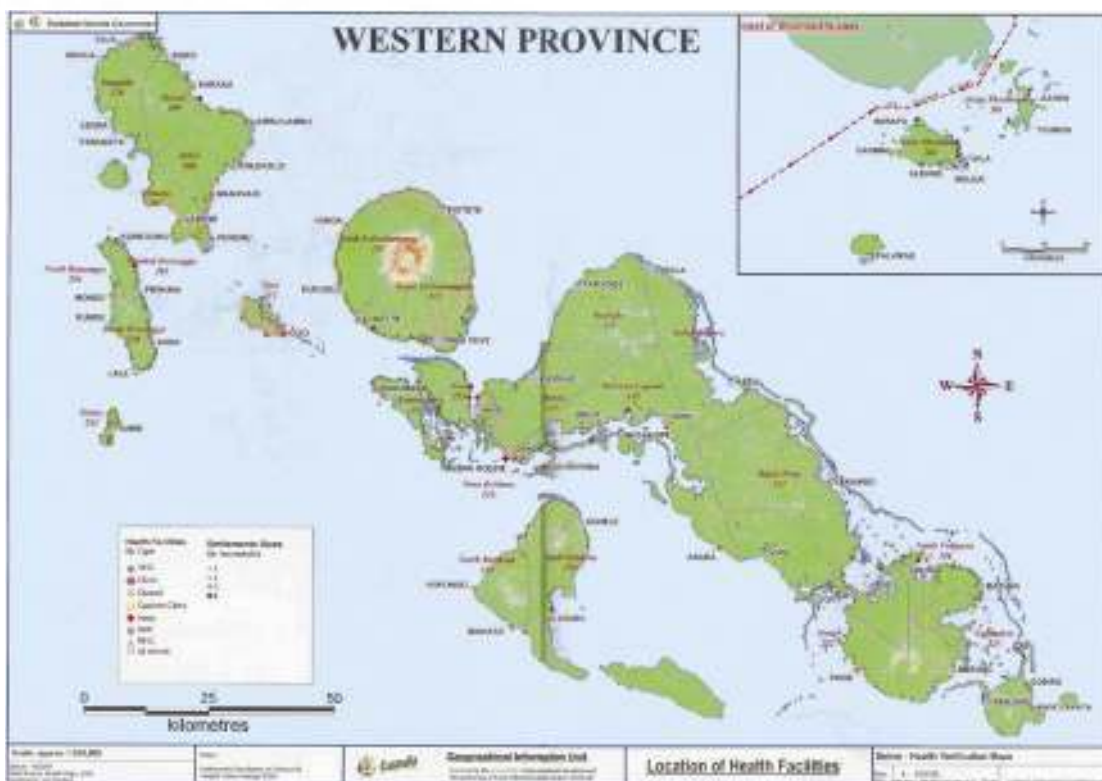


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# MAPS



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On the morning of April 2nd 2007, a large (8.1 Richter scale) earthquake and subsequent tsunami destroyed or caused severe damage in 304 villages across the Western and Choiseul Provinces of Solomon Islands. The disaster killed 52 people and directly affected 36,500 people, around half of whom were children.

Within the last four years the UNICEF Pacific office has responded to a number of emergencies. Niue and Vanuatu were hit by cyclones in 2004, the Cook Islands and Tokelau were hit by cyclones in 2005. The April 2nd 2007 disaster, however, was the first ever large-scale humanitarian disaster for UNICEF Pacific's Multi-Country office in Suva, Fiji, and the Solomon Islands Field office in Honiara. This outcome evaluation likewise represents the first systematic assessment of UNICEF's response to that emergency and is among the first detailed participatory evaluations of a humanitarian agency's efforts during the emergency and initial recovery phases of the Solomon Islands disaster. A follow-up impact evaluation is planned for 2010.

UNICEF has an institutional commitment to ensuring the survival needs and human rights of children are met in emergencies. The Core Commitments to Children in Emergencies (CCCs) provide the guiding framework for UNICEF's response in emergencies. The CCCs outline programme and operational responses and priorities following a disaster in key areas of health, education, water, sanitation and hygiene, child protection and HIV, to be met in the first 72 hours, the first 6-8 weeks, and the first six months and beyond.

