Salient Points

- Torrential rain and river overflow in Honiara, Guadalcanal, Malaita and Isabel Provinces caused massive flooding, damages and displacement between 3 and 5 April 2014.
- Two earthquakes (7.2 and 7.7 in magnitude) have shaken Solomon Islands in the last few days, triggering tsunami warnings and evacuations, but fortunately no tsunami. Rapid assessments have not revealed any visible damage, but relief efforts were delayed while people twice evacuated high risk areas.
- Destruction or serious damage of entire residential and business communities in Honiara; serious damage to small scale and large commercial agriculture and infrastructure, including water sources, in Guadalcanal, Makira-Illawa and Malaita.
- 10,653 people are living in 33 evacuation centres in Honiara. Honiara City Council (10 April) reports around 4,000 of these evacuees are children aged 0-16.
- Destroyed or damaged bridges are still limiting mobility and access, but repairs have started and detailed sector assessments and assessments in rural Guadalcanal are being carried out.
- Some electricity and water systems restored; large numbers remain dependent on emergency tank trucks or water purification tablets that need to be replenished.
- Critical ongoing needs are site management; food, clean water (including water purification tablets) and sanitation, hygiene supplies, health care (esp. diarrhea, malaria, dengue, respiratory, eye and skin infections), counselling services, protection of vulnerable people. Other needs identified include blankets, clothing, micro-nutrient powder sachets, zinc, fuel and cooking utensils, school restoration to minimize delay in resumption of classes.
- Government has identified a standard return package of 33 items for family and livelihood use.
- Humanitarian action plan for three months is being written.
UNICEF and Partners Response to Date

Ongoing monitoring, following initial assessments, of evacuation centres in Honiara show that more than 10,653 people continue to need purified drinking water, adequate water, sanitation facilities and hygiene supplies. Despite notable effort by Government and partners, (including Red Cross delivering 76,000 litres from two purification machines, SI Water Authority and MFAT/New Zealand, the supply of clean water is still below humanitarian standards, considering the number of people affected in and out of evacuation centres. Detailed WASH assessments are being carried out, along with environmental impact assessments. All water sources assessed in Burns Creek, Mosquito, Tanakake Valley and Rice Farm are contaminated. The displaced persons are mainly from the poorest parts of Honiara, areas that were deficient in clean water and sanitation even before the flooding. Obvious open defecation is occurring around evacuation centres and in areas of return where people are trying to rebuild. People at all sites require soap and other basic hygiene items, especially adolescent girls and women. Surge deployment from the Pacific Humanitarian Team includes a WASH specialist (UNICEF). UNICEF has made available its contingency supplies in Honiara existing of water containers, purification tablets, soap and hygiene messages. Of these 2000 collapsible water containers have been distributed in Guadalcanal, while 150 WASH kits have been distributed to one of the evacuation camps. UNICEF has purchased 50,000 bars of soap. Additional supplies will be shipped from Vanuatu and other UNICEF depots. Water cans have also been distributed by SI RC (1000) and others. Cleaning of evacuation centres has improved thanks to Honoria City Council. Key gaps remain more and continued clean water, coordinated hygiene messaging and general recovery of the water and sanitation system in affected areas. UNICEF Solomon Islands is designated by the Government as their Supporting Agency for the coordination of WASH response, including assessments, plans and coordinated supply distribution.

UNICEF Solomon Islands is designated to support Government with coordination of the Education Cluster; the education rapid assessment is ongoing. Fifteen schools are being used as evacuation centers (OCHA Situation Report 13 April); although the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD) believes the number may be higher. 41 schools are damaged according to rapid assessment and reporting, but further assessment is required (OCHA Situation Report 13 April). School re-opening after holidays is now late in flood affected areas. The Taskforce for Education in Emergencies (TEES) is coordinating the response and assessments of damage to schools. In Guadalcanal the educational authority and the Ministry of Education are assessing the areas affected, while in Honiara as well as areas of Guadalcanal a private firm has been contracted to conduct assessments (OCHA Situation Report 13 April). A major concern aside from building damage, is school water and sanitation damages, as well as losses of school equipment, furniture and learning materials. Save the Children among others, is assisting MEHRD to find water solutions. UNICEF initially supplied 2 x 80m2 an 1 x 24m2 tents and 20 tarpaulins to Honiara City Council and has now supplied another two 24m2 tents, two early childhood development kits and two “school in a box”, via the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD), An education specialist was deployed from Fiji on 13 April and has arrived in Honiara to support the development of an education cluster response plan, to be included in the humanitarian action plan, and monitor and support UNICEF’s continued distribution of education related supplies.

