

### 3.5. Core Commitments for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

**Relevant Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies in Initial Response (usually 6-8 weeks):**

- *Ensure the availability of a minimum safe drinking water supply taking into account the privacy, dignity and security of women and girls.*

**Relevant Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies after the Initial Response (up to and beyond six months):**

- *Establish, improve and expand safe water and sanitation facilities and promote safe hygiene behaviour.*
- *Provide soap and disseminate key hygiene messages on the dangers of cholera and other water- and excreta-related diseases.*
- *Establish regular hygiene promotion activities*
- *Define UNICEF's ongoing involvement beyond the initial response.*

#### 3.5.1. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene context

Local conditions and practices with regard to water supply, sanitation and hygiene prior to the disaster in both Western and Choiseul Provinces are informed by cultural preferences including using the ocean as the principal means of sanitation. In this context it was quickly established by UNICEF and other actors in the WATSAN Sector that the attainment on SPHERE targets of 1 latrine per 20 head of population was not appropriate in the emergency response except where communities had moved a considerable distance inland.

#### 3.5.2. UNICEF'S Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Response

Two UNICEF emergency water and sanitation specialists arrived in Gizo on 10 April 2007 (day 8) to undertake an emergency needs assessment, implement emergency response activities where appropriate and develop a longer term response plan for UNICEF.


At UNICEF's initiative, a WATSAN coordination meeting was held on Day 4 following the disaster. In partnership with other NGOs and agencies including the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RWSS) division, UNICEF supported the achievement of WASH Core Commitment: Ensure the availability of a minimum safe drinking water supply ensuring the privacy, dignity and security of women and girls.

An immediate needs assessment revealed that sufficient water purification measures by other agencies were in place for meeting the WASH Core Commitment (Provide bleach, chlorine or water purification tablets) and WASH Core Commitment (Provide jerrycans, or an appropriate alternative etc.). A proposal for 2008 has been funded for materials and technical assistance to support the reconstruction and rehabilitation of water and sanitation facilities in the Western Province.

According to reporting from UNICEF water and sanitation consultants, there have been few issues with the quantity of water supply as villages and camps are usually close to streams and springs. Water quality is generally good in most areas except for two locations with very high levels of total coliform bacteria.

#### 3.5.3. Summary of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Achievements

- Within 8 weeks, alongside other partners, UNICEF ensured all IDP camps were at >50% of SPHERE standards for water supply as targeted.
- UNICEF rehabilitated the water storage and supply for Gizo hospital.
- In the WATSAN sector UNICEF was able to establish effective collaborative partnerships with NGOs.
- UNICEF worked closely with Oxfam and both organisations coordinated with RWSS.
- UNICEF assisted RWSS by providing technical advice, funding and material and logistic assistance upon request.
- UNICEF assisted communities providing a limited number of water tanks, water containers and water systems. Over 8000 collapsible water containers (10 litres size) were distributed.

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- 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).

#### **3.5.4. Constraints and Gaps in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Response**

Despite the existence of a WATSAN coordination group, there was a lot of conflicting assessment data. Precise information on WATSAN requirements in schools took time to accumulate despite MEHRD assessments. While there is good capacity at the provincial level (more so in Western Province) to implement appropriate water supply and sanitation initiatives, the lack of basic WATSAN materials has significantly hampered progress.

#### **3.5.5. Lessons and Recommendations for the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Response**

- Given supply issues, UNICEF should focus on pre-positioning of water containers and soap. To support the promotion of hand washing behaviours, also pre-position supplies of buckets.
- Assess the immediate need for washing dishes, further soap and other non-food item (NFI) distribution amongst affected population and continue the focus on intensive and large-scale hygiene promotion.
- Continue to provide targeted support to and through RWSS. Linkage between WATSAN and the Education Sector must continue to be a high priority. Focus sanitation interventions on schools and clinics to ensure SPHERE standards achieved.
- Ensure appropriate latrines are built matching community preferences (pour flush).
- As WATSAN partners begin to withdraw from the affected areas, UNICEF must maintain a long-term presence to ensure the vital rehabilitation work continues.

## 3.6. Core Commitments for Child Protection

### 3.6.1. Child Protection context

Solomon Islands is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and has established a National Advisory Committee for Children to address CRC issues. It has also adopted the principles of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Despite these initiatives at the time of the disaster, awareness and practice of child protection principles was minimal. The main government agencies focused on child protection and related issues are the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs (MWYCA), established in 2007, and the Social Welfare Division (SWD) of MHMS.

Prior to the disaster, UNICEF worked in partnership with the government and NGOs such as Save the Children Australia (SCA) and World Vision to protect and promote children's rights in Solomon Islands.

### 3.6.2. UNICEF'S Child Protection Response

UNICEF carries out Child Protection activities under 8 CCCs. Of these 8, only 2 are directly relevant to the situation in Solomon Islands. These are:

- Prevent sexual abuse and exploitation of children and women.
- Support the establishment of safe environment for children and women, including child-friendly spaces, and integrate psychosocial support in education and protection responses.

In carrying out these CCCs, UNICEF has made 5 main contributions as part of the emergency response. These were to:

- Rapidly assess and report on the situation of women and children.
- Advocate on issues related to child survival, protection and recovery.
- Support the Coordination Action Group (CAG) and Working Group.
- Establish Safe Play Areas in partnership with SCA and World Vision.
- Support SWD's Community Welfare Volunteer programme.

### 3.6.3. Summary of Child Protection Key Achievements

#### ***Support for CAG and Working Group***

UNICEF supported the Gizo-based Coordination Action Group (CAG), chaired by the Social Welfare Department, and consisting of provincial government representatives, International (Humanitarian) NGOs as well as representatives of the national Disaster Council Office. The CAG was set up in late April 2007 with the aim to keep each other updated on common interest issues as well as providing collective support where necessary.


The impact of the CAG has been good. Through the other NGO partners, reports on feeling "unsafe" within camps were reported to the SWD through the CAG meetings. Soon after the disaster, young girls (on Gizo island) reported feeling very insecure sleeping in open spaces in tent (no walls). These girls were particularly afraid when drunkards shout and cause unnecessary noise and disturbance. The SWD was able to direct this matter to the Police which resulted in more night patrols. This is an excellent accomplishment in terms of ensuring government ownership of advancing protection issues.

Other concerns were also raised through the CAG. Women in IDP camps on Ghizo Island drew attention to a lack privacy to bathe. NGOs have begun to address these concerns by building simple structures to provide more privacy.

UNICEF's Education and Child Protection programmes continue to support a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD), the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs (MWYCA) and the Social Welfare Division (SWD) (in the Ministry of Health and Medical Services), Save the Children (SCA) and NZAID to establish safe play and learning areas. These partner organisations appreciate UNICEF's guidance and financial assistance to carry out the field activities.

#### ***Establish Safe Play Areas (SPA)/Child Friendly Spaces (CFS)***

Another core response of UNICEF's child protection programme was to support the establishment of Safe Play Areas (SPA) or Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) for affected communities. These areas were set up to promote a sense of security and allow children to forget the recent earthquake and tsunami experiences.



With UNICEF support including the provision of funds and recreation kits, Save the Children Fund Australia and World Vision of Solomon Islands took the lead in establishing these SPA/CFS and went on to train youths to supervise children. By early May, 70 child-friendly spaces in Western and 15 in Choiseul communities had been established, bringing benefits to some 8,500 children. The establishment of SPA was seen by those communities who participated in the programme as appropriate and relevant in terms of an emergency response. In most cases communities with a SPA really appreciated the initiative and felt they really helped children to normalise again. Strong pre-disaster partnerships with World Vision and Save the Children Fund Australia enabled rapid mobilisation of SPAs.