The overall purpose of the evaluation was to:

- identify major achievements during the emergency response and recovery phase (from 2 April 2007 to 1 June 2007) and during the initial reconstruction and rehabilitation phase (June 2 to September 30) including impact on beneficiaries;
- note constraints and gaps in that response; and
- make recommendations (as necessary) for a better response to similar situations in the future and identify potential policy implications for the future.

The terms of reference for the evaluation were broad and encompassed all major aspects of UNICEF Pacific's approach, including programme design, implementation and impact, management and leadership, supply and logistics, funding and finance, human resources and organizational learning. Due to time constraints Operational Response issues are not dealt with in as much detail as Programme issues. The evaluation focused on a number of key questions drawn from the TOR which include:

- Did UNICEF meet the CCCs?
- Did UNICEF achieve its intended results?
- What were the strengths and weakness of their approach?
- What are the lessons from their response?

The primary criteria used throughout the evaluation are those recommended by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) for evaluating humanitarian action. UNICEF's response was thus assessed in terms of its relevance, appropriateness, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability/connectedness, and coverage. While these criteria have been applied throughout, it is acknowledged that they represent 'ideal standards' and that it is not always practical or even appropriate to meet all criteria at all times. Sustainability, for example, may need to be sacrificed to ensure a timely response. Efficiency may sometimes be disregarded to ensure adequate coverage, as in the case of the distribution of some supplies.

It is important to note that the team adopted a participatory approach throughout the evaluation. Tools used to collect data included a document review, direct observation, key informant interviews, semi-structured group interviews with primary stakeholders among the affected population, an electronic questionnaire emailed to UNICEF staff to elicit their confidential feedback, and several feedback sessions with stakeholders to validate findings. Interviews with UNICEF staff were conducted in Suva, Honiara, Gizo and Taro and interviews or meetings were held with UNICEF's government and non-government partners in the latter three locations. Primary stakeholders were interviewed or otherwise consulted in 8 villages in Western Province and 4 villages in Choiseul Province.

# ACHIEVEMENTS

Based on extensive consultation with a wide range of key stakeholders and review of available reports and data, the independent evaluation team found that UNICEF's overall response to the Solomon Islands disaster appears to have been relevant, appropriate, somewhat effective (intervention coverage was variable, especially in Choiseul Province) and relatively efficient with some major impacts against several Core Commitments for Children. There was strong coherence between programmes and there are good prospects for the sustainability of several key interventions. Given the lack of experience in responding to a large-scale emergency, UNICEF Pacific has done well overall and in some areas it has excelled (refer to Table 1 at the end of this Executive Summary). Nevertheless, the crisis highlights significant weaknesses in terms of UNICEF Pacific's existing capacity to respond to large-scale emergencies in the Pacific. UNICEF Pacific can be justifiably satisfied with its hard work and achievements to date but needs to act swiftly to address gaps – both in terms of its preparedness for future disasters and its response to the ongoing disaster in Solomon Islands.

On hearing news of the Solomon Island earthquake and tsunami, UNICEF initiated an excellent first level of response, immediately deploying senior staff from the Suva and Bangkok offices to coordinate with government and other agencies engaged in the emergency response. Emergency funds were also rapidly identified to kick start mobilization of supplies and technical assistance. UNICEF was able to determine core needs and generate support for useful interventions in key areas of health, education, child protection, water, sanitation and hygiene and HIV. UNICEF identified and deployed technical expertise to support government partners in developing their response and to guide UNICEF's programme activities in key sectors. UNICEF Pacific's commitment to having a strong staff presence in the field is noteworthy and has been instrumental in UNICEF's successes to date. It has contributed to positive perceptions of UNICEF both in Honiara and the field by all stakeholders.

## **Achievements during Emergency Response and Recovery Phase**

Within the first 72 hours UNICEF:

- Deployed experienced emergency personnel to Honiara to coordinate and plan UNICEF's emergency response.
- Mobilized medical supplies which had been already been pre-positioned in Honiara. Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) were sourced and provided to boost the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) stores for distribution to facilitate home-treatment of diarrhea.
- Developed and issued an immediate needs document requesting funding of \$500,000 for UNICEF's initial response.

