CRISIS FOR CHILDREN: 100,000 CIVILIANS FLEE CONFLICT ZONE, AND TENS OF THOUSANDS STILL TRAPPED

• Over the past days the number of IDPs who have managed to escape the fighting has more than doubled, to at least 170,000.

• Amid fierce fighting and an unknown number of civilian deaths, close to 100,000 people fled the conflict zone and entered Government territory between Monday 20 April and Thursday 23 April. There are tens of thousands of civilians still trapped, and the total number of IDPs in need of assistance might soon reach a quarter of a million people.

• The massive influx of IDPs who have endured extreme conditions - including scarcity of safe water, sanitation, insufficient health care and medicines as well as scarcity of food (more than one in four children under five suffer from acute malnutrition) and dire protection concerns, particularly for children and women - will put even greater strain on already overcrowded IDP camps. UNICEF is rapidly expanding its operations to meet their urgent needs in nutrition, health, water, sanitation, protection and education.

• To meet the most immediate needs of these IDPs, UNICEF Sri Lanka urgently requires US$ 5 million.
1. ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

Sri Lanka’s 25 year internal conflict has killed more than 70,000 people. Fighting intensified after the Government’s abrogation of the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) in January 2008. Several hundreds of children have been killed and many more injured in intense fighting since the start of February this year.

The Tamil Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has been progressively losing territory since the fighting intensified in January 2008. As the territory controlled by the LTTE shrunk further throughout 2008 and 2009, fighting was reduced to a small area (10sq miles) in the north of the island. In addition to direct threat from the conflict, the area suffers a gross lack of food, water, medical supplies and sanitation. Since early February there has been a steady flow of IDPs who have managed to escape the fighting. By 19 April there were 65,000 IDPS in Government controlled areas where they have been placed in camps around Vavuniya, Mannar and Jaffna.

Last week, a Government offensive pushed into the last remaining area occupied by the LTTE. Amid fierce fighting and an unknown number of civilian deaths, as many as 100,000 people out of which approximately one third are children, reportedly fled the conflict zone and entered Government territory (from Monday 20 April – Thursday 23 April). Tens of thousands of civilians still remain trapped. They are living in dire circumstances and are being caught in the crossfire of fierce fighting. The massive influx of IDPs who are in desperate need of assistance will put even greater strain on already overcrowded IDP camps, and on the resources of UNICEF. Women and children coming out of the conflict affected areas have endured extreme conditions, including scarcity of food, water and sanitation, for extended periods of time and are in urgent need of immediate humanitarian support. It is estimated that the total caseload of IDPs in need of assistance might soon reach a quarter of a million people.

2. UNICEF RESPONSE: ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS

UNICEF, in close collaboration with its partners, is scaling up its activities to meet the immediate needs of the civilians currently fleeing from the conflict zone. This is in addition to over 95,000 IDPs now in camps around Vavuniya town and Jaffna already receiving assistance. The main focus is on maintaining international standards of humanitarian assistance in line with UNICEF’s Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies, in the priority areas of health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), education and child protection. UNICEF leads the clusters for WASH, Nutrition and Education, and is leading the sub-group for Child Protection under the Protection cluster led by UNHCR. District level health cluster coordination is ensued by UNICEF.
**Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)**

The urgent provision of WASH related interventions for the estimated number of 170,000 IDPs in Government controlled areas has been highlighted as a high priority both by the Government of Sri Lanka and the humanitarian community.

UNICEF’s WASH response based on Sphere Standards seeks to ensure timely provision of safe water, adequate sanitation facilities, and hygiene assistance, to prevent any outbreak of waterborne diseases, for the rapidly increasing number of IDPs arriving into the camps in and around Vavuniya and Jaffna. This includes safe water supply to health facilities including therapeutic feeding centres. UNICEF is therefore airlifting urgently needed items such as 10,000 litre bladders, water treatment units, and water purification tablets. This is complimenting locally purchased items such as hygiene kits, plastic buckets, water containers, and chlorine powder as well as contracted water trucks.

