UNICEF’s Response

- UNICEF is actively working in Health and Nutrition, Gender and Protection, Education, WASH, Communications and Community Engagement clusters.
- UNICEF has supplies for about 7,500 people ready to dispatch, agreements with partners, and contingency supplies are in place to support the response.
- UNICEF is ready to dispatch supplies to affected areas as needed.
- Health and Nutrition is closely collaborating with the Health Cluster and co-leading the Nutrition-Sub Cluster to assess and meet the immediate health and nutrition needs of the affected population, especially children, and pregnant and lactating women, and restore the delivery of essential health and nutrition services in communities severely impacted by the cyclone.
- UNICEF is collaborating with the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) to assess and provide essential supplies to schools affected by the cyclone, aiming to minimise learning disruptions for over 25,000 students in Penama and Malampa provinces.
- UNICEF is the co-lead for the WASH cluster and supports the Department of Water Resources (DoWR) in the development of the WASH response plan and the planning of the rapid assessments and quick fixes. UNICEF has pre-positioned stock in place sufficient to support 7,500 people with essential WASH needs.
- Under the coordination of the Child Protection in Emergencies sub-cluster, UNICEF will support training on child safeguarding and psychosocial first aid to frontline responders, while establishing child-friendly spaces and providing psychosocial support to about 12,000 children in affected areas.
- UNICEF is working with the Communications and Community Engagement (CCE) Sub-Cluster to support CCE activities and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP).

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

Tropical Cyclone Lola, initially a Tropical Low, entered Vanuatu's Area of Responsibility on October 22, 2023, at 12:00 AM. It intensified to a Category 1 cyclone by 6:00 PM the same day, reaching Category 5 by 1:00 AM on October 24. On October 25, at 4:13 PM, it weakened to Category 3. The National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) issued a Red Alert for Penama, Shefa, Malampa, Torba and Sanma provinces. The severity of the cyclone is particularly alarming given that it has emerged well ahead of the official tropical cyclone season in the Southern Hemisphere, marking it as a highly unusual occurrence, and it's the third tropical cyclone to hit Vanuatu in the last 8 months.
Around 50,000 people are estimated to be affected by Tropical Cyclone Lola. Immediate risks involve potential injuries, housing destruction, psychological trauma, and heightened fear, particularly among children who have recently experienced multiple cyclones. Short-term challenges include a lack of shelter, restricted access to clean water and food, disrupted hygiene facilities, and prolonged school closures. Medium-term consequences may lead to increased sickness rates due to insufficient access to essential services like healthcare and immunisation.

On October 27th, UNICEF is conducting rapid needs assessments in the Malampa and Penama provinces in close collaboration with the government and various clusters. Additionally, UNICEF is mobilizing a robust humanitarian response, with a focus on essential health services, child protection, education, water, sanitation, hygiene, community engagement, and gender-sensitive initiatives.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

Health and Nutrition
UNICEF is actively engaged in ensuring the health and nutrition needs of the affected population are met. UNICEF is an active member of the Health Cluster, and co-leading with the Ministry of Health (MoH) the Nutrition sub-cluster. Under the wider Health Cluster, UNICEF is advocating for the integration of nutrition assessment as a critical component of the emergency medical response, and liaising with MoH and Health Cluster members to provide emergency medical responders with the knowledge, skills, supplies, and tools to effectively integrate nutrition assessment. UNICEF is also collaborating with the Health Cluster to provide the vital support to rapid and technical assessments, which includes assessment of the functionality of health facilities and cold chain. UNICEF is gearing up to support the provincial health teams in restoring delivery of essential health services including vaccination, nutrition, and psychosocial support in affected communities through community outreach. Through the Nutrition Sub-Cluster, UNICEF is providing technical leadership and guidance to sub-cluster members on developing a response plan. UNICEF has pre-positioned supplies and funding support for various health-related activities, ensuring that necessary resources are available to meet the health and nutrition needs of the affected communities.

