

## PRESS RELEASE

## Earthquake anniversary highlights need for basic systems to benefit Haiti's children

**GENEVA/PORT-AU-PRINCE, 7 January 2011** – One year after the devastating January 12 earthquake shook their fragile lives, Haiti's 4 million children continue to suffer from inequitable access to basic water, sanitation, healthcare, and education services and protection from disease, exploitation, and unsanitary conditions, UNICEF said today.

Today, more than 1 million people – approximately 380,000 of whom are children – still live in crowded camps. The relief and recovery efforts of Haitians and the international community have been extraordinary. Nonetheless, the United Nations children's agency noted in its report *"Children in Haiti: One Year After - The long road from relief to recovery"* issued today in recognition of the anniversary, that the recovery process is just beginning.

"Children in particular suffered and continue to suffer enormously because of successive emergencies experienced in 2010, and they have yet to fully enjoy their right to survival, health, education, and protection," said Ms. Françoise Gruloos-Ackermans, UNICEF Haiti Representative.

"Haiti poses huge institutional and systemic issues that predated the earthquake, and that require more than an emergency response to resolve. This places even more emphasis on the need for organizations such as UNICEF to focus on developing and reinforcing structural interventions that will adequately prepare this country and its inhabitants for the future," Gruloos-Ackermans added.

Responding to the challenges of successive humanitarian emergencies requires commitment and investment in sustainable solutions for Haiti's people. Water, sanitation and hygiene were on the decline prior to January 12, with only 19 per cent of people having access to basic sanitation facilities in 2006, down from 29 per cent in 1990.

In response, UNICEF provided more than 11,300 latrines serving over 800,000 people. Every day, over 600 latrines are desludged as part of UNICEF's ongoing efforts to maintain safe sanitation standards. While challenges remain in both water and sanitation, UNICEF is working to help implement sustainable solutions that include investing in water systems and focusing on community-led sanitation.

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, UNICEF, WHO and partners conducted emergency vaccination campaigns immunizing 2 million children against preventable diseases such as polio, diphtheria, and measles. A distribution of 360,000 insecticide-treated bednets reached more than 163,000 households in the malaria-endemic southern coastal regions.

At the height of the emergency response, UNICEF and partners trucked a daily average of 8.3 million litres of safe water to approximately 680,000 people. With the ongoing cholera outbreak, UNICEF is providing more than 10.9 tons of chlorine and over 45 million water purification tablets to ensure safe water for 3 million people in the capital city and the surrounding towns.

The UNICEF-led Child Protection Interagency Working Group helped register and reunite children who were separated from their families and worked with national and international partners to put in place 369 Child-Friendly-Spaces for close to 95,000 children across earthquake-affected areas. UNICEF also initiated prevention and response activities to gender-based violence, and, importantly, on child trafficking. In addition, to date, 4,948 children have been registered and 1,265 have been reunited.

UNICEF and partners helped establish schools, procured tents and educational materials and allocated resources so that 720,000 children could resume their lessons, and in some cases, start school for the first time. Nonetheless, more than half of Haiti's children do not attend school and school construction continues to be hampered by rubble clearing and land tenure issues.

The earthquake highlighted the deeply rooted structural problems faced by Haiti's children, including chronic malnutrition, which affects one in three children under five years of age. UNICEF worked with partners to deliver nutritional supplements to address particular needs of infants and their mothers. By mid-year, a network of 107 'baby friendly tents' was fully operational, providing nutritional advice and counseling for mothers and children, including a safe space to breastfeed. To date, more than 102,000 children and 48,900 mothers have been reached through these services with nutrition counseling and information.

"We have seen results in the past year, but significant gaps remain and much more must be done in collaboration with UN, NGO, private sector, civil society, and government partners to ensure we are delivering on our commitments to children and women, including the commitment to resolve the situation of those still displaced by the earthquake and those in remote rural areas who struggle to meet their daily needs," said Gruloos-Ackermans.

"Haiti's children have a right to grow up with education, nutrition, clean water, and safe sanitation; they have a right to be free from exploitation and disease – and we believe that with support and commitment, the seeds of recovery and development can be planted and these goals can be achieved."

Listen to a podcast with Tania McBride, UNICEF Communication Specialist for Haiti, and, Carlos Vasquez, architect and UNICEF Education Specialist, who have been working in Haiti to find out how the education system is moving forward one year after the earthquake.

<http://www.educationandtransition.org/resources/rebuilding-haiti%E2%80%99s-education-system-one-year-after-the-earthquake/>

Listen to a podcast with Dr. Ralph Ternier, Director of Community Care and Support with Zanmi Lasante/Partners in Health, on the impact of the cholera epidemic on education and children.

<http://www.educationandtransition.org/resources/educating-against-cholera-in-haiti/>