

UNICEF Situation Report Solomon Islands - EXTERNAL Tsunami-Earthquake Emergency Programme 23 April 2007

Major Developments

Well into the third week of the crisis, information about the detailed needs in all the locations affected by the earthquakes and tsunamis of 2 April is still incomplete, mainly due to a very complex transport logistics.

The Government has established relief operations in the Western Province from Gizo and the National Disaster Management Office is continuing to manage the operations for Choiseul Province from Honiara.

Overall an estimated 10,276¹ people have been affected by the crisis, in the islands of Gizo, Ranonnga, Vella la Vella, parts of southern coast of Choiseul, Simbo, Shortlands, Munda, Kolombangra, Approximately 5200 are children below 18 years.

UNICEF has established a small temporary office in one of the rooms of the Gizo Hotel, and telephone/fax and internet and wireless connection has been installed.

The UNDAC mission who arrived at the beginning of the crisis and split between Honiara and Gizo has left the country after a handover process to the representatives from National Disaster Committee (NDC) and the Provincial Disaster Committee (PDC) in Gizo.

UNICEF Pacific Solomon Islands Office, with the support of colleagues from the Suva Office and the regional office, undertook a planning exercise on April 19th, to look at a programmatic and management plan for the next three to six months of the response. Outcomes of this exercise are being finalized and will be shared with key colleagues in the regional office and NYHQ.

Needs Assessment

Several assessments have been carried out by various organizations in different islands, but the complexity of transport in the area has not allowed a comprehensive picture to be formed yet. More comprehensive sectoral assessments have been carried out by the Australian Defence Force on health clinics, and by Save the Children on education, protection, health assessment in Gizo town, Gizo camps, Rendova and Simbo. Currently, NDC/PDC is conducting an independent assessment of all affected areas. WHO consultant is currently assessing the camps in Gizo and recommendations will be presented to NDC/PDC this Saturday. Ministry of Education plans to conduct a general assessment which will include further assessment of the learning spaces and resources and structural damage to schools next week in Western and Choiseul Provinces. Water and sanitation needs assessments have been undertaken in Gizo in cooperation with Oxfam and on other islands in cooperation with the ADF.

¹ Final numbers yet to be confirmed

UNICEF Response

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

In addition to general assessments, the emergency needs assessment team has completed sufficient detailed assessments to develop a program for the restoration and improvement of water supply and sanitation facilities in tsunami and earthquake affected areas in the Western Province. This includes terms of reference for a WASH engineer to support implementation of water and sanitation activities undertaken by the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (Ministry of Health and Medical Services, MHMS).

Water containers (1,100 x 10L) were distributed to camps and villages during assessments as well as a small number of boxes of soap. Water purification tablets supplied by Save the Children were also provided with the water containers.

Materials (timber, tools and plastic) sheets were purchased and provided to Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RWSS) to assist their operations.

UNICEF has collaborated closely with Oxfam in latrine construction by RWSS for IDP camps on Gizo. To date 14 latrines have been completed and 16 are in various stages of construction. This activity will accelerate as database information on camp needs is being completed and construction procedures have been streamlined.

A WATSAN working group has been established with representatives from RWSS, Public Works, UNICEF, Oxfam, World Vision and Red Cross. The objectives of the group are to coordinate activities to avoid duplication and identify gaps; to share information on needs, supplies and distributions and to assist each other wherever possible in delivering assistance through the RWSS to affected people.

Shelter and Non-Food Relief Items

Also in this sector, aside from the picture of the situation of the IDP camps in Gizo, the shelter and non-food items (NFI) needs in other locations are still scanty, and increasingly more consistent information is trickling in from different sources.

The main actors involved in NFI are the Red Cross (under the coordination of the IFRC) and World Vision Australia. Oxfam is the only NGO involved in transitory and permanent shelter.

UNICEF has taken a complementary role in this sector, by providing plastic tarpaulins, 9 rolls distributed through the Prime Minister's visit to Vella la Vella and another 62 rolls will be used by Save the Children to distribute for shelter, creating of recreational areas in Gizo camps and Ministry of Education for informal education areas.

