



UNICEF Assists Post-Earthquake Child Support Mission

High level mission with government looks into signs of stress in children

BEIJING, May 21, 2008 – The Government of China has organized a high level mission to Sichuan - with support from UNICEF - to provide immediate psycho-social assistance for children suffering emotional trauma following the major earthquake that struck the region on May 12.

The mission has been organized by the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA), the top government body handling child protection issues in China, and the National Working Committee on Children and Women (NWCCW) the State Council's coordinating body for children's issues, in response to numerous reports that children are exhibiting signs of severe stress related to the traumatic experiences of the massive earthquake. The multi-sectoral team is made up of UNICEF professionals, psycho-social recovery specialists and senior government officials.

“It is important to reach out quickly to children who have been affected by the traumatic experiences they have been through,” said Dr. Yin Yin Nwe, UNICEF Representative and Chair of the UN Disaster Management Team for China, “After the 2007 Yunnan earthquake, when UNICEF provided technical assistance for child psycho-social support we found about 95 per cent of children were naturally resilient and could be helped through community based psycho-social care. The remaining 5 per cent needed to be referred for psychological treatment.”

The main purpose of the mission is three-fold: 1) to organize immediate psycho-social interventions for hundreds of children who have been separated from parents, 2) to gather information on the scope of post-disaster child psycho-social stress in the region and 3) plan next steps to provide long term psycho-social support interventions. The team will visit facilities where separated and unaccompanied children are currently being cared for. The mission will last about five days.

Efforts to collect detailed information on separated and unaccompanied children have been hampered by damaged infrastructure in the region.

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Following a natural disaster, it is important to rapidly identify and document all separated and unaccompanied children. When children are suddenly separated from their parents and family, they are much more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

About UNICEF

For more than 60 years, UNICEF has been the world's leading international children's organization, working in over 150 countries to address the ongoing issues that affect why kids are dying. UNICEF provides lifesaving nutrition, clean water, education, protection and emergency response saving more young lives than any other humanitarian organization in the world. While millions of children die every year of preventable causes like dehydration, upper respiratory infections and measles, UNICEF, with the support of partnering organizations and donors alike, has the global experience, resources and reach to give children the best hope of survival. For more information about UNICEF, please visit www.unicefusa.org.

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For additional information, please contact:

Marissa Buckanoff, U.S. Fund for UNICEF, (212) 922-2485, mbuckanoff@unicefusa.org