Earthquakes in Mexico

SITUATION UPDATE – SEPTEMBER 21, 2017

A powerful earthquake rocked Mexico on Tuesday, September 19th, killing more than 200 people and toppling buildings — less than two weeks after a magnitude-8.1 quake previously hit the country and killed nearly 100. The quake struck central Mexico at about 2:15 p.m. ET and had a magnitude of 7.1. Its epicenter was in the state of Puebla, about 80 miles southeast of the capital, Mexico City.

According to reports, more than 20 children had died and 30 were missing after a school collapsed. The earthquake also caused major damage in neighboring states.

UNICEF Mexico staff are closely monitoring the situation. Around 2.5 million people do not have electricity in Mexico City and 29 buildings have reportedly collapsed. The city was in chaos as of Tuesday afternoon; traffic was affected and phone lines were unreliable.

UNICEF PUTS CHILDREN FIRST

The first earthquake on September 7th affected over 2.1 million children in Chiapas and Oaxaca states, out of which more than 580,000 were children under age 5. After this earthquake, UNICEF deployed three teams to assess the needs in Chiapas and Oaxaca. UNICEF staff met with local authorities and there is no detailed assessment of damages as of yet. However, it is estimated that there are approximately 5,000 houses damaged, 30 deaths and some 300 injured. Some 120 schools are estimated to be damaged. There are eight shelters, of which only one is official. There is no information on how many people are staying in these shelters. Another severely affected site is San Mateo del Mar. Schools are heavily damaged and classes are suspended indefinitely.

UNICEF staff have detected a strong need for psychosocial support. Children are observed to be emotionally and mentally impacted by the earthquake. UNICEF will be promoting temporary learning spaces and provision of “school-in-a-box” kits in mobile schools that should be provided by the National Protection Agency. UNICEF will also be conducting advocacy for an early return to school in the earthquake-affected areas.
UNICEF Mexico Country Representative, Cristian Skoog said in response to the quake, "We need your solidarity, the support of all Mexicans in this very difficult time. Your support, your solidarity, your help. We count on you."

UNICEF is requesting a total of $4.6 million to support its life-saving programs for both earthquakes. Below are details for UNICEF’s response for the most vulnerable children affected by these earthquakes.

In areas where the first earthquake hit – Oaxaca and Chiapas, programs will include:

- **Education**: UNICEF is coordinating a back-to-school effort to reach 20,000 children, using school-in-a-box kits and temporary learning spaces. This will keep children learning and help them regain a sense of normalcy and routine. UNICEF will also be conducting teacher trainings for 40 affected schools on psychosocial support and teaching in emergency settings.

- **Psychosocial support**: In addition to training teachers on recognizing and addressing distress and trauma to meet children’s socio-emotional needs, UNICEF is providing recreational kits so children can play, relieve stress and just be kids. This includes materials for primary school-age children, adolescents and children under age 5 to cope, heal and feel safe and supported. UNICEF is setting up tents to ensure children have safe and welcoming places to go for learning, play and healing. UNICEF is also ensuring that teachers and facilitators have access to basic supplies to support psychosocial intervention and dialogue.

- **Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)**: UNICEF will provide supplies to ensure access to safe drinking water and prevent the spread of waterborne disease. Hygiene supplies include antibacterial hand gel, personal hygienic items including menstrual hygiene kits and diapers, wipes and other materials.

- **Nutrition**: It is critical that pregnant, lactating and nursing mothers have access to information on how to keep breastfeeding and receive lactation counseling if needed, so their babies can continue to receive the nutrition they need, even in a time of crisis. UNICEF is currently assessing needs and planning to target mothers with services and support.

In areas where the second earthquake hit – Mexico City, Morelos and Puebla, programs will include:

- **Child Protection**: UNICEF will provide advocacy and communication to parents on how to protect their children during the earthquake to prevent child separation in earthquake-affected areas. UNICEF will also provide child-friendly spaces to provide children with psychosocial support to address the trauma children have experienced from the earthquake. Additional support will include blankets, rainwear and tarpaulins, along with supporting emergency foster care for children who have been separated from their parents.

- **Education**: UNICEF will provide temporary learning spaces (school tents) and school safety guidelines, along with school-in-a-box kits and early childhood development kits to help children continue their education, and to bring some sense of normalcy in the aftermath of the earthquakes. Training for teachers in providing psychosocial support will also be included.

- **Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)**: UNICEF will provide safe drinking water in highly affected municipalities of Puebla and Morelos. Also, UNICEF will include as part of its WASH response are mobile toilets in temporary shelters and open spaces, in addition to distributing hygiene items such as handwashing soaps, menstrual pads, diapers and antibacterial hand gel.

**About UNICEF**

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) works in more than 190 countries and territories to put children first. UNICEF has helped save more children’s lives than any other humanitarian organization by providing health care and immunizations, clean water and sanitation, nutrition, education, emergency relief and more. UNICEF USA supports UNICEF’s work through fundraising, advocacy and education in the United States. Together, we are working toward the day when no children die from preventable causes and every child has a safe and healthy childhood. For more information, visit unicefusa.org.