Protection is under the Welfare and IDP Cluster. Red Cross and other partners have carried out registration at evacuation centres and updates/verifications are ongoing. Evacuation site management has improved. Public servants have been briefed by Oxfam on Sphere standards related to the management of evacuation centres (OCHA Situation Report 13 April). Government employees from various sectors have been deployed to manage security; some cleaning; and provide mobile health services, however trained evacuation centre management remains a major gap. While displaced persons have left a few of the sites, thousands remain. An assessment conducted by Honiara City Council (HCC) indicates that 40 percent of displaced persons housed at evacuation centres will return to their home areas once a voluntary return package has been made available (OCHA Situation Report 13 April)., and NDMO has agreed on a standard package of 33
items. HCC is seeking to reduce the number of evacuation centres to fewer than 10, shifting the focus to relief distribution (HCC Situation Report 10 April). An urgent request for counselling services to evacuation centre housing evacuees still searching for bodies and family members has been requested (HCC Situation Report 10 April). Australian, NZ and Pacific Police personnel are assisting as part of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Island (RAMSI). World Vision, UNICEF and other partners, in collaboration with Education Cluster, have begun to organise safe/protective spaces or PLACES for children. Three staff on surge deployment from the Pacific Humanitarian Team includes child protection (UNICEF), gender-based violence/reproductive/maternal health (UNFPA) and gender (UN Women). UNICEF’s education and child protection teams are planning PLaCES (protection and learning at community emergency services at affected schools).

Disease surveillance and reporting indicate an increase in diarrhea, acute respiratory infection and conjunctivitis. Malaria and dengue remain high risks, although Honiara City Council have been carrying out successful spraying and around 2000 mosquito nets have been distributed. WHO and UNICEF shared an advisory to humanitarian partners against distribution of infant formula and encouraging the promotion of breastfeeding, as well as other health messages. UNICEF and Government EPI managers have prepared a costed plan for a special immunization campaign against measles; funding is being sought. WHO has deployed staff from Fiji and Manila, and bilateral and NGO surge staff have also arrived in Honiara from Australia. Two emergency health kits and oral rehydration salts from UNICEF have been delivered. Five health teams have are carrying out assessments in Honiara and Guadalcanal, while 21 health facilities have been assessed and surveillance mechanisms have been put in place to monitor outbreaks (OCHA Situation Report 13 April). The National Referral Hospital is now open and accepting patients (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 11 April 2014). National Medical Stores, identified gaps in essential supplies including micronutrient powder, zinc, abendazole, F75, F100 and ReSoMal, which UNICEF has ordered. The Government and some NGO and other groups have been doing food distribution, along with cooking fuel, but supplies and personnel are insufficient to meet needs. UNICEF has estimated, based on pre-flood survey data, that there may be over 1000 moderately or acutely malnourished children under age five in Honoria and Guadalcanal, and in the coming days and weeks, they need to be identified and treated, and prevention measures instituted.

Other Cluster news: The Government of Australia has deployed engineers to help with bridge reconstruction, WFP has two logisticians at work. SPC is sending environmental specialists. UNDP is planning early recovery assistance to the SIG, through the Australian Government-funded Pacific Risk Resilience Programme. There are significant needs for shelter, food security and agriculture and other livelihood recovery.

**Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs**

Three days of heavy rains from 3-5 April, on top of a long rainy season, caused rivers to overflow, flash flooding, bridges to be destroyed or damaged and entire city neighborhoods and rural farmland to be destroyed. Two earthquakes shaking Guadalcanal and causing additional localized flooding also triggered tsunami warnings and population evacuations. However tsunamis did not occur and people have returned to work and homes. Logistics and mobility remain a serious challenge, with many bridges and roads damaged, however rural assessments as well as engineering assessments along rivers and of bridges are going on. The airport and seaport remain open, although the grounding of many boats is a potential hazard.

Honiara City and Guadalcanal Province appear to have experienced the worst damage, with damage to food gardens, plantations and water sources also reported from Malaita and Isabel Provinces. Guadalcanal Province (population: 93,613, estimated affected: 52,000, including in the
capital city of Honiara (population: 64,609). The estimated 12,000 people initially displaced has been reduced to 10,653, with people spread out between 33 evacuation centres (HCC Situation Report 10 April). The Red Cross and other agencies have been assisting with the registration in evacuation centres (HCC Situation Report 10 April). Numbers per centre vary with the most populated centres in east Honiara, housing 3,500 people at the Panatina Pavillion and approximately 1,000 people at both the airport terminal and King George VI School (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 11 April). Youth volunteers have been engaged to collect information on how many families have sustained damage to their home (HCC Situation Report 10 April). No incidences of children separated from families were reported, although children are among the dead.

