SITUATION OVERVIEW AND HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

As of 25 April, the Union of Comoros experienced significant impact from Tropical Cyclone Kenneth, a category 1 storm (speeds of up to 110 kph). Flooding has occurred in high risk areas of the entire archipelago, mainly on the coastal lines. Water tanks have lost their covers and are polluted with garbage blown in by the fierce winds or filled with sea water in many villages and the risk of contracting water-borne diseases. The situation is likely to deteriorate rapidly if urgent action is not taken to purify water tanks and the number of people affected is likely to increase. The priority focus of the response remains on health, wash, education, food, and shelter. An estimated 60 – 80 per cent of the staple crops have been destroyed.

The Comorian Government has taken the lead to respond to the crisis supported by UN agencies, the Red Crescent and local NGOs. The Government has decided, in an extraordinary Council of Ministers meeting to withhold 10 per cent of civil servants’ salaries to address the emergency and the President has also indicated that he will also provide special funds in addition to salary cuts. However, Government capacities to respond remain a key issue, particularly significant weakness in sectoral response. Partners on the ground have limited capacity and there is no cluster approach in Comoros. Limited access due to damaged roads is another important constraint. With all national transport suspended, no power supply for the past three days, phone connectivity and logistic means to move supplies around is a significant challenge. Flooding is another issue on the coast line and in Anjouan. From 24 April, Government facilities including schools were closed.

Highlights

- The Union of Comoros faced a tropical cyclone - Kenneth - which landed on 24 April in the north Ngazidja Island.
- UNICEF, along with the Government and humanitarian partners are providing an immediate response to support those affected by the cyclone.
- A multi-sectoral Rapid Needs Assessment was initiated on 25 April with key stakeholders, including UNICEF staff. This will enable the identification of immediate needs and better indicate those sectors worst affected.
- Initial estimates from assessments indicate there are seven deaths, over 200 people wounded. An estimates 45,000 people are in need of assistance, including 20,000 people internally displaced (IDPs).
- Schools are closed until 29 April due to damage.
- About 125 civil security personnel were deployed on the ground on the evening 24 April to support and assure the security and safety of the population.

45,000 people are in need of humanitarian assistance

Preliminary estimates indicate 7 deaths and over 200 people wounded.

An estimated 20,000 displaced
Among the affected population, it is estimated that 65 per cent use rainwater harvesting as their main source of water, while 35 per cent are connected to a water supply system. While rainwater is available, most water tanks are damaged or filled with dirt, garbage, sea water and can be considered as contaminated. The water supply system (Mbeni and Mitsamiouli) is primarily affected by lack of power, preventing pumping and hampering water supply. People have resorted to rainwater, which is available but not potable for consumption.

On 25 April, during the morning, tropical cyclone Kenneth was 131 km west of Ngazidja and continued to move away from the islands, at a speed of 15 km/h. However, the entire national territory remains affected by heavy rainfall and strong winds of 70 km/h.

Multi-sectoral needs assessments teams were deployed by Government (with the support of UN and partners) and data is being compiled. Preliminary estimates indicate there are seven deaths and 200 wounded people, with 45,000 people in need of assistance, including 20,000 IDPs. The number of displaced is likely to increase once a better indication of how many households have been destroyed is available and precise figures come from Anjouan and Mohéli. Accordingly, about 125 civil security personnel were deployed on the ground on the evening of 24 April to ensure the security and safety of populations.

HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

The UNCT deployed the members of the inter-agency DRR/DRM Task Force to assist the Government in the preparedness and rapid assessment activities, including inter-sectoral coordination with the national authorities and humanitarian actors. National actors are led by the government with the support of civil society organizations, the Red Crescent, Scouts and UN Partners. Several clusters were activated: food security, health and nutrition, WASH, shelter and NFIs, education and protection, and logistics (including communication and security). Previous UN had trained UNVs and officers of the regional civil security directorates of each island were deployed for rapid needs assessments.

The UNCT has provided the logistics to support the rapid assessment teams. An emergency stock has also been positioned for the health, education, nutrition and WASH sectors. The UNCT has identified and reprogrammed funding ready to be availed within 24 hours to strengthen the Government response capacity.