### **Support CWV programme**

The Community Welfare Volunteers programme is a new concept that the Social Welfare Division was looking to implement in provinces across Solomon Islands. The disaster provided an opportunity to fast track the implementation of this initiative and with assistance from UNICEF and NGOs, implementation began in early May with a training workshop for Western Province participants. A training workshop for Choiseul CWVs occurred in late May.

Selected from their own community, CWVs aim to assist communities build on existing strengths to ensure the protection of the most vulnerable, in particular children. They have been trained in welfare and child protection which further expands the network of protection and support the Government of Solomon Islands has created for its children.

To support this concept, UNICEF's assistance included:

- Engagement of one child protection officer and two education officers (one in Gizo, one in Choiseul) to provide technical assistance.
- Provision of supplies, including recreation kits, other recreation supplies and shelter for safe places.
- Support for travel and other costs of government counterparts in Gizo (SWD and MWYCA).

By the end of May, as a result of the joint initiative between UNICEF and the SWD, 62 Community Welfare Volunteers were trained and actively working in affected communities in both provinces. Out of these numbers, 60% of the trained CWVs actually produced community protection plans. UNICEF's good partnership with government, especially with the Social Welfare Division means that the Division's presence in communities is being felt through the Community Welfare Volunteers.

### **Recreation Kits**

UNICEF also provided recreational kits to most communities with an SPA. The evaluation team found out that both the children and CWVs were very appreciative of the kits. However, there were one or two instances where the appropriateness of certain items in the kits was questioned. This was mainly related to cricket sets, rugby balls and frisbies, which are unfamiliar sporting equipment in Solomon Islands. It is recommended that in future more care be taken when requesting recreational toys for rural communities in Melanesian countries from companies and UNICEF National Committees.

### **Training and Capacity Development**

Overall, the training of youth to be volunteer supervisors was good. The initiative gave young people a chance to participate in the emergency response and to be involved in a leadership role. However, as the maximum duration of SPA is 3 months, there is a need to find a role to continue the use of these trained youth volunteers.

## **3.6.4. Constraints and Gaps in the Child Protection Response**


### **Volunteer staff and human resources**

The evaluation team heard some reports that after the CWV were trained in Taro, Choiseul, they did not do anything upon returning to the village.

*"Our community volunteers went to attend training in Taro but when they returned to the village, they did nothing."*

Reporting mechanisms and monitoring of their activities should be improved if the volunteer system is to remain effective in the recovery phase. Continuous support must be maintained with partners.

In some instances, there was a lack of linking trained youths to existing teaching staff from the village. As a result, some teachers felt



undermined and left out. Some teachers also felt that they should be given a chance to be involved at the start because not only are they being paid to do “children supervisory work” (=teaching) but also they know the children better. A bit more participatory planning in the beginning would have minimised this issue.

The Provincial Education Authorities was initially not involved in the establishment of the CWV and SPA systems but it was soon realized that they are a key partner to their sustainability. The PEA is now working to support both systems to help communities commence some form of education and routine to get schools started again as soon as possible. While the importance of SPAs to the recovery of children has been significant and widely appreciated, the introduction of the SPAs appear in some cases to have postponed the recommencement of formal schooling. Further investigation into the impact of SPAs on the recommencement of formal schooling is recommended.

Another oversight in the establishment of SPA was in communities and villages without schools. Therefore where villages do not have education facilities (including Kindies), no SPA were established leading to further sidelining of already marginalised communities.

Provision of support, especially financial, by UNICEF’s implementing partners to volunteer staff have not always been as transparent as they could be. Some youth volunteers complained that there have not been proper explanations or paper work of what allowances they are entitled to. Very often, there were delays in getting allowances. This is not directly UNICEF’s responsibility but is an issue UNICEF should monitor and raise with appropriate partners

### 3.7. Core Commitments for HIV and AIDS

**Relevant Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies after the Initial Response (up to and beyond six months):**

- *Provide essential supplies such as HIV rapid test kits, rapid syphilis test kits, post-rape care kits, including post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV, where necessary, to health care centres*
- *Provide training to health care staff on VCCT, post care rape, PEP and Psycho social Counseling*
- *Support the establishment of essential health care services including integrated PMTCT and VCCT outreach services*
- *Mobilize young people on HIV prevention, including messages on ABC, stigma and discrimination.*

#### 3.7.1. HIV and AIDS context

The importance of including consideration of HIV issues when designing emergency response is widely recognised and reflected in both the Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) ‘Guidelines for HIV interventions in emergencies’ and UNICEF’s Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies.


Solomon Islands’ close cultural, political, economic and educational ties with and geographic proximity to Papua New Guinea, where HIV has reached epidemic proportions, demand extra vigilance regarding HIV issues in Solomon Islands. This is particularly relevant to the two provinces most directly affected by the April 2 disaster. Choiseul Province and the Shortland Islands of Western Province are short journeys from Bougainville and substantial cross-border traffic in people and goods provide a vector for entry of HIV into Solomon Islands. Both Western and Choiseul Provinces exhibit many other risk factors for HIV such as high levels of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), unwanted teenage pregnancy, a significant but undisclosed sex industry, particularly associated with numerous logging camps located close to villages. Awareness and commitment to safe sex practices is reportedly low, and condom use varies according to availability, individual and cultural preferences.

The most immediate impact of the April 2 disaster on HIV was the destruction of laboratories with the capacity to support Voluntary Confidential Counselling and Testing (VCCT) in Sasamunga and Gizo hospitals. Secondary effects include the increased potential for transmission of the virus as a consequence of the population dislocation and upheaval that occurred following the disaster. Vulnerability to infection from rape or unsafe sexual practices may have increased due to less secure living conditions, reduced social control, increased poverty and interruption to health services.

#### 3.7.2. UNICEF’S HIV and AIDS Response

UNICEF took HIV into account early in the emergency, incorporating HIV-specific objectives into the Emergency Management Plan by week 3 of the emergency. The CCC requirement is to ensure HIV is clearly identified and considered as part of the initial response within the first 72 hours. There was some delay before HIV was recognised as an important issue.

Reporting from the UNICEF Health and Nutrition consultant in June 2007 notes that an initial 6 week health promotion programme to



affected areas was completed by June 1st 2007. This programme involved 2 teams of 4 health promotion workers from MHMS and World Vision supported by UNICEF. The communication material "Save and Protect" (adapted to local language), soap, Vitalita, water containers, and condoms were distributed to beneficiaries in affected areas. Condoms were also included in Reproductive Health kits distributed by UNFPA.<sup>16</sup>

Further reporting identifies that a number of subsequent initiatives including ongoing Radio messages have been used to disseminate HIV prevention messages to youth and adults. Monitoring of HIV awareness through means of an Omnibus Survey was carried out 10 weeks after the April 2 disaster. The results of the survey indicated that HIV awareness was relatively high but that there was also a high level of stigma associated with the disease. The survey noted that the high levels of HIV awareness could not be directly attributed to UNICEF's emergency work.

### 3.7.3. Summary of HIV and AIDS Key Achievements

UNICEF's overall response with regard to HIV appears to have been relevant and appropriate in the context of the emergency. In comparison to other emergency prone regions of the world, there is not known to be a large HIV positive population in Solomon Islands (10 positive cases identified to date) but anecdotal evidence points to many undisclosed cases in Western and Choiseul Provinces. Choiseul Province has a high prevalence rate of Syphilis in pregnant women and other STIs which are proxies to HIV infection (based on STI/HIV second generation surveillance 2004). Appropriate steps identified in the checklist for HIV in UNICEF emergency field handbook appear to have been considered such as the identification of appropriate partners to communicate HIV messages.

At the 10 week mark, together with UNAIDS, a senior HIV in Emergencies specialist from UNICEF NYHQ 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) and made a series of recommendations for mainstreaming additional HIV and AIDS interventions into the recovery response. For example, Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) kits were identified as being a required element of UNICEF's response. Unfortunately UNICEF did not carry its own supplies and relied on UNFPA to identify the kits. In the event there have been no reports of kits being used although anecdotal reports of possible rapes having occurred were noted by a joint UNICEF/UNAIDS mission report in July.

