BACKGROUND

It is two months since the floods of 3-5 April 2014 that claimed 22 lives and affected 52,000 people in the capital city, Honiara, and Province of Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands. UNICEF and its partners have been supporting Government since the first day with humanitarian response and recovery efforts. 15 per cent of the people who were in evacuation centres remain in a few transitional centres. The country and its people are in recovery mode, rebuilding infrastructure, restoring services and livelihoods.

Outbreaks of diarrhoea, including 16 deaths to children, have afflicted several Provinces, however this is not related to the April flooding, but rather to challenges with access to clean water and sanitation, and the need to change knowledge, attitudes and practices related to hygiene and health care seeking. UNICEF is working closely with Government, relevant ministries and partners to respond and mitigate future outbreaks.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 21 evacuation centres closed down after people returned home or moved to one of the six transitional centres authorised by Government. 1,530 people, 15% of the peak number, are now in the centres, where they receive weekly food supplies.
- UNICEF continues to support Government with WASH cluster coordination and is funding and overseeing ongoing response work by several WASH cluster partners through a Central Emergency Fund Grant from UN OCHA. The work includes well cleaning and rehabilitation of dug wells.
- Toilets are being constructed in Child Friendly Spaces, schools and health centres.
- All schools affected by the floods have resumed classes. Early Childhood Development kits and School-in-boxes have been distributed to partially replace damaged school supplies. Selected schools are implementing a one month emergency feeding programme, with technical support from UNICEF and funding from a UN OCHA emergency cash grant.
- Training on screening, identification and treatment of malnutrition was carried out, and therapeutic supplies provided to the Ministry of Health and Medical Services.
- A Supplementation Immunisation Activity (SIA) has been completed in Honiara City Council (HCC) and is currently underway in Guadalcanal Province (GP); it includes vaccinations, distribution of Vitamin A, and deworming tablets and screening for malnutrition.
RESPONSE by UNICEF AND PARTNERS

WASH Cluster

UNICEF Solomon Islands is designated by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services as their Supporting Agency for the coordination of WASH response, under the Welfare and IDP Cluster.

- Water trucking: World Vision Solomon Islands (WVSI) and Solomon Islands Red Cross (SIRC) distributed 157,000 litres for 5,600 beneficiaries in GP and transitional centres in HCC. UNICEF supports water trucking through Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).
- Well cleaning: WVSI completed phase one of well cleaning for 220 wells with 4,615 beneficiaries. Save the Children Australia have cleaned 170 dug wells.
- Repairs: Caritas is repairing water supply system in West GP for 500 people. Well linings are now available for distribution to 24 communities, 2,400 beneficiaries.
- WVSI has started toilet construction in Child Friendly Spaces. UNICEF supports construction of toilets in schools, child friendly spaces and health centres.
- Health Promotion Unit and SIRC are engaged in hygiene awareness. UNICEF supports printing and publishing of agreed Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials through SIRC.
- Sixteen diarrhoeal deaths have reported in the last month in Western province (10), Guadalcanal (2), Central (3) and Makira (1). Rotavirus is likely to have led to the deaths. UNICEF to support the response by providing soaps and IEC material for hygiene promotion.

Education Cluster

UNICEF Solomon Islands supports the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD) to coordinate the Education Cluster, under the Welfare and IDP Cluster.

- All schools including those previously used as transitional centres have resumed classes.
- Twelve schools, as identified by MEHRD, are midway through the UN OCHA Emergency Cash Grant feeding programme. This programme is enabling 3,603 students to have access to 30% of their daily food intake and incentivising school attendance.
- UNICEF also gave these schools Early Childhood Development kits and School-in-boxes, resulting in higher attendance.
- More education supplies are expected to arrive in the country in the 3rd week of June.
- UNICEF WASH programme is in the final stages of agreeing on a Programme Cooperation Agreement with Save the Children Australia for the construction of WASH facilities in 4 schools in Guadalcanal.
- UNICEF helped the MEHRD compile data, informing the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) about the lack of clean drinking water in 17 schools in Guadalcanal.
- UNICEF provided an 80 square-meter tent as a temporary shelter for families at FOPA. Families from Mbokonavera School transitional centre were relocated to this tent. This enabled Honiara City Council education authority and MEHRD to carry out renovation work at Mbokonavera School and classes to resume.
Heath and Nutrition Cluster

WHO is the primary support to the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS), for the coordination of Health and Nutrition Cluster, under the Welfare and IDP Cluster. UNICEF is a cluster member providing technical, financial and supply assistance in the areas of nutrition, immunisation, and other maternal and child health needs.

Nutrition

- Surge support from UNICEF India ended his mission, having oriented and trained health staff and prepared a technical guidance note, as well as identifying and facilitating suitable technical support from Government of India and consultants.
- UNICEF conducted nutrition survey workshops at the National Referral Hospital (NRH). About 40 volunteers and 10 team leaders (health workers) were trained on how to do nutrition assessment, including anthropometric measurements and conducting semi-qualitative questionnaire surveys.
- The nutrition sub-cluster working group (MHMS, WHO, UNICEF) continued work on sampling methods for the nutrition assessment.

