



UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION REPORT 2007

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FOREWORD

Emergencies, in the form of natural disasters and new or protracted conflict, continued to extract a toll on the lives of children and women around the world. Massive flooding in the Horn of Africa and the multiple typhoons in South Asia were typical of the ever more frequent occurrence of floods, typhoons and earthquakes that have affected thousands of families in 2006. While in Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the occupied Palestinian territory, Sri Lanka and the Sudan, women and children continue to be impacted by the reverberating crossfire of conflict.



In its sixty-year history, UNICEF has learned that protecting the lives of vulnerable women and children requires governments, local communities, humanitarian agencies and the donor community to work in partnership. In that tradition, and with a commitment to humanitarian reform aimed at achieving improved, more predictable and effective response to emergency situations, UNICEF took part in a new approach to emergencies with its inter-agency partners in 2006. The 'cluster approach', was applied in four pilot countries: DRC, Liberia, Somalia and Uganda. It was also implemented in two new emergencies, the Indonesia earthquake and the conflict in Lebanon, and to improve protection in Côte d'Ivoire. As the global cluster lead for nutrition, water and sanitation, common data services and now a partner in developing a global education cluster, this has brought new approaches to the work of the various humanitarian agencies and partners. Early assessments are positive, with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee concluding that the cluster approach has demonstrated potential to improve the overall effectiveness of humanitarian response. As a firm supporter of humanitarian reform, and in line with our Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies, UNICEF will continue to stress the need for continuous improvement in humanitarian response in all sectors.

In 2006, UNICEF appealed for a total of US\$ 1.2 billion to ensure the protection of women and children in 53 emergencies. As of November 2006, about half of that amount was raised, allowing UNICEF to respond to the most urgent needs of women and children in many emergencies. However, many crises remain severely under-funded and in neglected or silent emergencies, such as those in Angola and Nepal, only about 38 per cent of the funds needed were raised for the women and children in urgent need. Without adequate funding, essential life-saving activities for millions of children cannot be carried out, and the lives of those children will continue to be in peril.

UNICEF works to protect the rights of women and children. Our flagship publication *The State of the World's Children 2007* shows that one of the most powerful constraints to realizing children's rights and achieving the Millennium Development Goals is the discrimination experienced by women. This is no less true during emergencies. In working to improve the situation of children around the world, we strive to empower both children and women, ensuring they participate in key decisions affecting their lives, including in emergencies.

The *Humanitarian Action Report 2007* outlines UNICEF's appeal for children and women in 33 emergencies around the world. We count on your continued generosity to help ensure their survival and the defence of their rights.

Ann M. Veneman
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ann Veneman', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

INTRODUCTION

Protecting and assisting women and children in emergencies: the double dividend of gender equality

“The world is starting to grasp that there is no policy more effective in promoting development, health and education than the empowerment of women and girls... No policy is more important in preventing conflict, or in achieving reconciliation after a conflict has ended.”

United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, 2006¹

Humanitarian emergencies devastate the lives of women and children, while reinforcing discrimination to lethal effect on children. UNICEF’s on-the-ground experience during the world’s crises shows time and again that women are denied resources to survive when they can least afford it, and that children under their protection are the ultimate victims. Yet women and children often account for the majority of those displaced by crisis. In the hard-scrabble existence of camp life, it is easier to survive as a mature male, than as a mother with hungry, frightened and ill children.

The United Nations Security Council has acknowledged that women, given the opportunity, have a key role to play in promoting peace and stability during conflict and transitions to peace.² UNICEF recognizes that aligned humanitarian policy which supports the empowerment of women during crises, in tandem with the development of national reform policies, can significantly affect the survival rates of children.

UNICEF’s report *The State of the World’s Children 2007 – Women and children: the double dividend of gender equality* addresses ‘double discrimination’ – discrimination against women that in turn impedes children’s development. It describes strategies to redress exclusion, such as enhancing women’s decision-making power within the household, promoting education and economic opportunities for women and increasing women’s participation in politics.