Several UNICEF staff queried the 'appropriateness' of including condoms in UNICEF hospital medical supply kits. It is clear from the evaluation team's discussion with the STD/HIV coordinator in Taro that these would be utilised and distributed if they reach the appropriate reproductive health or HIV contact point within relevant health administrations.

### 3.7.4. Constraints and Gaps in the HIV and AIDS Response

Including HIV/AIDS 'awareness raising' in a Health Promotion campaign also charged with the distribution of packets of Vitalita nutritional supplements, plastic water containers, soap and the delivery of other health and hygiene messages was efficient but not necessarily effective. Interviews with communities revealed that in many cases health promotion and HIV awareness raising was not undertaken during distribution as was intended or was rushed. Women were more likely to report that HIV awareness-raising activities had occurred, suggesting that men were often not included. Given the cultural sensitivities that surround sexual practices in Solomon Islands, as elsewhere, it seems very unlikely that effective results could be anticipated from this approach.


Authors of the Omnibus survey conducted by UNICEF in June/July note that more than 75% of the young people interviewed as part of the survey had heard of HIV/AIDS but also note that it is difficult to ascribe this to the limited number of face-to-face awareness raising meetings held with youth by peer-to-peer educators, or to radio bulletins broadcast after April 2nd.

Coverage of HIV awareness activities appears to have been patchy. Most communities were not aware of UNICEF or any other group coming to their village to undertake HIV/AIDS awareness. The exception was on Gizo Island where there had been HIV awareness raising activities carried out by several groups including UNICEF. The increasing use of radio broadcast seems likely to be a positive and cost-effective means of reaching communities and should be continued.

In the view of the evaluation team, the two most significant steps that UNICEF could take to ensure improved coverage of HIV awareness and advocacy would be open:

- open a medium term or permanent office in Taro
- ensure that the Honiara-based HIV officer is given opportunity to travel extensively to priority areas in Solomon Islands (particularly Gizo, Shortland Islands and Choiseul).

<sup>16</sup> Personal communication from HIV team, Suva.



Based on the team's observations, interviews with health workers and reporting by UNICEF Health and Nutrition Consultants, health workers have a basic awareness of the risk of HIV but limited knowledge about infection control strategies and practices. Staff at Taro hospital reported that it was over five years since hospital staff had received training in infection control. The hospital has a STI/HIV coordinator who has been unable to conduct awareness activities for the last 3 months due to staff shortages. She reported that while youth now came freely to her clinic to request condoms she rarely had them in stock. She also offered that it would be good to have leaflets to hand out to youth seeking advice on prevention strategies. No posters or other visual material regarding HIV were displayed among the numerous other posters on reproductive health and family planning. Several confidential sources have confirmed to the evaluation team that there is an active sex-trade around logging camps in Choiseul Province involving girls between thirteen and sixteen years of age.

Interviews with health care workers in affected areas of Choiseul including Ngarione clinic and Sasamunga hospital indicate there was basic awareness of the importance of safe disposal of medical waste such as sharps but that when sharps containers were full they "keep them in the wards because we don't know what to do with them." UNICEF's Taro-based officer reported that the week prior to the team's visit she had seen a large quantity of syringes and other medical waste dumped outside Konamara clinic beside a track leading to Konamara school. These examples indicate that even where 'awareness raising' takes place, unless systematic support is provided to introduce safe practices then unsafe practices will continue.

The limited presence of UNICEF health staff and HIV staff on the ground in Choiseul Province is a key constraint to effective HIV interventions in this province. While Gizo-based Health and Nutrition consultants have made visits to Choiseul there has not been the benefit of the on-the-ground relationship between UNICEF's health team and provincial counterparts that has been particularly fruitful in the education sector.

### **3.7.5. Lessons and Recommendations for the HIV and AIDS Response**

HIV was incorporated in UNICEF's response to the emergency in Western and Choiseul Provinces but could have been further advanced if there had been a UNICEF officer with appropriate emergency management training tasked specifically to ensure that progress was maintained towards meeting the HIV CCCs. The progression of HIV issues in the emergency response appears to be somewhat ad hoc and has been mainly advanced through incorporation of HIV awareness messages into health promotion campaigns. HIV awareness activities appear to have been most successful in communities on Gizo where accessibility has made HIV specific awareness raising interventions practicable. It has been least successful in Choiseul Province where logistical issues and lack of presence limited UNICEF's influence.

The line between 'emergency' and 'development' is particularly blurred with regard to HIV interventions. While there is more to be done with regard to HIV in Western and Choiseul Provinces, it is the evaluation team's view that it is unrealistic to expect that this could be achieved during emergency response. It is also noted that the lack of initiatives to advance HIV prevention in Choiseul Province pre-dated the emergency.

#### ***Immediate***

- Provide immediate and sustained material and technical support to frontline service providers such as Taro, Sasamunga and Gizo hospitals and clinics, including, as necessary, equipment, in-situ training, educational materials and supplies (leaflets, posters,).
- Ensure that the Honiara-based HIV officer is given opportunity to travel extensively to priority areas in Solomon Islands (particularly Gizo, Shortland Islands and Choiseul).

#### ***Medium***

- In partnership with national and provincial health authorities carry out a thorough risk analysis and baseline survey of HIV incidence and attitudes in Solomon Islands focusing on high risk and vulnerable communities in Western and Choiseul Provinces.
- Establish a medium term presence in Choiseul Province staffed by 2-3 UNICEF officers (1 team leader, 1 health officer (trained in HIV prevention), 1 education) and build HIV prevention into the key rationale for maintaining that sub-office.

#### ***Future emergencies***

- Ensure that UNICEF Pacific's HIV and AIDS Programme is tasked to assess and identify HIV issues and appropriate measures for response at the onset of a declared emergency.
- Ensure that within the early part of the initial response an HIV officer is deployed to identify key contact points and develop an appropriate strategy for ensuring HIV messages have the desired impact.
- Clarify who is responsible in the field for progressing HIV issues in emergencies and establish clear lines of communication between the field and technical expertise in the multi-country office in Suva.

# 4. GENERAL PROGRAMME ISSUES

## 4.1. UNICEF Pacific Emergency Preparedness and Response

UNICEF Pacific has made significant efforts to improve its emergency preparedness over recent years. A UNICEF Pacific Regional Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan were prepared in 2006 and included a range of scenarios. In the event of a real emergency, however, the plan did not provide useful guidance. Nevertheless, other initiatives such as pre-positioning of medical emergency kits were of great benefit. 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.

### Achievements

- UNICEF had an Emergency Focal Point and was able to deploy him immediately.
- Pre-positioned medical supplies were able to quickly be deployed to where they might be useful.

### Lessons Learned

- UNICEF Pacific staff need more training in emergency response and management.
- UNICEF Pacific partners need more training in emergency response.

### Recommendations

- Ensure UNICEF Pacific staff receive more detailed training in emergency response and management (and receive regular refresher training).
- In coordination with other regional agencies, develop a longer-term emergency response and management capacity building programme for national partners especially in Pacific Island Countries at high risk of natural disasters.
- Pre-position increased quantities of medical emergency kits, school-in-a-box kits, Kindy Kits, Recreation Kits, tents, safety equipment, buckets, blankets, and office set-up kits within the region.
- Establish emergency supply agreements for key items in advance. In this connection, UNICEF Pacific with support from UNICEF Supply Division (Copenhagen, Denmark) and UNICEF Regional Office (Bangkok, Thailand) should set up procurement agreements with supply centres in Australia and New Zealand. This will ensure a rapid turnout time for emergency supply.
- Map shipping routes and pre-identify preferred transport options for various emergency scenarios.
- Develop common standards and approaches with NGOs and other assistance providers that ensure beneficiaries are adequately consulted and informed on which emergency assistance providers are helping them and what their entitlements are.
- Monitor the performance of implementing partners to ensure that results of interventions meet UNICEF's desired targets and international standards.

