

STATEMENT

Statement by UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman on the Earthquake in Haiti

NEW YORK, 13 January 2010 - We are saddened to learn of the devastating earthquake in Haiti. While relief efforts have begun, communications are extremely difficult and accurate information is still scarce, it is clear that the consequences are severe and many children are among the victims. Our hearts go out to the families whose lives have been so terribly impacted by this tragedy.

Early news reports indicate that schools have collapsed, homes destroyed, and hospitals overwhelmed by the large numbers of injured coming in for medical assistance.

UNICEF is deploying necessary supplies to Jacmel and Port-au-Prince as quickly as possible to assist with recovery efforts including clean water and sanitation, therapeutic foods, medical supplies and temporary shelter. We will also be focusing on children who have become separated from their families to protect them from harm or exploitation.

Expert estimates suggest that 46 per cent of Haiti's nearly 10 million people are under 18 years of age. The special needs of children for food, shelter and protection, must be factored in at the very outset of relief efforts and UNICEF will do everything in its power to make sure these needs are met.

We are also greatly concerned for our colleagues from the United Nations mission, MINUSTAH, many of whom are still missing.

All UNICEF staff in Port-au-Prince have been accounted for, although UNICEF premises in Port-au-Prince are badly damaged and our communications facilities have been destroyed.

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