Since the beginning of the year, through support from UNICEF and its implementing partners, IDPs located in camps in Vavuniya and Jaffna have gained access to safe water supply for drinking and bathing through water trucking and the provision of water storage tanks, buckets and water containers. In order to reduce dependency on water trucking and to improve cost-effectiveness, tube wells equipped with hand pumps have also been installed. UNICEF has further rapidly constructed emergency gender segregated toilets and bathing spaces. The water and sanitation facilities of Vavuniya Base Hospital have further been improved through toilet construction and provision of a water storage tank thereby allowing the hospital to receive an ever increasing number of wounded and sick patients being transferred or fleeing from the northern parts of the country.

Tens of thousands of IDPs have benefited from improved hygiene through awareness campaigns and the distribution of hygiene kits and environmental cleaning kits. UNICEF needs additional funding to scale up and maintain these interventions.

**Education**

In response to the influx of IDPs, UNICEF is putting in place 13 Temporary Learning Shelters (TLS) including 65 classrooms in IDP camps, working in two shifts to the benefit of over 13,000 children, and has provided 500 sets of tarpaulins used for temporary learning spaces for over 10,000 children in transit camps and for displaced host community children. These interventions have been coupled with the provision of 200 blackboards for IDPs and displaced host community children, benefitting 6,000 children, individual school kits for over 7,000 IDP children, 400 teacher’s kits benefitting over 12,000 IDP children, 40 recreation kits for over 4,000 IDP children and 1,000 sets of guidance material on psychosocial activities provided to teachers to the benefit of over 30,000 children.

This support is invaluable in promoting normalcy for the children within the camps and to enable them to participate in educational, psychosocial and early childhood development (ECD) activities. It further has a significant impact on the lives of their families, as family members can then engage in getting water and other activities, secure in the knowledge that their children are safe and constructively occupied.

Additional funds will be needed for setting up additional temporary learning shelters along with provision of education supplies, teacher’s and children’s kits. Funding will also be needed for catch-up education, supporting children to gain the skills that they have missed out on due to the conflict, and helping the teachers to deal with multiple levels in the same classroom.

**Nutrition**

The UNICEF led nutrition cluster is working closely together with the food and health clusters to address the urgent nutritional needs among conflict affected children as well as pregnant and lactating mothers. The extreme conditions endured by the IDPs who have been trapped in the conflict zone - including food scarcity over extended periods of time – require immediate support for both nutrition and health. The new arrival of IDPs only is expected to include up to 10,000 children under five years and approximately 3,600 pregnant and lactating women.

Based on the results of a Rapid Nutrition Assessment in the IDP Camps of Vavuniya in March 2009 jointly conducted by the Ministry of Health, the Medical Research Institute (MRI) and UNICEF, indicating that about 25% of all children under five years of age suffer from Acute Malnutrition: 5% Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and 20% Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM), additional funds will be needed for UNICEF to provide...
support for the acutely malnourished children through therapeutic feeding (Plumpy Nut, BP100, F100, F75) and supplementary feeding (UNIMIX and High Energy Biscuits) through the Nutrition Rehabilitation Programme (NRP).

In order to allow for a rapid response to the increasing needs in terms of malnutrition, UNICEF is airlifting immediately needed supplies. Additionally, UNICEF on 23 April sent 20 metric tonnes of high energy biscuits to Vavuniya for those newly arrived people who currently have scarce access to food. Pregnant and lactating women suffering from underweight will further be assisted and UNICEF will continue the provision of multiple micronutrient supplements (sprinkles and vitamin A mega doses) as well as parasite control through the distribution of de-worming tablets for all children under five years and pregnant and lactating women. Improved Infant and Young Child Feeding practices and breastfeeding will further be promoted among the IDP population.

Effective nutrition outreach is challenged by the limited capacities, particularly insufficient numbers of qualified health workers, as the current situation requires additional staff to provide emergency health and nutrition assistance. Rapid training on ‘Nutrition in Emergencies’ has so far been undertaken for 130 Public Health Midwives (PHM) and other health professionals with UNICEF support. Additional training will be required.

Health

UNICEF, since the beginning of the year, has supported the provision of basic health services to conflict affected populations in camps through the provision of infant kits, expectant mothers’ kits, emergency health kits in addition to numerous cooking utensils and mosquito nets. UNICEF further provided tents to several health facilities and in camps, thereby raising their much needed bed capacity to attend to the increased demand. UNICEF is also constructing an emergency paediatric ward of 50 beds and a maternity ward of 75 beds at the Vavuniya General Hospital.