## 4.2. Partnership

### 4.2.1. UNICEF relations with Solomon Islands Government

Prior to the April 2nd emergency UNICEF Honiara had engaged closely at senior levels with the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS), Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD), the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs (MWYCA) and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), including the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO). The establishment of cooperative working relationships with these key counterparts proved critical in the immediate response to the emergency. The evaluation team interviewed a number of senior SIG officers in key ministries in the course of assessing UNICEF's emergency response. As a consequence of substantial investments in relationship building through the process of consultation leading to development of the 'Pacific Plan' and as a result of the respectful approach of UNICEF to ensure the plan reflected government priorities a strong rapport has been developed with MHMS (including SWD), MHA (including NDMO), MWYCA and MEHRD. There was substantial praise for UNICEF's approach.

*"UNICEF were the first to break the traditional way of doing things where donors come to the country and decide what they want to do! Their regional framework reflects government policies..."*  
- Senior SIG Official

*"Incorporating government policies into clever programs will mean sustainability and ownership by government when the program is completed"*  
- Senior SIG Official

#### 4.2.2. Internal and external relationships

The crisis has not only has massive impacts on the lives of those who are among the affected population in Choiseul and Western Provinces but has placed intense pressure on UNICEF's external and internal relationships with both positive and negative implications. Senior officials in key line ministries within Solomon Islands government emphasized that under the intense pressure of the crisis their relationship with UNICEF only became stronger.

*"UNICEF helped SWD realise their own potential! The relationship goes back a long way but the tsunami made it a lot more intense". - SIG*

UNICEF's leadership and facilitative roles in key sectoral working groups is well documented in meeting minutes and was affirmed by both governments and non-government implementing partners. Importantly, however the facilitative and participating model of leadership and engagement has been matched by an ability to support government to get things done. UNICEF has used the 'Cash Assistance to Government' modality to provide practical assistance to government quickly. UNICEF was able to recognize and act quickly to resolve operational constraints inhibiting government's response, providing transport, lifejackets, fuel, and per diems, often in a short space of time. Government partners appreciated UNICEF's flexibility, responsiveness and approach.

*"It is easier to work with UNICEF – perhaps because of vast experience. But they didn't impose ideas. I don't like to be told what to do. I'll reject some foreign idea if not suitable. Instead of forcing, UNICEF listened". - SIG*

But this was not always the perception. In the first 6-8 weeks of the emergency UNICEF was also prone to the tendency of both central government, donors, and other agencies to 'fly in the experts' in order to tell provincial governments what they should do:

*"The first person from UNICEF didn't help much compared with [name withheld]. She was way up here. She had her own ideas. So she and I clashed a bit."*

In an interview with the evaluation team, UNICEF's most recent education consultant emphasized what works:

*'Don't expect government to fit into your framework, fit your plans into their framework'*

*'Relationships are key!'*

#### 4.2.3. Internal relationships

While UNICEF has excelled at building strong relationships with external stakeholders, internal relationships between different programmes and different offices within UNICEF Pacific have at times been strained. This is most evident in the dynamic between the Gizo sub-field office and Suva multi-country office. To an extent these tensions are probably unavoidable and represent the age-old divide between the head office and the field, or between programme areas and operations. Factors contributing to this will be discussed further in the section on management and operations.

#### 4.2.4. Non government partnerships

UNICEF worked closely with a number of non-government organizations with shared priorities. In the area of Child Protection, for example, UNICEF cooperated closely with Save the Children and World Vision. In Water and Sanitation (WATSAN), UNICEF worked closely with Oxfam, World Vision and Caritas.

#### 4.2.5. Lessons learned

- Cash Assistance to Government has proven to be an effective modality for advancing shared goals of Solomon Islands Government and UNICEF.
- UNICEF's commitment to 'being there' was appreciated and has been far more effective than the practice of 'having a remote operations base' of several other agencies.
- It is important to be cautious of exaggerating the impact of disaster on affected populations or assumption they cannot immediately or soon resume normal duties and roles. If they don't or can't resume normal duties, assess what can be done to support them before bringing external staff in to replace them. Teachers were still receiving salary after the disaster but according to some informants some teachers felt their role and status was undermined by the youth implementing the Safe Play Areas.
- UNICEF and other providers of external assistance need to identify strategies to get essential local staff (health and education) back to work, involved in assessments and leading the response as soon as possible (issues around child care, housing, proper food).

- It is also essential to ensure that local knowledge and expertise is not sidelined by the fanfare of 'disaster specialists'. External experts are next to useless if they don't acknowledge and seek out local knowledge.
- While difficult – it is important to consult and encourage participation from the provincial government and affected communities right from the assessment phase. This is an area where UNICEF's performance could be stronger.
- UNICEF's approach of providing practical support to local leadership and coordination (ie. People, printers, phones, paper) has been extremely effective.
- There was a general lack in the emergency of effective systems to get the right information to the right people to assist them to make the right choice for their circumstances. Especially regarding the risk of future disasters. UNICEF would do well to liaise with other partners now to ensure this is improved in future responses.

### 4.3. Inter-Agency Coordination

The complexity of inter-agency issues that stalled and ultimately derailed effective coordination of the initial response to the emergency and early recovery efforts is reflected in the minutes of the UN Disaster Management Team (DMT) Meeting held in Suva in 28 August and the report of the NDMO lessons-learned workshop held from 11-14 June 2007. Among the many issues labelled as constraints or lessons from the response were the following:

- The absence of the director of NDMO overseas delayed NDMO from taking an early lead on coordination and assessments.
- UN and NDMO scenarios for disasters in Solomon Islands had not planned for a disaster response centred around a remote provincial capital (Gizo).
- Information did not flow well and there were delays in getting an accurate sense of the scale of the disaster.
- Key UN agencies such as UNDP and UNOCHA did not take a leading role in coordinating the disaster and those experienced personnel who were deployed were rotated too quickly to develop effective relationships with counterparts.
- Unusually, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) volunteered to take on a coordination role for early recovery but was slow to deploy staff and establish coordination mechanisms.
- Rapid staff turnover amongst UN agencies frustrated government counterparts.
- Provincial governments were perceived as 'not functioning' and in some cases were unwilling to take on responsibilities as they claimed to be 'victims' too.
- Senior government leadership and decision-making was at times contradictory and politically motivated which led to reticence by some UN agencies to get involved.

While the UNDAC team made a good contribution, it was perceived by some as slow to deploy and withdrew after two weeks without leaving an effective coordination mechanism in place. UNDAC's role in bringing coordination together was largely viewed as positive. Some informants, however, noted that the introduction of UNDAC assessment tools after alternative tools had been mobilised caused confusion.

### 4.4. Funding

**Relevant Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies in Initial Response (usually 6- 8 weeks):**

- *Assess financial and administrative capacity in country, including sources of cash, banking and financial systems, available funds disbursement methods and security of assets.*
- *Through the use of standard checklists for funds management, provide guidance on funds management and disbursement modalities at the onset of the crisis.*
- *Put in place internal oversight and control systems while preserving the safety of staff members, partners and assets.*
- *Respond rapidly to queries regarding finance and administration from Field Offices.*

**Relevant Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies after the Initial Response (up to and beyond six months):**

- *Timely consultation with Country Offices, Regional Offices, DHR and other stakeholders to deploy finance and administration staff to emergency duty stations, as required.*

#### 4.4.1. Funding Appeal

UNICEF Pacific issued an immediate needs document within 73 hours of the April 2 earthquake. A request was made for US\$500,000 to cover UNICEF's immediate response. UNICEF Pacific also applied for a further US\$250,000 from the UNICEF Emergency Programme Fund (EPF). Within a further 72 hours US\$500,000 had been mobilized; US\$100,000 from the Mercury Fund, US\$100,000 from the Japan National Committee for UNICEF and US\$300,000 from the Government of Japan. US\$200,000 was reprogrammed from UNICEF Pacific's Regular Resources. The New Zealand National Committee for UNICEF and the Australian National Committee for UNICEF also raised funds equivalent to US\$16,319.71 for the Solomon Islands emergency which was directed to psychosocial and child protection needs.

