Highlights

On the night of 13 August 2017, the city of Freetown and its outskirts experienced torrential rains and landslides that continued well into the morning of 14 August 2017. As at 15 August, the Ministry of Information and Communication has confirmed that 297 deaths have died (105 adult males, 83 women and 109 children, as a result of flooding and landslides, with many still reported missing. The figures are expected to rise.

The Government of Sierra Leone has declared a seven days of mourning and activated the level 3 security. In response to the request for urgent assistance, the UN Resident Coordinator has activated the United Nations disaster response for the affected areas and designated the Country Director and Representative of the World Food Programme as Incident Manager for this crisis.

Response teams have been deployed to two community schools that have been converted as temporary displacement centres (one in Regent and one in Kaningo) for the affected communities. While assessments of needs and gaps are still underway, UNICEF and partners are supporting the response with water, sanitation, hygiene, essential medicines, nutritional services, child protection, education and social mobilization. Preliminary results from the site assessments conducted by the Office of National Security and the United Nations Interagency Rapid Response Team, including UNICEF, indicate that a total of 1,039 households from several locations (including Regent, Kamayamah, Dworzak, Culvert and Kaningo) and 100 individuals in a shelter in Mountain Cut have been affected by the floods and landslides. Disaggregated data on the affected is still not available.

UNICEF’s Response with partners

UNICEF through its implementing partners is supporting the following:

**WASH**

- Provision of WASH package that includes portable water (initially through trucking), sanitation (mobile toilets/emergency latrines, handwashing stations, Aquatabs, soap and hygiene education.
- In Regent, construction is underway for four emergency latrines, two bathrooms and a 10,000 litres rain water harvesting system. The existing latrines and three drop holes will be repaired once construction of the four new emergency latrines is completed.
- In Kaningo, three mobile toilets have been installed and three temporary bathrooms have been constructed.
Health

- Provision of infection prevention and control supplies and body bags (child and adult) to the hospitals, and medicines.

Child Protection

- Provision of psychosocial support, identification of displaced children.
- Provision of 20 family tracing kits for use with unaccompanied/separated children

Education

- UNICEF is closely monitoring the situation given the start of the school in the next two weeks. Assessments are also ongoing to identify any schools that have been affected.

Nutrition

- Working with Directorate of Food and Nutrition to promotion breastfeeding and use of milk substitutes as part of cholera prevention.
- Priority is to assess number of pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, children under 2 years, numbers of SAM and MAM cases.

Social mobilization

- As lead of the social mobilization pillar, UNICEF is also supporting social mobilization efforts, focused on key messages around diarrhoeal diseases, including cholera and malaria prevention.

Finally, UNICEF has been using its free text message service, U-Report, to gather data on the needs of people living in Freetown, following the deadly floods and landslides. Around half of those who responded to a question on their biggest concern, cited looking for missing relatives. More than a third of respondents said their water supply had been affected by the flooding disaster. More results can be found on the following link: https://sierraleone.ureport.in/poll/2191/.

Humanitarian leadership and coordination

The Government of Sierra Leone has initiated its emergency response mechanism, under the leadership of the Office of National Security. A command centre has been established in the area of Regent, the epicenter to the landslide, to ensure coordination of efforts. At the technical level, eight pillars have been activated to coordinate the response (protection, health, logistics, security, social mobilization, food and nutrition, WASH and registration).

At the level of the United Nations Country Team, the United Nations Resident Coordinator has designated the Country Director and Representative of the World Food Programme as Incident Manager. The Regional Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs will be supporting the response of the United Nations Country Team. In terms of field coordination, daily meetings are held at the Office of National Security twice a day and the United Nations Country Team is also meeting daily to ensure coordination at the level of the United Nations.

Humanitarian Strategy

Following the initial operations to rescue survivors and recover the bodies, the response is being implemented on three levels: 1) support to communities affected by the landslide and floods as well as mitigation of resurgence and potential risks; 2) providing support to those in the temporary displacement centers; and 3) mitigating potential risks, such as cholera or any other outbreaks.

To support the response, UNICEF has established a field and mobile team composed of all sectors. UNICEF strategy is focused on the immediate response, prevention (potential outbreaks and other emergencies) and recovery. Sectors are currently assessing their needs and gaps to develop plans for the next steps in the response.
Human Resources
The Country Office is supporting staff that have been either directly or indirectly affected by the crisis. The Human Resources team, Staff Association, Peer Support Volunteers and counsellors are on standby to provide assistance to staff. While there is no need for additional staff at the moment, the Regional Office is providing remote support as required. Human Resources will request support from the Regional Office to fast-track the recruitment for the Emergency Officer position.

Funding
The crisis has garnered a lot of media attention and the Country Office has been contacted by several donors that are interested in supporting the response and recovery. Donors have been flexible in terms of fund utilization to support the response and the Country Office is preparing a response plan on potential gaps for donor support.

Next SitRep: 16/08/2017

Who to contact for further information:

Hamid El Bashir,
Representative
UNICEF Sierra Leone
Tel: +44 2033579278/9 x1001
Mobile: +232 76 101 004
Email: helbashir@unicef.org

Sandra Lattouf, Deputy Representative
UNICEF Sierra Leone
Tel: +44 2033579278/9 x2001
Mobile: +232 76 291 023
Email: slattouf@unicef.org

John James, Communications Specialist
UNICEF Sierra Leone
Tel: +232 76 601 310
Mobile: +232 76 102 401
Email: jjames@unicef.org

UNICEF Sierra Leone Facebook - Twitter - YouTube - Instagram - Flickr