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Solomons schools to open despite emergency

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Press Release – UNICEF

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SUVA, 15 January 2010 – Widespread landslides, flash floods, damaged schools, water contamination and reports of diarrhoea, red eye, psychological trauma, coughing and the 'flu' were cited in the assessment conducted by the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Development Programme (UNDP), and other partners (OXFAM, Red Cross, Save the Children, ADRA and World Vision).

In Baniata, Solomon Islands UNICEF has taken the lead to provide temporary school shelters so children still have access to education after the emergency.

"School begins on January 18th but we have provided support in Baniata so children will begin school only a week after the normal schedule for the rest of the Solomon Islands school system," said UNICEF Pacific office Representative, Dr Isiye Ndombi.

Dr. Ndombi added "tents are being assembled and communities mobilized to help UNICEF set up temporary classrooms."

"Even though there is an emergency education is still essential. Children are much better off if they are in a safe and protective environment that is familiar to them. Schools can provide just such an environment." he added.

Apart from the provision of tents, UNICEF has provided water purifying tablets, flyers explaining how to use the purification tablets, basic emergency health kits, oral rehydration salts, a tent for a temporary health clinic and written information materials promoting key hand washing, breastfeeding and sanitation and hygiene behaviours to the affected population.

On January 4th 2010 powerful earthquakes (6.5 and 7.2 magnitude on the Richter scale) struck in Western Province of Solomon Islands near Rendova and Tetepare Islands, some 88km South South East of Gizo. The earthquakes triggered landslides, a localized tsunami hitting the southern and northern coast of the islands, and caused damage to homes and schools.

In 2007, the same area was badly damaged when an 8.2-magnitude earthquake generated a tsunami that struck the islands.

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