In mid April, following rapid assessments across the affected area, it was determined by the UN Disaster Management Team (DMT) that a common UN appeal would not be required. In hindsight it has been suggested to the team that this decision may have been premature as insufficient information was available at the time to make this decision. From UNICEF's perspective it was clear from assessments that many thousands of children were severely impacted by the disaster and that a significant UNICEF response was required. UNICEF therefore prepared and launched its own appeal document requesting funds to meet recovery and rehabilitation phases of the emergency response.

UNICEF Pacific appealed for an additional US\$1,290,500, allocated to the following priorities.

Education	US\$380,000
Health and Nutrition	US\$210,000
Water and Sanitation	US\$320,000
Child Protection	US\$330,000
HIV and AIDS	US\$50,000

Further breakdown of these figures by sector is provided in the Solomon Islands Emergency Management Plan Results Matrix at Annex 5.

Overall contributions from UNICEF totalled US\$1,436,262.73. A further US\$300,000.00 was funded through the Global Thematic Humanitarian Funds (NYHQ) for Basic Education and Gender Equality. US\$517,472.44 was funded through the Global Thematic Humanitarian Funds (NYHQ) for Emergencies. Japan provided US\$280,380.00 and the NZ National Committee has provided US\$16,319.71.

Contributions from Global Thematic Humanitarian Funds were tied to the education sector or more specifically for Basic Education and Gender Equality and in particular Girls Education (ICHD).

UNICEF Pacific reports that as at 31 October 2007, in total US\$2,550,434.88 in funds was formally made available for the emergency response to the Solomon Islands disaster. In addition to this, substantial but often unquantified contributions of staff time and other resources were made available to the emergency response from EAPRO, UNICEF's multi-country office in Suva, and Honiara field-office.

#### 4.4.2. Budgeting and Disbursement of Funds

The disbursement of funds for the emergency has been an intricate process. Programme staff and consultants based in the field expressed frustration that they did not have direct control over budgets for their programmes or a clear picture of the funding available. This made it difficult to prioritise. One consultant claimed he was told to 'just spend' and then, without warning, advised that 'there is no more funding available'.

According to UNICEF Pacific's Chief of Policy, Advocacy, Planning and Evaluation (PAPE) a significant lesson from this emergency is to ensure that a clear budget is developed from the outset based firmly on the priorities identified in the Emergency Management Plan. Financial management in UNICEF's internal accounting systems (ProMs) should be structured on the Emergency Management Plan Results Matrix.

Despite some difficulties and very significant procurement and supply constraints, UNICEF's disbursement of funds has occurred at a satisfactory rate. As at 15 October a total of US\$1,026,033.67 has been spent on procurement of supplies.

### 4.4.3. Operational Costs

The operational costs of UNICEF's response to the disaster have been very high relative to the size of the population affected. This is in large part due to the remoteness of the affected area, the need to mobilize supplies quickly and the challenges of organizing transport. Air charters were used to airlift supplies from UNICEF in Papua New Guinea and in Indonesia. Many other supplies have had to be transported by air to Gizo (in much smaller volumes therefore many trips). Access to most communities from Gizo is usually only possible by boat. In the early part of the emergency the availability of boats was at times limited due to increased demand.

Other factors contributing to high operation costs were brought to the team's attention by UNICEF staff and key counterparts. UNICEF Pacific's Chief of Operations noted that a tendency towards reactive rather than planned decision making meant that it often became necessary to arrange urgent and expensive air transport options whereas cheaper sea-freight options would have been possible if planning and preparedness had been better. The use of charters and the routing of supplies through Gizo rather than through existing regular shipping services also led to increased costs.

Local counterparts noted that certain International UNICEF staff were unwilling to take local advice and insisted on distribution approaches that were slow, expensive and inefficient. By way of example and as noted earlier, delivery of education supplies to Choiseul took over a week utilising a single boat for four separate trips. This was slow and inconvenient to local Education staff that had to be present out of hours to meet deliveries which were sometimes postponed without this being communicated to them.

### 4.4.4. Impact and Key Achievements

The identification of financial resource and disbursement of funds through government and non-government partners is an area UNICEF Pacific has done particularly well. UNICEF's overall impact has been greatly enhanced by its strategic engagement and financial support for programmes implemented directly by government and through the establishment of cooperation agreements with NGO partners such as Save the Children, World Vision and Caritas.

#### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that a clear budget is developed from the outset based firmly on the priorities identified in the Emergency Management Plan.
- Financial management in UNICEF's internal accounting systems (ProMs) should be structured on the Emergency Management Plan Results Matrix.
- Develop and continuously update a Supply Plan in accordance with the Emergency Management Plan and supply monitoring.



# 5. GENERAL OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

## 5.1. Supplies, Logistics, Information Technology (IT) and Security

### 5.1.1. Supplies

A major issue raised at all stages of the evaluation concerns the efficient, timely and effective delivery of supplies from the point a need is identified and requisition is placed, to the time supplies reach the intended beneficiary or meet the specified operational purpose. Senior management in Suva office in both Operations and Programme areas noted that this had been a weakness in UNICEF's response and accurately predicted that it would be raised as a major concern by staff in the field.

Procurement for all 14 Pacific countries where UNICEF Pacific has programmes is coordinated centrally through the Multi-country office in Suva and varies according to whether procurement occurs locally, is carried through the Contracts Review Committee (CRC) process, or is requisitioned from UNICEF Supply Division in Copenhagen. In each case there are numerous steps in the approval process representing points where supply orders can be delayed. Local procurement action time is monitored by management through monthly reports. The September 2007 'Dashboard Status' report notes that 97% of supplies were delivered in 12 weeks, which is an impressive statistic in light of the very significant logistical challenges to supply in the Pacific, though it is obviously not a useful measure of UNICEF's emergency response capability.

#### **Achievements**

- UNICEF Pacific has been able to respond to its first major emergency with considerable professionalism and effectiveness.
- The pre-positioning of emergency medical supplies was significant time, cost and potentially lifesaving initiative.
- UNICEF has over many decades as a provider of emergency assistance organization developed standard procedures to ensure that supplies are sourced and delivered in a manner that is both cost-effective and accountable.

#### **Findings and lessons**

Overall UNICEF Pacific's procedures and mechanisms for tracking and monitoring requisition processes appear to be sound. There would be benefit in carrying out a review of work processes to identify bottlenecks and benefit in Suva-based staff spending increased time in the field to train and support field staff – particularly in an emergency setting when many new staff are likely to be employed. There is also an apparent need to improve the 'emergency footing' of Suva in terms of ensuring that Operations staff are trained to recognize emergency priorities and facilitate accordingly. While examples were provided where supply processes were rushed through and all steps of a CRC process were completed in less than 2 days other items have taken many months to arrive (e.g. tent supplies to Choiseul Province, water tanks and other WATSAN hardware).

#### **Staff perspectives**

Field-based staff thought delays in supply were due to 'lack of understanding of what an emergency is in Suva'. Operations staff in Suva thought 'delay in actions were mainly due to inadequate or no understanding at all of the UNICEF policy and procedures at the Field level'.

