

## **UNICEF Pacific is mobilising \$200.000 for supplies and assistance to Samoa and Tonga**

**Source:** United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

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**SUVA, 1 October 2009** - UNICEF Pacific office based in Suva, Fiji, is sending a team to Samoa and Tonga to assist with a rapid assessment on the needs of children and their families affected by the tsunami that hit the Pacific region on 29 September. UNICEF Pacific is also offering its assistance to American Samoa.

American Samoa, Samoa and Tonga were hit by the tsunami early in the morning following an 8.3 magnitude earthquake striking of the coast of Samoa. The confirmed number of fatalities in the three countries has exceeded 150. Tens of thousands have been affected and there are reports of entire villages having been destroyed by the tsunami.

UNICEF Pacific is mobilising up to \$200.000 to send urgent immunisation supplies to Samoa and Tonga to guard against an outbreak of disease. Emergency supplies of oral rehydration salts and water purification tablets will also be sent. UNICEF is planning to set up nutrition, water and sanitation programs and working with Samoa and Tongan partners to mobilize national systems for the protection of children and women. It is believed that up to 6,000 children have been impacted by the tsunami in Samoa alone.

Dr. Isiyé Ndombi, UNICEF Pacific Representative, has expressed shock over the scale of destruction of the tsunami and the resulting grief to the people of Samoa and Tonga:

"Our hearts and minds are with the children and families of Samoa and Tonga right now. This is a tragedy of unbelievable proportions and UNICEF Pacific is ready to work closely and coordinated with our Samoan and Tongan partners and international agencies to provide immediate relief and support to the people of Samoa and Tonga. From past experiences we know that it is especially important that we work to immediately immunise children against measles, ensure the protection of women and children who are especially vulnerable now, and establish good sanitation facilities to prevent outbreak of diseases. UNICEF is especially well prepared to provide support in these areas now."

UNICEF Pacific is assisting with the rapid needs assessment to ensure a focus on children and women, and will provide supplies and assistance to Samoa and Tonga in coordination with the United Nations (UN) Resident Coordinator's Office and the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

## **About UNICEF**

*UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all girls and boys, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.*

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