Supplementation Immunisation Activity (SIA)

The SIA in Honiara City had a micro-planning workshop on 6-7 May 2014 and the campaign was carried out from 15-28 May 2014.

- Three mobile teams for outreach services and eight fixed site clinics were engaged for the polio and measles-rubella immunisation, distribution of Vitamin A and Albendazole (for de-worming).
- The health workers also did a mass screening for malnutrition using a rapid assessment Mid Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) technique, targeting children 6-59 months of age.
- The Honiara SIA exceeded its target for measles rubella (likely because of including children that were visiting Honiara from other areas of the country) and reached 83.5% for polio.
- The SIA in Guadalcanal had micro-planning workshops between 23-24 May 2014 and the campaign officially started on 27 May 2014; it is scheduled to end on 12 June 2014.
- Three health zones (Zone 5, 6 and 1) have been included in the campaign with the following targeted populations: 1,309 for 6-11 months and 5,740 for 12-59 months. The programme components are the same as for the campaign in Honiara City.

Supplies

- Micronutrient powder (MNP) was distributed in Honiara City and Guadalcanal Province, complementing the one month emergency school feeding programme supported by UNICEF.
- Therapeutic supplies (Res0mal, F75, 100) were delivered to the National Referral Hospital.
- UNICEF also supplied Zinc Oxide and Oral Rehydration Solution to the National Medical Stores with more stock expected in the near future.

Training

- UNICEF trained 11 staff at the Children’s Ward at the National Referral Hospital on treatment of severe acute malnutrition with therapeutic foods and medicines, using the World Health Organisation (WHO) 10 Steps on Health Facility Based Management of Children with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM).
- With support from NRH and MHMS, UNICEF also trained staff at Good Samaritan Hospital in GP on the same 10 steps, including correct use of the therapeutic food supplies.
- UNICEF is currently assisting with a guideline on SAM for health care providers, and with sourcing external experts for additional training.
- Leaflets on the use of Micro Nutrient Powder have been developed and printed and will soon be distributed to parents, communities and schools with MNP Packs.
Welfare and IDP Cluster


- Oxfam, with the support of UNICEF, trained 40 volunteers on 9th-13th May to support inter-agency protection monitoring over the next two months in the flood-affected areas of Honiara and GP. Teams are currently deployed and conducting assessments.
- UNICEF supported World Vision with training of 40 volunteers on Child and Women Friendly Spaces.
- Agencies are re-focusing from evacuation centres to Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) in communities of return. Save the Children Australia will start CFS activities in the following Guadalcanal communities: Koli, Komuporo, Mamasa and Good Sheppard. World Vision (WVSI) will start CFS activities in Lelei, Veraboli, Vura, Tenaru, Popolio 1, Metapona, Malatoha, Biun, Suaghi and Turaranan. The CFS will run until 25 August 2014.

KEY CONCERNS

- 500 WASH kits and containers are needed in East GP for 500 households. As requested, UNICEF will provide WASH kits to the Guadalcanal Province with purification tablets.
- Health facilities need assistance with specific hygiene messages to be relayed to communities. UNICEF is working closely with all partners and supporting Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) Health Promotion Unit to intensify messaging.
- The National Referral Hospital is facing water quality challenges. A task group, led by Rural Water Sanitation and Hygiene (RWASH), has been formed to look into the issues of water quality.
- There have been serious outbreaks of diarrhoea in at least four Provinces, unrelated to the April flood disaster. It has been identified as rotavirus in the few locations where there is testing available. The following deaths occurred to children under age three: 10 deaths in Western Province; 2 deaths in Guadalcanal; 1 death in Makira; 3 deaths in Central Province. UNICEF and WHO have been using the still active Cluster meetings to coordinate the response (even though this outbreak is not flood emergency related.) UNICEF has given to the Ministry Health Promotion unit, thousands of hygiene promotion/information “hands” (the information is printed on colourful paper hands, to remind people about hand washing.) UNICEF has also offered bars of soap, ORS and zinc to give out with the “paper hands”.
- For now, Child Friendly Spaces cater to only children 10 years of age and below. Communities have asked for services for children above the age of 10. Ongoing gaps with Child Protection include a lack of funding, lack of staff, access limitations, capacity gaps and logistical challenges.
- Not all school age children are back in school; although enrollment and attendance were sub-optimal before the floods, the economic and other effects of the flooding appear to have had a disruptive effect on children’s education.

Humanitarian and Recovery coordination

The Solomon Islands National Disaster Council, with the National Emergency Operations Center and the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), is leading and coordinating the response, including all Government designated leads and their humanitarian partners on sector or cluster areas. UN OCHA is assisting Government with Coordination, while bilateral and multilateral partners and many NGOs and FBOs are supporting with cash, supplies, staff and services.
Human resources

Regular UNICEF staff members in Honiara, Solomon Islands include:
A Chief of Field Office, WASH (3), child protection (2), education (1), immunisation/logistics (1), maternal and child health (1), communication (1), administration (3).

Surge staff deployed during this period: emergency coordination (1), education (1), nutrition (2), supply (1), immunisation/logistics (2), communication (1). A visit from a UNICEF Deputy Executive Director and the Regional Director is expected in late June.

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