Other common causes of delays brought to the teams attention included:

- Inadequate documentation provided by the field (specifications, government counterpart requests)
- Further information required from the field but not being provided.
- Rapid turnover of staff in the field resulting in questions to the field not being answered and the requisition process stalling.
- Changes in priority or preference from the field (also related to high turnover).
- Approval being delayed due to travel of the authorized delegate or other key person.
- Supply process being delayed due to training or other commitments by key staff.
- Supply process being delayed by external constraints such as the unavailability of supplies or excessive delays by the supplier (e.g. Copenhagen Supply Division).
- Dramatically increased workloads in Suva without increased staff to carry them out.
- Supply being delayed due to unavailability of funds.



### 5.1.2. Logistics

UNICEF appears to have struggled to mount a logistical response adequate to the demands of an ambitious emergency programme and able to deal with the challenges posed by a major disaster occurring in a remote area and affecting geographically dispersed island communities with limited infrastructure.

Gaps in planning and staffing meant that it was some weeks into the emergency before a supply and logistics officer was deployed to Gizo. Most procurement was handled by Suva and forwarded to Honiara. The lack of a dedicated logistics officer, or even staff with basic training in logistics, meant that time was wasted getting supplies moved from Honiara to Gizo. Further delays in mounting an effective response resulted from the routing of supplies for Choiseul through Gizo, where UNICEF had established a warehouse. Communities in Choiseul were generally the last to receive supplies and based on community interviews, received substantially less of key items per head than Western Province.

#### ***Warehousing and Supply Logistics***

Operational management in the Gizo field office appeared professional and efficient. Secure and clean warehousing was observed and supplies were adequately stored and organised. Sound procedures for appeared to be in place for the issue of materials and recording of losses (if any). Stack cards were observed on all commodities and documentation appeared in good order.

The current standard of warehousing is the result of improvements made by the Operations Manager. According to the Warehouse Manager and Operations Manager stores were poorly managed in the early part of the emergency. While this is to an extent understandable it also reflects the delay in ensuring that experienced logistics staff were deployed. As a consequence it is difficult to assess the extent of losses and damage as it appears that record keeping prior to arrival of the current Operations Manager was not adequate. The Warehouse Manager reports that some supplies were stolen from the previous warehouse but was unsure what exactly. The Operations Manager was aware of one box with a printer being stolen during unloading of a vessel. This was documented and reported to the police. The Chief Education Officer in Choiseul Province reported that some school tent materials were stolen in Choiseul (but after delivery to the community)

There are no immediate improvements necessary. Current staffing is adequate. With the departure of the current Operations Manager and Gizo Team Leader, however, a significant gap in operations staffing may occur. Local staff are motivated and effective in their current roles but may not be sufficiently experienced or competent with computer-based reporting systems to be confident that systems will be maintained and adhered to.

#### ***Distribution***

Early documentation and record keeping was pretty poor. The situation is much improved. Stock movement records now show where commodities are dispatched to (to the village level in the Western Province but for Choiseul Province only note when goods are dispatched to Taro for further redistribution).

The absence of trained logistics staff to facilitate movement of goods through Honiara to Taro and Gizo and ensure their safe receipt and storage prior to distribution has been a major weakness of UNICEF's response.

#### ***Field Office Set-up***

UNICEF is to be congratulated for establishing a functioning field office in Gizo within days of the disaster. Nevertheless, establishment of a similar presence in Choiseul Province should have been accelerated. It must be noted that the location of many areas affected by the April 2nd disaster allowed humanitarian agencies to base their main operations in a reasonably well equipped Provincial Capital (Gizo). Parts of Gizo Town and its amenities (eg. the hospital, some water supplies) were significantly damaged by the earthquake and tsunami, but by and large, facilities such as the main hotel, other accommodation, roads, water supplies, electricity and phone connections, remained reasonably intact. This may not be the case in future disasters. UNICEF should learn from NGOs such as IRFC who have developed and pre-positioned office set-up kits for rapid field deployment.

### **Information Technology**

UNICEF Pacific quickly established a field office in Gizo. Computers and other IT equipment were set up rapidly but required regular maintenance. IT support from the Suva Office was not always available when needed. Phone and fax access was reasonable but Internet connectivity was variable – not surprising given the remoteness of the field office.

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure all staff are familiar with supply requisition requirements – if necessary, provide rapid refresher (for existing staff) and orientation for all new staff at the onset of a declared emergency and as new staff are mobilized.
- Ensure a dedicated Logistics and Supply Officer is mobilized as part of the initial response team and develop clear staff replacement timetable to maintain logistical expertise through the first six months of an emergency response (depending on scale and duration of supply management required).
- Monitor the performance of implementing partners to ensure that results of interventions meet UNICEF's desired targets and international standards.
- Develop field office set-up kit and pre-position accordingly for rapid deployment in the Pacific.
- Learn now from what it has taken to set up Gizo and set a minimum standard for UNICEF operations. Train staff in its set-up and work to a deadline (eg. 48 hours)
- Develop standby arrangement with IT and Communications firm to allow rapid set-up and servicing of basic field office equipment and communications.

### **5.1.3. Security and Safety**

Emergency environments carry inherent risks to the security, safety and wellbeing of UNICEF staff and consultants as well as to the affected population they seek to assist. In Solomon Islands risks to staff safety and security include:

- health risks
- ongoing possibility of political or civil disturbance
- random crime
- vehicle accidents and marine accidents and natural disaster.

The UNICEF sub-office in Honiara has an effective security plan in place in conjunction with other UN agencies, under the supervision of the UNDP Security Officer. Authority to travel must be granted by supervisors and is monitored.

#### **Marine travel**

The need to undertake sea travel between islands to implement and monitor UNICEF programmes poses a significant risk to UNICEF staff engaged in the current emergency operations in Western and Choiseul Provinces. The usual mode of travel in both provinces is small open outboard fibreglass or aluminium boat with single engines of 40-75 HP capacity.

UNICEF Pacific and particularly the Gizo field office have instituted a number of safety protocols which the team note and believe demonstrate a high standard of security awareness amongst the current UNICEF team. A culture of safety appears to be evident throughout the organization and no explicit breaches of safety were observed during the evaluation.

Positive and proactive measures taken to manage risk which were observed include:

- Only UNICEF staff members allowed to drive UNICEF vehicles.
- All observed marine field trips were well-equipped with EPIRB (emergency positioning beacon), life jackets, torch with spare batteries, spare water and rations and satellite phone.
- Equipment was checked prior trips going out by the Gizo Team Leader and the Operations Manager ensured safety equipment was signed for and returned.
- Access codes and emergency numbers (UNICEF Office Gizo) were affixed to satellite phones.
- The evaluation team was advised and complied with a 6 pm call in schedule when in the field.
- A daily phone-call schedule was in place between the Gizo sub-office with the only remotely located (and female) staff based at Taro.



Gaps and suggestions in terms of security that the evaluation team note include:

- Consultants were not provided a verbal or written briefing on security or safety issues prior to be mobilised to the field. Given the international nature of UNICEF's deployments it should not be assumed that UNICEF staff or consultants are familiar with risks in the Solomon Islands environment.
- Current safety in the field seems overly reliant on the initiative and diligence of individuals rather than representing a thorough analysis and institutionalisation of appropriate safety protocols.
- Reportedly, the first UNICEF staff deployed to the emergency did not have appropriate safety equipment (life-jackets, satellite phones, etc.) when they arrived and worked without it.
- There was no specific documentation of risk management procedures and protocols in the event of an accident, capsizing or accidental drowning.
- There has not been specific training or awareness for staff regarding safe marine travel (eg. lifesaving or first aid).
- Procurement of some key safety equipment (eg. GPS) has been slow (the team understands that this will soon be completed).
- Other NGO partners of UNICEF have reportedly had accidents at sea. Given its close coordination with NGOs, UNICEF should request incident reports (if they exist) and use these experiences to examine their own level of preparedness for similar incidents and ensure preparedness of partners.