UNICEF will be in need of additional funding to continue supporting the provision of basic health services and providing emergency supplies, infant kits, expectant mothers’ kits, emergency health kits, cooking utensils and mosquito nets. Additionally, it will provide logistic support and transport facilities in order to carry out outreach activities through mobile health clinics.

Child Protection

UNICEF’s emergency child protection response in transit camps in Vavuniya, Jaffna and any future sites focuses on: facilitation of activities for children in camps through the establishment of child friendly spaces/mobile units; identification and response to vulnerable children in camps including separated and unaccompanied children, child-headed households, and children with special needs and disabilities; monitoring, reporting and advocacy on protection issues for children and families including sexual violence, child recruitment, harassment and violence (in particular, incidents of killing and maiming and attacks against hospitals are being documented); assessment and provision of services for victims of mines/UXOs and other children with disabilities and mine risk education, as appropriate.

Rapid assessments are being undertaken to develop and implement programmes to prevent and attend to specific risks for children in emergencies such as: family separation, children at risk of abduction, recruitment or abuse (including sexual violence), and protection of children associated with armed groups.

Recreational / psychosocial activities are currently implemented through mobile units in all IDP locations in Vavuniya town through child protection partners benefiting more than 7,500 children. This will be scaled up in response to increasing needs.

UNICEF, in close collaboration with relevant Government Departments, is working to establish/strengthen child protection coordination networks at central and district level to ensure that a more coordinated and effective response is provided for children and communities during an emergency.
3. FUNDING REQUIREMENTS AND RECEIPTS

As part of the joint CHAP appeal launched on 18 February 2009 in Sri Lanka and in Geneva on 4 March 2009, UNICEF currently still needs US$ 11,783,023, which represents 79% out of a total requirement of US$ 15 million to be able to respond to the increasing needs of children and women in Sri Lanka. This total requirement will be amended through the revision of the CHAP currently underway, in order to ensure a comprehensive and timely response to the rapidly increasing number of IDPs in need of assistance.

Table 1: Funds Received against CHAP/HAR (UNICEF Humanitarian Action Report)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appeal Sector</th>
<th>Initial CHAP/HAR Requirements **</th>
<th>Funds Received (US$)</th>
<th>Unmet Requirements (US$)</th>
<th>% Unfunded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>2,200,000</td>
<td>584,751</td>
<td>1,615,249</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>1,100,000</td>
<td>275,039</td>
<td>824,961</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water, Sanitation and Hygiene</td>
<td>4,300,000</td>
<td>1,726,422</td>
<td>2,573,578</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>4,200,000</td>
<td>427,465</td>
<td>3,772,535</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Protection</td>
<td>3,200,000</td>
<td>203,300</td>
<td>2,996,700</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong>*</td>
<td>15,000,000</td>
<td>3,216,977</td>
<td>11,783,023</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Funds received against this appeal will be used to respond to both the immediate and medium-term needs of children and women as outlined above. If UNICEF should receive funds in excess of the medium-term funding requirements for this emergency, UNICEF will use those funds to support other, under-funded emergencies.

** This requirement will change through the CHAP currently being revised in order to reflect the increasing needs resulting form the rapidly changing situation.

*** The total includes a maximum recovery rate of 7%. The actual recovery rate on contributions will be calculated in accordance with UNICEF Executive Board Decision 2006/7 dated 9 June 2006.

Table 2: UNICEF Funding Priorities as of April 2009

The funding priorities are related to the emergency response to camps and transit centres in Vavuniya and Jaffna districts. While the estimated number of IDPs currently in camps amount to 95,000 as of 24 April, an estimated total number of 170,000 IDPs are now out of the conflict zone and it is expected that this number will rapidly increase to up to a quarter of a million persons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Beneficiaries/coverage</th>
<th>Amount Required (US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene</td>
<td>250,000 IDPs</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Nutrition</td>
<td>25,000 children U5 and 8,000 pregnant and lactating women</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Child Protection</td>
<td>50,000 IDPs including 30,000 children</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Emergency Education</td>
<td>30,000 school aged children</td>
<td>500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Priority needs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>5,000,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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