



UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION REPORT 2008

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FOREWORD

In 2007, natural and man-made disasters continued to take a toll on the lives of people. Flooding, cyclones, landslides and tropical storms have threatened lives and livelihoods on every continent. And in many parts of the world, from Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Iraq, Zimbabwe and Sudan, children and women continue to bear the brunt of conflict, displacement and deteriorating living conditions.



An important lesson learned from major emergencies is that timely and flexible funding enables humanitarian actors to respond rapidly and most effectively to priorities established with national counterparts. To ensure timely availability of funds, UNICEF has increased its Emergency Programme Fund (EPF) to US\$ 75 million per biennium.

Throughout the year, UNICEF and its partners have worked to meet the needs and rights of affected children and women. Partnerships are key to making a lasting difference for them and UNICEF has focused on further expanding its partnerships with communities, governments, NGOs, UN agencies and the private sector. Experience has taught us that children and communities must be equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to better prepare and cope with disasters.

Coordination is crucial for effective delivery of humanitarian aid. A strong supporter of humanitarian reform, UNICEF continues to work with its partners to improve the coordination of humanitarian response in all sectors. UNICEF is the global cluster lead for nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene and common data services. In education, UNICEF and the Save the Children Alliance are leading the cluster. The successful response to the floods in Mozambique is a good example of how improved coordination allows humanitarian actors to respond better to the needs of affected populations.

UNICEF continues to strengthen its early warning system and country offices' preparedness to respond to disasters. Important measures are being taken to further enhance preparedness and response skills of UNICEF and its partners.

The *2008 Humanitarian Action Report* outlines UNICEF's appeal for 39 emergencies around the world. We count on the continued support and generosity of our donors to help ensure the survival, protection and well-being of women and children in these emergency situations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Ann Veneman". The signature is fluid and extends to the right with a long horizontal stroke.

Ann M. Veneman
Executive Director

2004 INDIAN OCEAN EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMI: LESSONS LEARNED

In 2004, the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami challenged humanitarian assistance to an unprecedented degree. After three years implementing programmes in eight countries,¹ UNICEF has achieved results for over 6 million children and women in tsunami-affected areas.

Some 1.2 million children were immunized against measles and more than 3 million children received vitamin A supplementation and essential drugs, as well as emergency water and sanitation to help prevent disease outbreaks in the aftermath of the disaster. Since then, UNICEF and its partners (including governments, UN agencies, NGOs and civil society groups) have helped build capabilities that did not exist before and assisted in reconstructing and improving on what the tsunami destroyed. They have combined the training of more than 56,000 health staff, the provision of key supplies and equipment to more than 7,000 health facilities and 2 million schoolchildren, the development of child protection policies and the construction/rehabilitation so far of 107 schools, 59 health facilities, 28 child centres and water facilities serving some 700,000 people.

In doing so, lessons were learned for future humanitarian assistance. The evaluation of UNICEF's initial tsunami response highlighted some good practices that will lead to lasting improvements. Partnerships were expanded, particularly with UN agencies, the private sector and the military.² Funding was timely and abundant and, as 53 per cent of incoming funds were *thematic*, they were also unearmarked and long term. This allowed for their flexible use according to priorities established with national counterparts. The global corporate trigger mechanism was activated, giving emergencies full organizational priority with respect to supplies, fundraising and deployment of staff for the initial 90 days. Global financial monitoring tools were modified to permit monthly tracking and reporting to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Country Offices' twice-yearly reports on the results achieved in tsunami programmes allowed for a rigorous schedule of audits and evaluations. Information was widely shared through reports to donors, public UNICEF reports and the posting of evaluations and information on the UNICEF website.

The evaluations also identified several shortcomings, which bring to light six key lessons for future humanitarian support. While some have already been put in practice, follow-up actions will address remaining gaps. Many of the lessons learned are similar to the learnings of other emergencies, such as Darfur, Iraq, Liberia, Mozambique and Pakistan. They are part of a broader humanitarian reform agenda, responding to the growing number and complexity of emergencies and to the need for greater predictability, accountability and leadership in humanitarian action. This includes the drive for a greater coherence among UN agencies and for UNICEF's proactive effort to become more effective, efficient and focused in line with its *Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies (CCCs)*.

1. Effective coordination, partnership and stewardship are necessary to reach all children affected by an emergency

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