Within the first 7 days UNICEF:

- Deployed a Nutritionist to the affected area to assess nutritional needs.
- Began detailed preparations for Measles immunisation and Vitamin A supplementation. Teams were trained and mobilized within three weeks, reporting greater than 95% coverage across the affected areas.
- Mobilized essential supplies such as tents and tarpaulins for emergency shelter provision and temporary schooling or play areas for children.
- Lobbied to ensure that child protection issues received prominence in the emergency response and utilizing existing partnerships to effectively include child protection issues in government policy statements and interventions.
- Identified emergency technical assistance in water and sanitation, health, child protection for rapid deployments in the following week.

Within the first 6-8 weeks UNICEF:

- Deployed the 6 requested staff in the first 14 days and the additional 3 within 6 weeks.
- Within three weeks, developed an Emergency Management Plan (EMP) and associated Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP), aligned to the CCCs and based on available assessment data.
- Provided important contributions to facilitate the establishment of an Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) and enabling the ESWG to: conduct an assessment on learning spaces and resources; create temporary spaces for play, recreation and learning; and develop a child-centred recovery plan and back to school campaign.
- Distributed 250 family tents and 1,400 tarpaulins to health staff and Internally Displaced People (IDP) around Gizo Island.
- Through partners, commenced distribution school-in-box kits (final total 180) and recreation kits (final total 182) to schools in the affected areas making it possible for schooling to resume as soon as possible.
- Within 14 days, distributed emergency medical kits with the capacity to supply hospitals serving a community of 10,000 people for 3 months (pre-positioned with MHMS in Honiara prior to the disaster). One kit was sent to Gizo hospital, 1 to Sasamunga, and 1 kit was deployed to the Shortland Islands.
- Supported a comprehensive health promotion campaign addressing key areas of risk associated with nutrition, hygiene promotion, HIV prevention and warning of specific dangers such as from handling asbestos. The campaign also served as a distribution mechanism for soap (6,500 bars), Vitalita (a micro-nutrient supplement) (90,000 sachets), ORS (30,000 sachets), and 4,400 collapsible water containers (10 litres size).

- Established effective collaborative partnerships with NGOs working on water, sanitation and hygiene issues and coordinated efforts with the National and Provincial Rural Water and Sanitation Services (RWSS).
- Alongside other partners, ensured all IDP camps were at >50% of SPHERE standards for water supply as targeted.
- Provided support to government leadership and coordination of protection issues and gave material assistance to the establishment of a child protection working group through the Social Welfare Division of MHMS.
- Alongside other partners, supported the establishment of 31 Play safe areas reaching 3,168 affected children in Gizo, Simbo, Vella La Vella and Choiseul.
- With partners, developed a network of young people disseminating information about HIV and AIDS through community-based activities in Safe Play Areas. Twenty-eight Youth Volunteers from 15 IDP camps were trained on 3 Pacific Stars Life Skills modules. As the first activity, the Youth Volunteers surveyed 240 young people in IDP camps in relation to Self Awareness, Coping with Emotions and Stress, and HIV/STIs.

### **Achievements during Initial Reconstruction and Response phase**

Within the first 6 months UNICEF:

- At the 10 week mark, conducted an innovative, population-based Omnibus Survey to determine reach of key interventions (Oral Rehydration Salt packets (ORS), soap, Vitalita, and health promotion messages) as well as HIV knowledge and attitudes.
- Through partners, distributed 75 school tents (large) to provide classrooms or dormitories in affected villages in both Choiseul and Western Provinces.
- Through partners, distributed 21,000 school bags to students in schools in the affected area which provided a strong incentive for students to return to school.
- Through partners, completed the distribution of 180 school-in-box kits and 182 recreation kits to schools in the affected areas.
- Through partners, distributed 47 guitars and 16 rugby balls with a further 55 guitars assigned for Choiseul Province (but not yet distributed at the time of the evaluation).
- Through partners, distributed 218 wind-up radios with emphasis given to women in IDP camps.
- Through partners, distributed over 1,500 tarpaulins (various sizes) to schools, IDP camps, and education and health staff.
- Through partners, distributed 20 clinic equipment sets to the National Pharmacy to rehabilitate rural clinics.
- Alongside other partners, reactivated Health and Nutrition monitoring and surveillance by providing support (computers, software, technical assistance) to provincial government partners enabling Early Warning and Response Network (EWARN) and Health Information System (HIS) programmes to resume/be developed.
- Rehabilitated the water storage and supply and incinerator for Gizo hospital.
- Continued to provide technical advice, funding and material and logistic assistance to Rural Water and Sanitation Services upon request.
- Assisted communities providing a limited number of water tanks, water containers and water systems. Over 8,000 collapsible water containers (10 litres size) were distributed.
- Through partners, distributed 33,800 bars of soap (at the time of this evaluation, 57,000 additional bars were ready for distribution as part of the Health Promotion and WASH activities).
- Alongside other partners, established a total of 85 Safe Play Areas improving child protection and children's recovery from trauma associated with the disaster, benefiting some 8,500 children.
- Alongside the Social Welfare Division of the MHMS and NGO partners, mobilised and trained a total of 62 Community Welfare Volunteers in both provinces. Out of these numbers, 60% of the trained CWVs produced community protection plans.
- At the 10 week mark, together with UNAIDS, provided HIV and emergencies training to UN staff, senior government staff and partners in Honiara, Gizo, and Suva, and assessed the post-disaster situation (Gizo, Taro and Sasamunga) with recommendations for mainstreaming additional HIV and AIDS interventions into the recovery response.
- Conducted HIV Awareness raising activities in association with a broader health promotion campaign utilising peer-to-peer educators and radio messages.
- Provided VCCT equipment to Gizo Hospital.
- Provided ongoing practical support to local leadership and coordination.
- Strengthened existing partnerships with government agencies (e.g. Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Ministry of Education of Human Resources Development, Ministry of Women Youth and Children's Affairs) and NGOs (e.g. Save the Children, World Vision, Caritas) and built new partnerships with provincial governments in Western and Choiseul Provinces.

# CONSTRAINTS AND GAPS

Although UNICEF's commitment to respond to the humanitarian needs of those affected by the disaster has been impressive, it has at times been undermined by gaps in UNICEF Pacific's emergency response capacity. This was perhaps most apparent in the area of supply and logistics, where for a variety of reasons, UNICEF was not always able to maintain an efficient, timely supply and distribution of required goods. While many external constraints – such as the remote and scattered geographic distribution of beneficiaries and the capacity of other partners – limited UNICEF's ability to meet some targets, there are specific areas of weakness in UNICEF Pacific's own programmatic and operational approach which should be addressed. These are discussed briefly below and in more detail in the relevant sections of the report.

## External constraints and gaps

- Government coordination in the first days of the emergency was not strong. Coordination of the initial response was focused in Honiara, far from the crisis and it was difficult to get a clear idea of what the situation was.
- UN Coordination was weak and a series of brief deployments by UNDP, UNOCHA and WHO limited overall UN leadership and coordination of external assistance providers.
- The deployment of an UNDAC mission for 2 weeks was useful but when the UNDAC mission left, coordination mechanisms quickly deteriorated.
- Each agency used different assessment tools resulting in much duplication and a massive amount of sometimes conflicting data and insufficient resources were dedicated to process it.
- The emergency response quickly became political. Poor communication and weak cooperation between central government and provincial government, between government and external agencies at senior levels, and between some external agencies themselves, led to confusion, inconsistent approaches to dealing with the emergency and reluctance by some key UN agencies to get involved.
- There was no common sense of purpose or even of how serious the emergency was which led to limited operational commitments by some agencies (when compared to UNICEF).
- There was no common contingency plan for dealing with a natural disaster in a remote province far from the capital, Honiara.
- Finally, the geographical remoteness, dispersed nature of settlements and very limited infrastructure in Western and Choiseul Provinces, imposed very significant constraints for logistics, travel and communication.

## Internal constraints and gaps

- UNICEF as an organization has relatively limited experience in the Pacific and has only had a permanent presence in Solomon Islands since 2003 with very little engagement at Provincial Government level.
- UNICEF Supply Division as the central storage point for UNICEF supplies is located in Copenhagen, Denmark and is therefore very distant from the Pacific.
- UNICEF in Suva and Honiara had no institutional experience in emergency response and staff and systems were insufficiently prepared for the challenges of an emergency.
- Lack of experience or training in logistics led to serious gaps in managing the efficient and timely movement of goods.
- When internally redeployed Supplies and Logistics staff were not available for periods of time in Gizo, some of the other field staff were not fully aware of UNICEF policies and procedures causing delays in procurement and approval processes (e.g. incorrect paperwork for requests was submitted).
- Frequent travel and/or training by key staff in UNICEF Suva office caused delays in approval and decision processes or simply the unavailability of operational staff to manage increased workloads.
- Frequent short 2-3 day field visits from Suva and Honiara to the field in Gizo caused excessive disruption to normal programme activities, are expensive and inefficient given the length of time traveling can exceed the length of time in the field.
- While UNICEF's programme was guided by the CCCs there were occasions where local context and local knowledge were not sufficiently taken into account.
- While UNICEF's programme commitments to the emergency were relevant and appropriate, some were also extremely ambitious. At times operational commitments were not adequate to make sure every programme commitment could be met.