On 25 April 2019, the President thanked the UN Resident Coordinator for the commitment and availability of all UN system staff to support the Government of Comoros in coordinating the preparedness and response activities in support of the management of the impact of the cyclone.

HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

UNICEF strategy consists of interventions in Health, Nutrition, WASH, Education, Child Protection and Communication for Development (C4D) all of which were prioritized to address the needs of people currently facing the humanitarian situation at national level. Interventions are currently being coordinated with government at central level, and have been guided by assessment, including the Government and UN under the leadership of the COSEP. UNICEF humanitarian interventions are complementary to government action. UNICEF’s strategy aims at providing timely immediate humanitarian assistance to children and women while addressing long-term development needs by focusing on:

Nutrition: Address nutritional status of under 5-years.
Health: Support Government to re-establish health services for affected communities and to ensure critical health supplies are available for outreach services.
WASH: Support sector coordination and evaluate reconstruction needs, re-establish access to drinking water, Water purification, Access to appropriate sanitation and hygiene facilities (for most vulnerable, with property/house damage), Access to essential NFIs (soap and water container) for the most vulnerable, with property/house damage and loss of belongings and dissemination of information on Safe water, sanitation and hygiene.
Education: Support children to access quality learning opportunities and recreational activities by ensuring learning resumes in temporary learning spaces in damaged schools.
Protection: women and children access gender-based violence prevention and response services; and Support to the most vulnerable families with unconditional monetary transfers to meet the basic needs and possibly boost recovery efforts.
C4D: people will be reached with key life-saving and behavior change messages on health, WASH nutrition, education and protection
UNICEF Comoros has launched its contingency and immediate response plan to provide an immediate response to the humanitarian situation as it unfolds. The UNICEF Comoros team is closely monitoring the situation, along with partners, and will respond accordingly. UNICEF has no available supplies on Anjouan and Mohali, this presents a major challenge in the flooded areas on these two islands. Potential communication and transport challenges between islands is also a challenge.

The following resources and supplies are available for immediate response:

- Some emergency contingency stocks are in place in Grande Comore for the initial response, including WASH material (seals, flexible jerrycans, bladder, water tank and emergency toilets), Health (midwifery kits, oxygen extractor and LLINs), Nutrition (RUTF, F75 and F100) and Education (recreation kits and school-in-a-box).
- US$100,000 has been re-programmed from Regular Resources for immediate response to the emergency. Additional funding will be required as the impact of the cyclone is substantial.
- UNICEF staff have been deployed in the field to determine the impact and assess the situation with Government and partners.
- Deployment of UNICEF teams in all regions for rapid assessment/evaluation to mobilize resources.

The following sector response activities are being planned:

**Health**: Organize outreach and fixed-point health services to displaced communities, organize outpatient sessions for children, providing basic curative and preventative services aligned to national protocols (IMNCI), procurement and distribution of vitamin A, four interagency kits, 19,000 ITNs, and support community health workers to deliver key preventive messages.

**Nutrition**: Training and logistic support for active acute case screening through MUAC, and referral and treatment of SAM children. Procurement and distribution of RUTF and other nutritional commodities used for treatment of SAM cases.

**Water, Sanitation and Hygiene - WASH**: Provision of sector coordination, provision of access to safe water, provision of access to appropriate sanitation and hygiene facilities, Procurement of essential NFI soap, water containers) and dissemination of information on Safe water, sanitation and hygiene
**Education:** Procurement of materials for construction of temporary school facilities (tents), school-in-a-box learning materials, and learner kits, provision of technical support and build capacity for construction and setting up of tarp tents. Provision of technical support on the use of ECD kits for preschoolers in safe learning spaces.

**Social Protection:** Support to the most vulnerable families with unconditional monetary transfers.

**Communication for Development (C4D):** ensure delivery of effective communications the number of people reached with key life-saving and behavior change messages on WASH, health, nutrition and child protection through face-to-face approaches. Through the Nutrition and WASH programmes implementation

**Funding**

The overall financial needs of the humanitarian response will be determined following the finalization of response plans. Based on initial estimates, UNICEF will require US$530,000 to cover the immediate humanitarian needs of the affected population. Detailed funding requirement will be outlined in the next Situation Report.

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