Highlights

- Tropical Cyclone Harold caused widespread destruction in Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and Tonga. The cyclone was most destructive in Vanuatu, where approximately 76,700 people, including 20,200 children, live in the worst affected areas. In Sanma Province, between 80 and 90 per cent of the population lost their homes and 60 per cent of schools were damaged. Food crops have been seriously affected and water infrastructure damaged.

- Technical support is being provided to the WASH, education, health and nutrition, and protection clusters in the development of response plans in Vanuatu, Fiji and Solomon Islands.

- UNICEF is distributing emergency supplies such as water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) kits and integrated emergency health kits in Vanuatu, Fiji and Solomon Islands.

- The response to the cyclone is especially challenging due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, which is hindering the movement of people and supplies. Shelter, water, food and the restoration of telecommunication and transport links have been identified as the most urgent needs.

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

In early April 2020, Tropical Cyclone Harold caused widespread destruction in Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and Tonga. In Solomon Islands, heavy rain and strong winds damaged homes, schools and gardens across four provinces. Approximately 27 people are missing after being washed off a ferry traveling from Honiara to Malaita.

The cyclone was most destructive in Vanuatu, making landfall as a category 5 cyclone on 6 April with sustained winds of more than 200 km/h. Roads, hospitals, schools, homes and churches suffered significant damage across the northern and central islands of Maewo, Pentecost, Ambae and Santo. Approximately 76,700 people, including 20,200 children, live in the worst affected areas, representing nearly 30 per cent of the country’s population. In Sanma province, it is estimated that between 80 and 90 per cent of the population lost their homes, and that 60 per cent of schools and 20 per cent of health centres were damaged. Food crops have been seriously affected, potentially increasing food insecurity. Access to safe drinking water is a key concern after WASH infrastructure was damaged. Many communities remain cut off from assistance due to flooding and the destruction of roads.

The cyclone caused widespread flooding across Fiji as heavy rain and strong winds hit the country on 8 April. As of 13 April, approximately 1,800 evacuees were being sheltered in 65 shelters. The storm then hit Tonga, where an estimated 428 houses were damaged or destroyed.
The global COVID-19 pandemic makes the response to the cyclone especially challenging. Governments in the Pacific continue to enforce strict measures like border closures, travel restrictions and lockdowns to prevent introduction of the virus in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands and community transmission in Fiji. Even in normal times, travel and logistics across the vast Pacific region are difficult which is now compounded by the COVID-19 situation. The Government of Vanuatu has maintained that foreigners will not be allowed entry and that all humanitarian cargo will have to undergo strict health protocols before being offloaded.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

Health and Nutrition
UNICEF has provided technical assistance to Vanuatu’s Ministry of Health in the development of the health sector response plan. Four interagency emergency health kits (IEHKs) have been distributed, each containing essential medicines and medical devices for 1,000 people for three months. Four midwifery kits have also been distributed, each containing basic drugs, medical supplies, medical equipment and basic sterilization and resuscitation equipment for health facilities to safely perform 50 deliveries.

WASH
The cyclone damaged water systems in all four affected countries, making access to safe drinking water a key concern. In Vanuatu, UNICEF provided technical assistance for the development of the WASH cluster response plan and provided US$40,000 to the Department of Water Resources (DoWR) for the deployment of WASH cluster teams for assessment and response. Two WASH staff from UNICEF were deployed within the WASH cluster Rapid Assessment Response in Santo and in Pentecost. A WASH engineer consultant was deployed and embedded within DoWR to facilitate assessment and repair of WASH facilities. UNICEF also provided Vanuatu with two 6,000-litre water bladders, two 1,500-litre water bladders, 1,800 ten-litre collapsible water containers, dignity kits for 500 households and 11 rolls of tarpaulin.

In Solomon Islands, UNICEF responded immediately to a request from the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), providing WASH and dignity kits for 60 households and 20 units of tarpaulin. In Fiji, UNICEF provided WASH and dignity kits for 1,100 households through the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MOHMS). Upon the request of the MOHMS, UNICEF is contracting three local consultants to support the needs assessment of WASH facilities, follow-up on the distribution of WASH kits and other materials and information management for both TC Harold and COVID responses.

Education
Schools have been damaged in all four affected countries. To minimize disruptions to education, temporary learning spaces, tents, school-in-a-box kits and early childhood development (ECD) kits are needed. Schools used as evacuation centres may require additional support, particularly in the context of COVID-19. In Fiji, UNICEF is in discussion with NDMO and the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts (MOEHA) regarding the provision of tents to substitute for damaged classrooms.

Communications for Development (C4D), Community Engagement & Accountability
UNICEF supported Fiji’s NDMO to broadcast “Get Ready” messages via television and radio, providing information on how families can protect themselves from and respond to the cyclone.

Humanitarian Leadership, Coordination and Strategy
UNICEF leads the clusters for WASH, education (with Save the Children), and health and nutrition (with the World Health Organization (WHO)) and is co-lead of the protection cluster (with UNWomen) under the Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT). The PHT is a network of humanitarian organizations that works together to assist Pacific Island Countries and Territories in preparing for and responding to disasters. It is composed of UN agencies and international humanitarian organizations and co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinators and the head of OCHA. UNICEF and the PHT support the leadership of governments and work within their respective political structures. Vanuatu and Fiji have officially adopted the cluster approach in their humanitarian architecture, while Solomon Islands has a similar configuration through their sector committees. Unlike cluster systems in other countries, these mechanisms are active year-round and are the coordinating bodies not just for emergency response but also for disaster risk management and preparedness.
Next Situation Report: 17 April 2020

UNICEF Pacific: [https://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/](https://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/)

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