## Lessons learned

### Programme

- UNICEF made a strong commitment to rights-based and results-based Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation and exhibited a willingness to learn from the lessons of similar disasters. The Emergency Management Plan (EMP) and accompanying Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP) were developed quickly and updated regularly in consultation with key stakeholders (based situation monitoring). While some planned programme results and targets were ambitious, most were



appropriately aligned to the CCCs.

- An innovative, population-based Omnibus Survey was used to assess the reach of several key interventions (e.g. ORS) and health promotion messages at the 10 week mark. Poor coverage in the distribution of some items indicated that improved and more regular tracking of supplies distributed to beneficiaries was needed.
- While UNICEF should emphasize education and health in its emergency interventions, vulnerable groups should have a first claim on these responses to mitigate the impact on these groups. Communities without a health clinic or without a school, or without both, are inherently more vulnerable as a consequence of this lack of services and need to be prioritised during emergencies.

## **Operations**

- To meet ambitious programme commitments equally ambitious operational commitments are required. UNICEF's success in rapidly mobilizing a measles immunisation and Vitamin A campaign was only possible because it was carefully planned and extensive operational support was given to local partners to implement it. UNICEF's results in terms of reaching targets for ORS, soap and Vitalita distribution, and the promotion of hygiene and HIV prevention were not as comprehensive. A leading factor contributing to this is that insufficient staff and operational resources were dedicated to meeting these latter targets.
- Accountability requirements demand that UNICEF improve its logistics capacity. All staff should acquire a basic understanding of procedures for supply, receipt and distribution of goods.
- UNICEF's most crucial resource is its staff. In times of emergency, greater managerial oversight or additional staffing resources may be necessary to strengthen financial administration to ensure that field staff receive salaries and per diems in a timely and reliable manner.

# SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

More specific recommendations are provided in Section 7 of this report.

## **Now (Next 6-8 weeks)**

- UNICEF should maintain a strong presence in Western Province and expand/establish presence in Choiseul Province.
- In coordination with the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) and other agencies, UNICEF should undertake a vulnerability needs assessment throughout the affected area to identify communities or groups at risk (e.g. pneumonia or malnutrition) and intervene as required.
- In coordination with NDMO, Development Services Exchange (DSE) and other NGOs document and map 'Who has done, What, Where' and identify any communities that need support but have not received it.
- Examine options and expedite proactive engagement on HIV and Child Protection issues in Choiseul and Shortland Islands.
- Review staff safety and train staff in sea-survival and related skills.

## **Next Year (Next 2-12 months)**

- Undertake health/nutritional baseline survey as planned.
- Undertake detailed review of operational processes to simplify and streamline supply and financial procedures.

## **Future (in the event of another disaster)**

- Ensure that local capacity and local knowledge are utilised as much as possible from Day 1 of an emergency and resource local capacity before assuming it is lacking.
- Identify strategies to assist getting essential government staff (health and education) back to work or involved in assessments as soon as possible.
- Provide practical support to local leadership and coordination as soon as practical.
- Build systems to get the right information to the right people to assist them to make the right choice for their circumstances.
- Establish clear performance benchmarks and reporting mechanism for procurement and delivery of supplies in emergency circumstances.
- Consider introducing performance indicators to improve support to field staff.
- Preposition tents, safety equipment, office set-up kits within the region.
- Establish emergency supply agreements for key items in advance.
- Map shipping routes and pre-identify preferred transport options for various scenarios.
- Devolve as much responsibility and decision-making to the field as UN rules will permit.
- Ensure all key management staff are brought through Suva for a thorough briefing prior to deployment and that this briefing is prioritized by staff in Suva. The Human Resources in Emergencies UNICEF intranet site contains orientation templates, some of which were developed in 2005, after the Indian Ocean Tsunami.
- Develop common standards and approaches with NGOs that ensure beneficiaries are adequately consulted and informed on who UNICEF is and what UNICEF does.
- Consider community distribution agreements documenting people's entitlements.
- Ensure implementing partners are closely monitored and understand that they are accountable for losses and damages.