Detailed sector assessments are being carried out, and a three month humanitarian action plan written. Immediate needs remain:

Clean water and sanitation, hygiene supplies at evacuation centres, for returnees and at schools; Health care (esp. for diarrhea, respiratory infection, malaria, dengue and unidentified fever, eye and skin infections, assessment, prevention and treatment of malnutrition, treatment for parasites, micro-nutrient supplementation, pregnant women and obstetric and newborn care), protection of vulnerable people and counselling services. Other needs identified include evacuation site management; blankets, clothing, fuel and cooking utensils; school restoration, including damages to buildings, water and sanitation and losses of furnishings and learning material.

Recovery needs will be assessed by the EU, World Bank and partners through a post disaster needs assessment; however the sector humanitarian assessments are already indicating large scale agriculture and business, shelter, school, clinic, road, bridge and other infrastructure repairs are needed.

Humanitarian leadership and coordination

The Solomon Islands National Emergency Operations Center is active 24/7 and the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) is leading the response, coordinating all Ministries and other Government entities designated as Cluster Leads. NDMO has activated all Solomon Islands Humanitarian Clusters and Government Cluster and other sector leaders are being assisted by bilateral and multilateral partners and many NGOs and FBOs.

Humanitarian Strategy

UNICEF is supporting the emergency response through its office in Solomon Islands, with technical oversight, surge staff, resource mobilisation, procurement, shipping, contracts and financial services from UNICEF Pacific’s multi country office in Suva, Fiji. UNICEF is the lead support to the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) led clusters for WASH and Education. UNICEF supports SIG and WHO for Health and Nutrition and SIG for IDPs and Protection. Our strategy is:

1) Coordinate all implementation resources and work through NDMO, supported by UN OCHA and within agreed SIG disaster coordination and Ministry mechanisms. Fulfil commitments for lead technical advice to SIG on coordination of WASH and Education; provide supplementary support in Protection, Health and Nutrition clusters or working groups.

2) Implement response through four mechanisms: (i) release of contingency supplies pre-positioned in Honiara and Port Villa to partner best able to distribute in coordinated, effective way; (ii) procurement and shipping of additional supplies; (iii) mixed modality of cash advances to government, NGOs and payments to contractors; (iv) technical assistance through staff on ground and deployed surge staff, with remote support from UNICEF Pacific in Fiji.

3) Prioritise needs for clean water, sanitation and hygiene in evacuation centres, and in schools that sustained damages

4) Integration of support to protective and learning services in evacuation centres

5) Integration of WASH, education and protection in support to resumption of regular schooling
6) Supplement supplies and services of SIG and other health partners, with concentration on nutrition supplies

7) Coordinate with the Solomon Islands National Emergency Operations Centre [NEOC], Solomon Island Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC) to ensure massive and repetitive promotion on national radio of key family practices for emergencies that keep family members healthy and safe.

These messages are a sub-set of agreed Pacific Humanitarian Team messages, and also agreed with relevant SIG Ministries. The promoted practices and messages match UNICEF’s core commitments to children in humanitarian situations, and have also been packaged as pocket guides which have been pre-positioned in Honiara. We are working with the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) to ensure their distribution to evacuation centres and other areas where most affected families are located.

8) Financial accountability for all resources and accountability through on site monitoring for performance on targets agreed with NDMO, and other involved SIG partners and humanitarian actors.

Human resources

UNICEF staff members in Honiara, Solomon Islands include the following areas: Chief of Field Office, child protection (2), education (1), immunization/logistics (1), maternal and child health (1), communication (1), administration (3). An additional WASH staff member will join the office shortly. Surge staff have been deployed in WASH (1), child protection (1), communication (1), education (1) and emergency coordination (1). Surge staff for maternal and child health is being sought. The UNICEF office is also administratively supporting logistics specialists deployed by WFP.

Funding

UNICEF Pacific has estimated it will require USD$ 400,000 to respond in water, sanitation, hygiene, maternal and child health, protection and education areas. UNICEF Pacific currently has USD$ 70,000 available from its Emergency Programme Revolving Fund, which will need to be replenished. UNICEF New Zealand has launched a donation appeal but support from other donors will be needed.

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