**Highlights**

- UNICEF Team, jointly with the country Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team (REACT), conducted field assessment last week to identify immediate and sustained relief needs of affected children/population. The mission held meetings with displaced populations in Rushon district and affected communities in the upper reaches of the Bartang valley, close to the earthquake epicenter.

- The mission reported that three (3) schools have been destroyed and 17 others have sustained various damages in Bartang Valley of Rushon district, GBAO Region. In total, 325 children under the age of 18 (107 under 5 years old and 218 school-age (6-18 years old)) were displaced and received temporary shelter in various public locations in Rushon district, which includes kindergarten, schools, boarding schools, child-creation center, hospital, organization's camps and host families.

Based on the assessment, immediate needs of the affected children and adult population were identified as: Psychosocial support; washing facilities; winter clothes; winter shoes; bedding; baby food.

- Some of the earthquake-affected populations, particularly in Bartang Valley, had been impacted by flooding and mudflows in the summer of 2015. They are exposed to more natural hazards and disasters over the next few weeks and months, including avalanches in winter months and landslides and flooding in the spring.

- To respond to the immediate and relief needs, UNICEF has recruited an Emergency Specialist, with WASH expertise, on a temporary basis, to support the country office in the management and coordination of the response. The emergency specialist will arrive on 28 December 2015 and will be coordinating and ensuring a sound emergency response in coordination with other key partners.

**Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs**

On 7th December, a powerful earthquake with a magnitude of 7.2 hit Tajikistan with its epicentre 357 km south-east of the capital Tajikistan (Dushanbe) and 22 km of the Sarez Lake. The earthquake caused significant damages in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), particularly to communities in Bartang valley. The confirmed total number of casualties is 2 and 10 are injured in GBAO. At least 21 aftershocks have been recorded to date.

The Government supported a relocation of people from the upper Bartang Valley, primarily to reduce the number of persons who would need support in these isolated areas. While some family members relocated, others remain to tend to live stock and care for damaged or destroyed buildings and possessions. Reports indicate that 652 persons have been relocated from Bartang valley to Rushon town. The displaced are temporarily lodged in schools, a kindergarten, a music school, a summer camp, and in private houses.

**Date: 25 December 2015**

$111,399.00 of emergency supplies have been released to date by UNICEF to support the response.

652 people evacuated from affected areas have benefitted from emergency supplies dispatched by UNICEF worth $25,000.

At least 325 children have been evacuated to Rushon district center. A total 126 school-age children (55 girls, 71 boys) are lodged in Rushon Boarding school where they live and attend school.

The CEE/CIS Regional Office has allocated $231,000 to the CO to replenish emergency stocks and fill humanitarian gaps.
Estimated Affected Population

The estimated total population of the most affected upper reaches of the Bartang Valley is 3,830 (862 households with 448 children of 0-15 years old). This number is the minimum number of affected as these people have either experienced direct (e.g., housing damage, earthquake shock) or indirect (e.g., loss of clinic, school or hydroelectric generation) damage in the most affected area. Additional affected populations in Shughnan, Vanj, Roshtqala and Murgab Districts are primarily due to damage to housing and public buildings.

Humanitarian leadership and coordination

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan issued an overview of required relief and recovery assistance, which is based on an assessment done by the State Commission.

During a meeting with the Tajik Foreign Minister on 14 December, the UN Resident Coordinator, on behalf of the wider humanitarian and donor community, assured the Government of Tajikistan of its commitment to support the Government and address the critical life-saving needs of the most vulnerable affected families. The same day, Development Coordination Council (DCC) discussed a joint response to relief and longer-term recovery needs.

Humanitarian Strategy

All humanitarian efforts are being coordinated through the REACT Secretariat, which is closely working with the Government and updating information on potential needs.

Government Priorities

As a first step, the Government has prioritized provision of food and temporary shelter for the displaced communities. Last week the Government reported completion of road clearance to access the affected communities in upper side of the Bartang valley. It is important to note that the upper side of the valley is often inaccessible by road from January to March due to winter weather, accessible in April, but again often inaccessible in May and June due to spring flood, and again accessible from July.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

Education:

UNICEF has been coordinating the education response together with the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), Local Education Authorities and FOCUS Humanitarian Assistance. The MoES called a meeting on 17 December 2015 with humanitarian actors to review the impact of the earthquake on the education sector and coordinate response activities.

The assessment identified that immediate education needs include education supplies, teaching and learning materials, toys and school furniture (desks and chair) in the temporary education locations for continuation of studies. UNICEF has prepositioned education stock (4 school-in-a-box and 2 recreation kits) in Khorog city of GBAO and additionally released some supplies on 24 December with the MoES truck (2 school-in-a-box, 2 recreation kits and 2 early childhood development kits) to cover the initial needs. UNICEF will be working with the MoES for provision of desks and chairs as well.

Furthermore, UNICEF has committed to support the MoES in minimising the impact of the emergency situation on the sector in the longer run. In January 2016, a joint mission will be organised to assess the damage and losses and identify recovery needs in the education sector. The recovery assessment results will feed into the MoES education recovery appeal.

Child Protection:

UNICEF entered into a new partnership with the NGO Lojvar based in Khorog city to provide psychosocial support (PSS) to the children and their caregivers affected by the earthquake who are in need of counselling among the 387 households living in seven villages in Rushon district (i.e. Bardichiv, Bopasor, Pasor, Rukhchi, Gurdara, Basid and Chadud villages in Bartang valley).

The recent information available through the recent assessment will help Lojvar to identify women and children in need of PSS and children at risk of post-traumatic stress disorder. Lojvar staff have started identifying the needs among the evacuated population who are currently sheltered in public facilities and/or live with host families in Rushon district. The actual provision of PSS is expected to start imminently. Next week, designated Lojvar staff will travel to Savnob jamoat to set up an office and provide PSS.

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Next SITREP: 8 January 2016