# TABLE 1

## Snapshot Assessment of UNICEF's Performance in Responding to the Solomon Islands April 2nd 2007 Emergency (independent evaluators' judgements)

AREA OF UNICEF'S PERFORMANCE	Weak	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Comments
<b>1) UNICEF's core commitments for children in emergencies</b>					
<i>These core commitments cover:</i>					
<b>a) overall humanitarian response</b>					
operational approach		✓			
rapid assessment		✓			
coordination			✓		
<b>b) programme commitments</b>					
health and nutrition				✓	
water, sanitation and hygiene		✓			
child protection			✓		
education				✓	
HIV	✓				
<b>c) operational commitments</b>					
security		✓			Greater focus on marine safety needed
planning			✓		
monitoring			✓		
fundraising				✓	
communications		✓			
human resources <sup>1</sup>	✓				
information technology			✓		
supply and logistics	✓				
finance			✓		
administration		✓			
organizational preparedness		✓			
support at all levels including regional, country-office and headquarters.			✓		Support is good overall but support to field is often weak.
<b>2) Lessons pertinent to emergency response</b>					
<i>OECD/DAC criteria for evaluating humanitarian action:</i>					
relevance/appropriateness (including timeliness)			✓		Had it been timely 'excellent' may have been justified here.
efficiency		✓			
effectiveness			✓		
impact			✓		
sustainability			✓		Strong partnership with both government and NGOs. Too early to score excellent.
connectedness			✓		
coverage	✓				Problems with coverage and equity need to be addressed.
coherence			✓		Interventions have been targeted, sensible and align with CCCs and Government priorities.

<sup>1</sup>These are qualitative judgments by the independent evaluators and not quantitative assessments against Human Resource CCCs. It should be noted that UNICEF used three different recruitment modalities: internal redeployment of staff; external recruitment; and standby arrangements.

# TABLE 1 CONTINUED

<b>3) Adherence to international principles and standards</b>					
Did UNICEF's performance meet international principles and standards (Code of Conduct, Sphere, and IASC Code)?			✓		
Were local people involved in the response?			✓		
What was their perception of UNICEF's response and its impact?			✓		
Were local capacities and disaster-preparedness capacities strengthened?			✓		
To what extent did UNICEF work with national and provincial governments and align itself with government priorities?				✓	This has been UNICEF's greatest strength – both at national and provincial levels.
To what extent and with what result did UNICEF Pacific itself promote and engage in inter-regional cooperation and advocate for inter-agency cooperation among government, NGO and international agencies?			✓		Close working relationship with NGOs. Less evident with donors and UN.
How have human resources been managed <sup>2</sup>		✓			
How have human resources been led				✓	
How have human resources been supported	✓				
<b>4) Use of funds</b>					
How much money did UNICEF allocate, and spend, and where and on what?					Refer report
Was this reflected in programme plans?	✓				
Did UNICEF add value to the overall response? Was the allocation of funds/spending in line with the needs of those affected?				✓	
Were UNICEF's interventions cost-effective?			✓		
<b>5) Learning</b>					
Is there evidence that UNICEF has learned from the response, and shared lessons from this and previous disasters?				✓	
How well did UNICEF Pacific apply lessons learned from previous disasters including the Indian Ocean tsunami?		✓			
Does UNICEF have effective systems in place to monitor, evaluate, learn and adapt from its ongoing work?			✓		'Excellent' except for weak tracking of supply distribution.
<b>QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>7</b>	
	<b>Weak</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	

### Rating scale:

**Weak:** this has been a substantial Pacific Office weakness and constrained UNICEF's overall achievement in other areas. Immediate attention should be taken to address serious issues in this area.

**Satisfactory:** has met some requirements but there are major issues that need attention.

**Good:** has met most requirements and there are no or few major problems overall. Performance can and should still be improved or may have been compromised by weak performance in other areas.

**Excellent:** this has been an area of strength. In the context of the emergency and international standards UNICEF has performed to expectations. Some issues may remain but these of a less serious nature.

<sup>2</sup> These are qualitative judgments by the independent evaluators and not quantitative assessments against Human Resource CCCs.