### Recommendations


- Ensure a rapid security and safety assessment is completed as the first task of the first UNICEF staff member to be deployed. This can then be written up as a one page security brief to be emailed to any staff or consultants being deployed, or could form an annex to contract of any consultants.
- Prepare and store marine safety kits for rapid deployment with the emergency response team.
- Document the security and safety procedures and good practices that currently exist.
- Conduct a thorough safety audit of actual and potential risks in UNICEF Pacific's operating environment and prepare short (1-2 page) context specific risk management plans for all UNICEF offices across the Pacific.
- Ensure new staff, consultants and seconded UNICEF staff are briefed on operations, safety and security before deployment (also allows opportunity for internal relationship building and training in UNICEF Pacific policies, procedures).
- UNICEF should request incident reports from NGOs and use these experiences to examine their own level of preparedness for similar incidents.
- Ensure debriefing is conducted as a matter of course and staff are given the opportunity and encouraged to receive counselling if they have been involved in critical incidents, under prolonged stress or would otherwise benefit.
- Ensure safety and security items receive priority in the procurement process.

## 5.2. UNICEF Pacific Management and Leadership

In the initial phase of the emergency UNICEF Pacific senior management, operations and programme staff focused intense attention on responding well to the emergency. UNICEF field staff were insulated from many of the normal requirements of UNICEF financial rules and procedures. Procurement processes were fast-tracked and the importance of meeting UNICEF's CCC was emphasized over financial regulations.

There were substantial investments in time on behalf of senior managers which according to some staff caused delays getting decision on other non-emergency programmes. There was a large increase in workload from staff involved on the operational side but some staff in Suva office reported they felt marginalized and 'out of the loop'. It was difficult for staff not directly involved in the emergency response to get management's attention for important but non-emergency priorities. Staff on the operational side were stressed by the constant pressure to 'fast track' processes that normally take weeks in just a few days and to make payments when documentation was incomplete. As one programme officer observed:

*"[Suva] needed new work processes from the start. Everyone jumped in but there was no reconfiguration of communication and work processes. Staff would be given sudden requests and not know the context and not sure who to deal with. A lot of programme assistants got frustrated. It was unclear when and whether to follow normal processes. A small emergency team was established but it needed to be done with the whole office."*



In Suva, UNICEF Pacific's Deputy Representative and Chief of Policy, Advocacy, Planning and Evaluation (PAPE), Chief of Operations, and the Chiefs of Programme and Programme Officers including Integrated Child Health and Development, Adolescent Development, and Child Protection formed the core emergency team. Several key Operations and Administrative staff were also involved.

UNICEF Pacific was also given strong support by the East Asia Regional Office (EAPRO), who deployed their Emergency Focal Point to assist preparation of the Emergency Management Plan (EMP) and NYHQ, who assisted by identifying suitable candidates for the emergency response and emergency funds.

The development of the EMP was completed by the end of week 3 and was a considerable achievement, representing the first time in the Asia Pacific that key results and targets for emergency response were spelt out in advance. UNICEF's firm commitment to the principle that the fundamental rights of every child to protection and survival cannot be compromised led to highly ambitious targets of 100% (eg. for number of children in affected area receiving RNI).

UNICEF Pacific senior management demonstrated a personal commitment to visiting the field and building an effective relationship with the Western Province government. The UNICEF Pacific Representative arrived on 12 April (Day 10) to meet the Premier and Provincial Secretary of Western Province.

### **5.3. Human Resources**

On 3rd April 2007 the first conference call took place between the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea Country Offices (CO), EAPRO Regional Office, Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS) New York (host) and Geneva, and the Division of Human Resources (DHR) Emergency Unit. Initial assessment of the situation undertaken by the Solomon Islands Office identified immediate human resource needs, and the HR Emergency Unit agreed to support six requests on 3rd April 2007: 3 Water and Sanitation (WATSAN), 1 Nutrition, 1 Communication, and 1 Supplies and Logistics.

The HR Emergency Unit began tracking deployment statistics to assess immediate and future needs using the standard Operational Staffing Matrix (OSM). Additional requests were received on 9th April 2007: 1 WATSAN and 10th April 2007: 1 Health Education Adviser (HEA). Deployments were made based on the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), employing internal redeployments (IR), Standby Partners (SBP), Temporary Fixed Term (TFT) and/or Consultancies (SSA).

Response to the initial requests of 3rd April was as follows. The first deployment arrived 6th April WATSAN (IR), 7th April Health and Nutrition (TFT); 9th April WATSAN (SBP); 11th April Supplies and Logistics (IR); 17th April Child Protection (SSA). Deployment of additional assignments arrived 15 days after request: Emergency Management Expert (IR). Additional WATSAN (SSA) and Health and Nutrition (SSA) personnel were on the ground 30 days and 43 days of request date. In sum, the CCC mandated timeframe of 6 (43 days) to 8 (56 days) weeks was met in 100 percent of the initial deployments. Release of internal staff came from UNICEF Papua New Guinea, Myanmar and Indonesia COs, demonstrating a certain level of organizational coordination and cohesion.

While UNICEF Pacific with exemplary support from NYQH and EAPRO was able to quickly deploy many staff in the initial response, it took significantly longer to identify longer term replacements. In addition, some cases senior management staff were deployed directly to the field without receiving a briefing in Suva. It would be useful for UNICEF Pacific to itself develop a sub-regional emergency roster of people with emergency/and or Pacific experience and maintain periodic (inter-emergency) contact with the main specialists on the roster.

### **5.4. Reporting and Internal Communications**

Based on some reports from staff, it is apparent that communication within UNICEF Pacific as a whole could have been improved. In an ideal world it would be good to ensure that consultants are briefed and meet key operational staff in Suva before being deployed.

Several staff noted that throughout the emergency response reporting mechanisms have been very unclear. This clearly detracts from effectiveness and may even cause staff stress.

## 5.5. Finance and Administration

### **Achievements**

- UNICEF administration is governed by established procedures which is both a strength and a weakness. Once procedures have been learnt UNICEF can transfer staff and anticipate they will be able to work effectively.
- Staff capacity at all offices is high. There is always room for development

### **Constraints and Gaps**

- Many of UNICEF's internal processes during an emergency still appear quite cumbersome – particularly for those new to UNICEF. This leads to stress at all levels of the organisation.
- The degree of urgency attached to different requests varied. Excessive and unjustifiable investments of time were required by the Gizo Team Leader to ensure that Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA) and salaries were paid to national staff.
- Salaries were often paid late and only when prompted.
- Trust, or the lack of it, between Suva and the field and sub-field office appears to be a problem.
- Decision-making concerning issues such as travel itineraries, logistics and minor programme issues is overly and unnecessarily centralised in Suva. This resulted in local knowledge and advice not being heard and several poor decisions being made.
- Staff noted that the long delay in approval from NYHQ to establish a bank account in Gizo. This was a significant constraint to effective financial management. Staff in Gizo had to hand-carry large cash advances. These were stored insecurely in the office. A safe was purchased for the Gizo office but at the time of the evaluation was still in Honiara office.

### **Lessons**

- The lesson with regard to 'remote management' is to avoid it wherever possible. Get good people. Give them the budget resources and room to do their job. Trust them to do it and monitor to ensure it is done well.
- Bureaucratic processes while inevitable within large bureaucracies and the UN in particular, impose very substantial costs.