Health and Nutrition

Despite coverage of over 95% in the measles Supplementary Immunization Activities (SIA) during the first half of 2006, large numbers of displaced people combined with previous low vaccination coverage led to the decision by the MHMS to undertake a measles SIA for children aged 6 months to up to 5 years in the affected areas. UNICEF is supporting this with technical and financial assistance and the 5 teams are currently positioned in the Western Province and Choiseul ready to be transported to their various island locations. In addition children will be given vitamin A, and children less than 1 year who have lost their immunisation record will be given new cards and catch up immunisations will also be provided. Multivitamins will be distributed to pregnant women and it's hoped that multi-

micronutrient powder “Vitaliata” can also be sent to the groups for distribution targeting children 6 months to 59 months. They will dispense ORS sachets and undertake health promotion and disease surveillance activities as time allows. It is estimated the campaign will take 2 weeks. The Ministry is also being supported to assess the impact of the disaster of the cold chain during the SIA.

Quality nutrition data is not currently available for the region and it is therefore likely that nutritional assessments will need to be done to establish the breadth of health interventions necessary. Subsequently activities additional to those above will be planned.

Concerns are held for the health of those living in the camps. No unusual outbreaks of disease have been noted at this stage but the MHMS are being encouraged by UNICEF to undertake outreach activities regularly in camps where temporary clinics have not been set up. To address issues of hygiene, sanitation and health UNICEF in partnership with Health Promotion Units of Honiara and Gizo and Oxfam have trained 20 volunteers as community mobilizers to work with camp residents targeting different age groups.

Many clinics are not currently functioning due to structural damage and many staff are personally affected, have lost some or all their belongings, and are requesting leave from work to attend to personal issues. UNICEF is providing assistance with tents for temporary clinics and housing, and will assist the MHMS with their staff planning.

Health worker and community awareness of HIV and sexual health issues are generally poor and UNICEF is working with UNFPA to identify approaches. Condom supply is being increased and distributed through NGOs. Life skills’ training is to be planned with the Adolescent Health and Development Coordinators (MHMS)

Education

It is estimated that some 36 schools have been heavily affected or no longer exist and another 39 are affected in some way. More information will come from the assessment by the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD) next week, but in the meantime temporary learning facilities will be set up using the ‘School-in-a-Box’ model with MEHRD in the most heavily affected communities and camps. These will compliment the ‘Play Safe’ recreation programs that will start over the coming days. As at today 23 ‘School-in-a-Box’ and 13 Recreation Kits have arrived in Gizo.

Protection

The Child Protection consultant arrived in Gizo on Thursday and has commenced work with partners. There has been very little coordination in this area on the ground in Gizo so a meeting with non-government actors has been organized at the UNICEF office tomorrow (21.4.07) to ensure no overlapping of resources and a consolidated approach.

An Inter-Agency Social Welfare and Protection Working Group was established in Honiara this week in collaboration with the Ministry of Women Youth and Children’s Affairs and the Social Welfare Division. This same group will be formed at the Gizo level in the coming days and are expected to meet early next week.

UNICEF is working very closely with Save the Children, providing material and technical assistance in the setting up of ‘Play Safe’ areas for children in affected communities and camps. A number of supplies including: 61 tarps (as above); 100 Guitars; colouring and

drawing books; and 3 Recreation kits – have already been given. With further supplies including more recreation kits expected in the coming weeks.

Inter-Agency Collaboration and Key Partnerships

After UNDAC's departure from both Gizo and Honiara, UNICEF is currently the only UN Agency present in Gizo. It is expected that UNDP will field one or two persons to lead the early-recovery phase and ensure formal coordination with key Governmental counterparts. OCHA sent a Humanitarian Officer from Suva, Fiji, on the 18th of April, to be replaced by another in a few days, who will stay for about three weeks. WHO is coordinating its response, primarily in Malaria prevention, from Honiara, and is placing one officer in Gizo to assess camp standards.

Supply and Logistics

The complexity of the humanitarian response is underlined by the logistic constraints affecting the relief operations. Gizo is served by a small airstrip only, and all the other affected locations are reachable by boat. The extraordinarily support provided by the Australian Defense Forces (ADF) and the United States Navy helicopters during the last two weeks to field people and supplies (albeit in small quantities) in most of the affected areas, was unfortunately phased down over the weekend. Currently, supplies received from the larger Honiara and Munda airport, or by barges from Honiara, are stored in the central sheltered platform of the harbor, under the supervision of NDC/PDC.