Crises kill children and colour their future. A study in *The Lancet*³ reported that 90 per cent of child mortality occurred in 42 countries, of which more than half are conflict-affected. As women and children are displaced, the complex formal and informal networks, which support a mother rearing her children, are eroded. Consequently, children lose valuable education, are robbed of their right to health services and stable sources of nourishment (often including the tragic impact on breastfeeding), and are exposed to direct violence and exploitation. The struggle to survive dictates that women and children take greater risks each day.

In emergencies, four communicable diseases to which women and children are the most vulnerable cause 50 to 95 per cent of deaths. One out of every 13 women in **West Africa** – a region affected by protracted war and drought – will die in pregnancy and childbirth compared to just 1 out of every 3,900 in Northern Europe. Motherless newborns are three to ten times more likely to die than those with mothers who survive.⁴

¹ Message of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on International Women’s Day, 8 March 2006.

² United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, 31 October 2000, (S/RES/1325).

³ Robert Black, Saul Morris and Jennifer Bryce, ‘Where and why are 10 million children dying every year?’ *The Lancet*, Vol 361, June 28, 2003.

⁴ United Nations Population Fund, *State of World Population 2005: The Promise of Equality, Gender Equity, Reproductive Health and the Millennium Development Goals*, UNFPA, New York, 2005, p. 35.

During a crisis women are even more likely to be burdened by dual roles as 'providers' and 'carers,' which disrupt infant feeding and compromise a mother's ability to care for her young. Obtaining food and cooking fuel during conflict also increases the risks and costs to women, from things such as landmines and sexual exploitation.

Gender-based violence is a direct consequence of humanitarian crises. In **Darfur, Northern Uganda** and **the Democratic Republic of the Congo** today girls and women are frequently forced to serve as sex slaves and 'wives' to military forces, and are victims of rape as a weapon of warfare. Gender violence exacerbates the spread of HIV/AIDS, particularly amongst women and children.

Gender inequality has excluded millions of girls from school, or has condemned them to a pitiable education, a fact exacerbated in crises. Reasons include the expectation that girls should produce, collect, and prepare food, and that boys are given priority over education when a choice is forced.

Gender inequality and humanitarian action

However, emergencies also provide a chance to change the lives of girls and women, and to shift traditions that have such a detrimental impact. Strategies include:

Increasing the participation of women in the design of humanitarian intervention: in **Sierra Leone, Northern Uganda** and **Sudan**, for example, UNICEF has coordinated community groups to design and implement reintegration programmes for girls and boys formerly associated with armed groups.

Supporting evidence-based studies: extremely high maternal mortality in Badakshan, **Afghanistan**, of 6,500 deaths per 100,000 live births per year reported in 2005 led to dramatic changes in health policy reform and resource allocation prioritizing women's health.

Increasing women's decision-making within the household: enhancing decision-making and control of resources improves a woman's own nutritional status, prenatal and birthing care, breastfeeding practices, and reduces stunting among children aged 1 to 3 years.

Promoting education opportunities for all: equal access to education through the abolition of school fees and establishing 'girl-friendly schools' is key in emergencies. For example, in Darfur, girls' involvement in education has risen impressively despite the ceaseless conflict. In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia** and **Kenya** girls and boys from poor households are able to enrol in primary school through a School Fee Abolition Initiative.

Encouraging women's participation in peacemaking and peace-building processes: new research suggests that women in politics affect advocacy for children, whether at the international, national or local levels.

Supporting national policy reform which affects maternal and child health: emergencies provide opportunity to influence policies which have a direct impact on maternal and child health. For example, in **Afghanistan, Indonesia**, and **Niger**, national policies were developed which protected breastfeeding by limiting the use of infant formula during crises.

Engaging men and boys in gender equality strategies: changing the attitudes and supporting men and boys is crucial to the success of efforts to change decision-making processes that impact women and girls. Examples from **Kenya, Pakistan, Uganda**, and elsewhere illustrate that men and boys are increasingly engaging in efforts to care, nurture and support children as well as advocate for women and children's rights.