Child Protection
Under the framework of the Gender and Protection Cluster, UNICEF is co-leading the Child Protection in Emergencies (CPIE) sub-cluster with the Ministry of Justice and Community Service, with initial priorities focusing on adopting Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures across partners, including the government. An assessment of vulnerable children is planned once the situation permits. UNICEF is committed to addressing the needs of unaccompanied and separated children through case management and referrals, targeting an estimated 250 children in the affected areas. Moreover, UNICEF will support the provision of psychosocial support and child-friendly spaces for approximately 12,000 children, as well as providing training on child safeguarding and psychosocial first aid for front-line responders. Community engagement and support for parents, caregivers and community leaders through key messages and service referrals are also in the plan. Additionally, UNICEF aims to address birth registration and certificate issuance for children who have lost their documentation due to the cyclone through the Department of Civil Registration and Identity Management (CRIM).

Education
Education Cluster has been activated, and UNICEF, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), is actively engaged in addressing the educational needs of affected children. As a part of this response, UNICEF will be supporting school assessments and providing necessary supplies. Schools in multiple provinces are temporarily closed, awaiting assessment. UNICEF is dedicated to assisting MOET in identifying the schools requiring tents and other essential school supplies, further strengthening the education sector's response to the cyclone. An estimated 243 Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) centres, 151 Primary Schools and 35 Secondary schools in Penama and Malampa province could be affected and could cause learning disruption for over 25,000 students.

WASH
UNICEF is the co-lead for the Vanuatu WASH Cluster, offering support to the Department of Water Resources (DoWR) under the guidance of the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO). A dedicated team of WASH experts and consultants is on the ground, providing coordination, information management, and preparedness. UNICEF has also established partnerships with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and has stocks in the country available to meet the needs of 7,500 people as well as additional contingency stocks in Suva and Brisbane, ensuring that adequate resources are available to meet WASH needs. Furthermore, UNICEF can deploy additional personnel from Suva and the Pacific
region if required. The focus is on providing essential water and sanitation services to the affected communities, contributing to overall health and hygiene during the response to Tropical Cyclone Lola.

Social and Behaviour Change and Accountability to Affected Population.
UNICEF is actively supporting the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) and partners via the Communications and Community Engagement Sub-cluster. This involves designing and testing clear and informative messages for the affected population and implementing Accountability to Affected Population (AAP) activities. The aim is to ensure communities are well-informed, engaged, and empowered throughout the crisis. UNICEF's collaboration with the NDMO and other stakeholders and partners ensures that information reaches the communities in a timely and accessible manner while supporting affected people to provide feedback and ensure feedback is used to inform activities of the response pillars. UNICEF has also activated online social listening to collect community insights via the Talkwalker social listening platform.

Humanitarian Leadership, Coordination and Strategy
• Cluster meetings are taking place with a focus on coordination and response planning.
• UNICEF is actively participating in cluster meetings and sharing information and resources.
UNICEF is co-leading three clusters and one Area of Responsibility (AoR). Education, WASH, Health and Nutrition; also, UNICEF is co-leading the Child Protection in Emergencies Sub-cluster and providing support to the Communications and Community Engagement working Group. At the regional level, UNICEF participates in the Pacific Humanitarian Team.

Human Interest Stories and External Media
Three cyclones in just 8 months!

Press Release

Next SitRep: Day Month Year
2nd November 2023

Who to contact for further information:
Jonathan Veitch
Representative
UNICEF Pacific Multi Country Office
Tel: +6793300439
Email: jveitch@unicef.org
Eric Durpaire
Chief Field Office - Vanuatu
UNICEF Pacific Multi Country Office
Tel: +6785545302
Email: edurpaire@unicef.org
Diego López
Emergency Specialist
UNICEF Pacific Multi Country Office
Tel: +6799920863
Email: dflopez@unicef.org