### **Recommendations**

- Set up emergency unit in Suva country office at onset of emergencies with representation from senior management, finance, supply, PAPE and Programme.
- Provide guidance and on-the-job training and reminders on teamwork and giving and receiving feedback.
- Encourage cross-department exchanges and rotations and exchanges.
- If emergency scenarios/training are run, provide opportunities for Operations staff to 'experience' emergency priorities.
- Ensure all staff are familiar with financial procedures – if necessary, provide rapid refresher (for existing staff) and orientation for all new staff at the onset of a declared emergency and as new staff are mobilized.
- Identify additional staffing resources to assist in operational areas (eg. finance) as soon as a large emergency occurs.
- In emergencies, document when procedures are not being followed (Note for the Record) but nevertheless proceed if requests will otherwise be delayed due to inadequate paperwork at the time of request.
- Ensure there are clear contact points for decisions and approvals.
- Review work processes in key operational areas and fine-tune for emergencies.
- Assess the Contract Review Committee process to develop supply agreements for rapid purchasing of equipment in an emergency.
- Implement standards of excellence in field support and sanctions for poor performance.
- Monitor junior staff in key operational areas (travel, finance, administration) to ensure timely and devolved decision-making is encouraged through-out the organisation.

# 6. UNICEF'S PERFORMANCE AGAINST OECD/DAC CRITERIA

## 6.1. Relevance and Appropriateness

CCCs are a guide and need to be carefully considered in the light of an individual country's context. The Pacific has particular vulnerabilities and unique strengths which need to be carefully analyzed to assess the relevance and appropriateness of a particular emergency intervention. The CCCs were developed from the distilled experience of 50 years of humanitarian intervention by UNICEF. Most but not all of this experience is applicable to the Pacific. UNICEF's response has been largely relevant and appropriate. Because of the multitude of actors involved, UNICEF decided not to conduct any initial surveys and depended on the assessments of others. The evaluation, however, found that initial assessment data generated by a variety of organizations (government and non-government) were painfully slow in materializing and often contained conflicting or confusing information. This meant UNICEF often had to make assumptions or "second-guess" the quantity and range of supplies and take more time than desired to negotiate distribution localities with other partners also struggling to identify actual needs.

Governments and humanitarian agencies working across the Pacific must make stringent efforts to harmonize emergency data collection tools and streamline information management systems in declared emergencies. The evaluation team note the recent efforts being made by UNICEF, SOPAC, IRFC, UNOCHA, UNDP, WHO and The Asia Foundation to harmonise data collection tools and processes.<sup>17</sup>

The evaluation also noted that the appropriateness of some CCCs (eg. measles campaign) need to be considered in context. It would be valuable to review each of the CCCs against risk profiles of Pacific countries. To develop sound risk profiles, it would be expedient to conduct epidemiological research to assess the greatest risks in the individual context of the 14 UNICEF Pacific countries and inform disaster preparedness planning.

## 6.2. Efficiency

The criterion of efficiency imposes special challenges when measuring the performance of agencies involved in emergency response in the Pacific. The costs in terms of communication and transport need consideration while the enormous diversity and scattered nature of small communities mean that economies of scale and 'template solutions' are often unlikely to achieve results.


UNICEF's mode of programme delivery, prioritizing implementation through local partners does however mean that substantial reductions in cost have been achieved to reach desired outputs. In particular the support provided to MHMS, MEHRD and Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) have allowed these national institutions to function far more effectively in the field, while the development of strong relationships with these Ministries and the strategic placement of UNICEF national staff and international consultants at the field and country office level has enabled UNICEF to provide advice and input to achieve concrete results in an efficient, sustainable and cost effective way.

There is room for some gains in efficiency in terms of improving strategic planning, operational practices and logistics, monitoring and evaluation, training and staff capacity development, and staff travel. It was noted by field staff as well as the evaluation team that it is a common practice for staff from the multi-country office to make numerous short visits to the field offices in Honiara and Gizo. This is costly in terms of travel time, airfares, and disruption caused in the field (to field staff and local officials). While it is invaluable to have regular contact between offices, longer and less frequent visits would ensure time was available to support and train field staff, develop relationships and a greater appreciation for the challenges of the field.

## 6.3 Effectiveness

UNICEF's response overall has been quite effective but there is a wide difference between its performance across different sectors, in different parts of the affected areas (UNICEF appears to have generally been less effective in Choiseul Province when compared to Western Province) and depending on which aspect of UNICEF, as an organization, one considers. Unsurprisingly, UNICEF has been more effective in areas where it has had a substantial presence. While considerable effort has been spent by staff based in Gizo to ensure that needs in Choiseul were adequately covered, in almost every sector Choiseul Province appears to have received less supplies and attention than Western Province, and has received it later.

<sup>17</sup> Workshop Report on Information Management for Emergencies in the Pacific, 13-16 November 2007, Suva, Fiji Islands. Suva: UNICEF/UNOCHA/UNDP/SOPAC/TAFOFDAG WHO.



Among the most effective of UNICEF's interventions was the pre-positioning of medical supplies in Honiara. This allowed UNICEF to respond very quickly to meet the needs of Gizo and Sasamunga hospitals which were severely damaged by the tsunami. UNICEF was also very effective in advocating on child protection issues, encouraging and leading coordination efforts, utilising its 'brand' effectively to lobby government and NGOs to adopt 'best practice' approaches to responding to the needs of children in emergencies, and in supporting a comprehensive measles vaccination and Vitamin A campaign.

UNICEF effectiveness has been considerably enhanced by the quality of its relationships with government counterparts. The use of government counterparts as implementing partners has been particularly positive and the relationship has been greatly strengthened by UNICEF's flexibility in meeting particular needs of government partners whether for boats and motors, per diems and petrol, or technical advice and computers.

UNICEF's reliance on external partners for programme implementation has positive and negative implications for its overall effectiveness. Use of government partners is essential for sustainability of UNICEF's programmes, is more cost-effective, and avoids duplication of effort or substitution of external programmes where government should be taking the initiative. The reliance on government and NGO counterparts allows UNICEF to use extensive pre-existing networks and systems adapted to the Solomon Islands situation. However, UNICEF's effectiveness and overall performance is closely tied to the performance of its partners. Where implementing partners perform strongly UNICEF's performance is enhanced. Where the distribution by implementing partners is unequal and inadequate, UNICEF's performance suffers. There is a strong case for increased efforts by UNICEF to monitor the performance of its implementing partners to ensure that results of interventions meet UNICEF's desired targets and international standards.

## 6.4. Impact

The team found no major examples of negative impacts from UNICEF interventions. UNICEF's government counterparts were of the view that UNICEF's programmes and presence had a substantial and positive impact. The quality of UNICEF's coordination played a key role:

*They saw the importance of not acting alone. Getting stakeholders involved is key to getting progress. They helped us concentrate on an area that is normally neglected.*  
- SIG Official

UNICEF's flexibility in being able to support government was also important.

*UNICEF was quick in its response and ensured that things were happening. It drove the process to the extent we could work together. UNICEF looked at how we could collaborate and who is doing what on the ground.*  
- SIG Official

UNICEF's impact in communities was most visible in those communities who had received education supplies such as tents, school bags, SIB kits and Recreation kits. In some cases the addition of a UNICEF tent led directly to the restarting of school.

The impact of other interventions such as provision of medical supplies has depended on the presence and initiative of counterparts to ensure supplies reach their intended purpose and are stored and distributed appropriately.

## 6.5. Coverage

The ambitious nature of many of the targets in the Emergency Management Plan requires that UNICEF achieve coverage rates at close to 100% of affected communities. In reality this has only been partially achieved. UNICEF has clearly achieved better coverage in Western Province. Choiseul Province was not covered in the same depth as Western Province.

There are a number of factors that constrained UNICEF's coverage:

- Poor weather and difficult sea conditions occasionally meant distribution could not take place or were delayed.
- Not all villages/settlements have schools and/or nearby clinics and some of these communities have not received vital supplies.
- In the initial emergency response the lack of "local knowledge" on the exact location of IDP camps, or because of the difficulties of tracking inland and uphill to get to these camps, occasionally hampered supply distribution. Where it is not