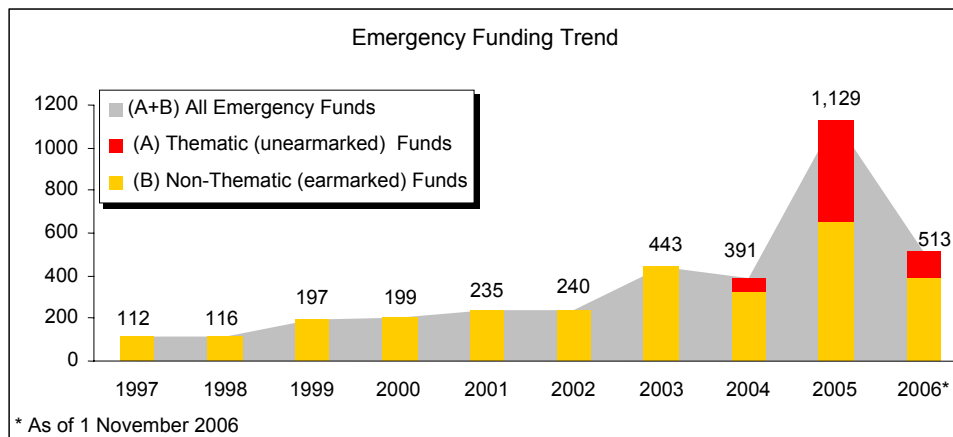
Conclusion

Crises have a debilitating impact on the lives of women and children, exacerbating existing prejudices that harm them both. Together with its UN and NGO partners, UNICEF has learned through its emergency work that there are opportunities to achieve improvements even in apparently dire situations. What is required is a focus on strengthened and enhanced outreach of social services, combined with determined support to change policies and practices that inhibit the active participation of women and girls in development. Together these measures can have significant impact on morbidity, mortality and the full realization of women's and girls' rights.

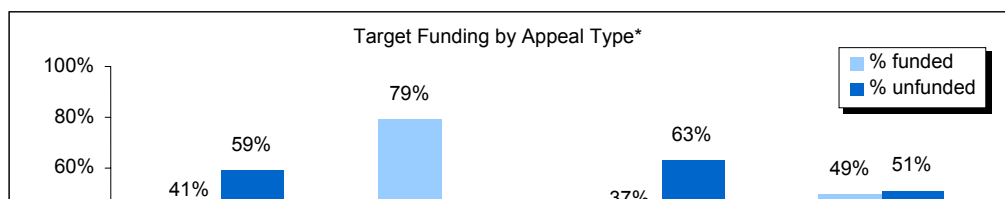
We must all tackle the obstacle of gender inequality head-on through service delivery and policy reform. Boosting women's decision-making power, providing educational and economic opportunities and increasing women's political participation can also lead to the double dividend of saving and improving the lives of children.

EMERGENCY FUNDING IN 2006

Donor funding to UNICEF humanitarian programmes reached US\$ 513 million as of 1 November 2006, reflecting a decrease of 55 per cent over 2005 levels of US\$ 1,129 million. The relatively high level of emergency funding in 2005 was attributed to the extraordinary donor response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami. If we exclude tsunami funding, we will find that 2006 emergency funding for all other emergencies is only 3 per cent lower than 2005 level. Emergency funding for 2006 may reach higher levels by the end of December 2006 as there are positive indications that donors will continue their support to fulfil the humanitarian needs of children and women globally.



UNICEF's response in 2006 covered 53 emergencies⁵, including 17 Consolidated Appeal Processes (CAPs), 13 flash appeals and 23 forgotten countries and regions. Overall, UNICEF required a total of US\$ 1.2 billion in 2006 (as of 1 November) for humanitarian interventions to ensure the protection of vulnerable children and women. As the trend has been in previous years, flash appeals attracted more donor attention and were better funded than CAPs with 79 per cent funded vs. 41 per cent for CAPs. The forgotten crises were the least funded with only 37 per cent of financial needs being met.



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