

PRESS RELEASE



EU and UNICEF: building community resilience against floods in Cambodia

EU funds €600,000 initiative to prepare for recurrent floods and reduce related health risks for Cambodian children and their families.

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, 22 May 2014 –The European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) is providing €600,000 (approximately US\$ 832,000) to help reduce the risk of water-borne diseases to vulnerable Cambodian children and their families during and after a flood emergency.

Recurrent and annual floods in Cambodia impact approximately 19 of the country’s 25 provinces. In 2013, floods affected at least 1.5 million Cambodians causing loss of life, damage to critical water and sanitation infrastructure (including more than 12,000 drinking wells), and ruining crops and livelihoods.

The EU funds will enable UNICEF to help strengthen preparedness and build resilience among communities in flood-prone areas by supporting the chlorination and rehabilitation of wells in an estimated 50 communes. To ensure that these activities are adequately undertaken, training will be provided to 100 sub-national officials from five provincial and 18 district offices of the Department of Rural Development, under the Ministry of Rural Development.

“This funding from the European Commission will enable UNICEF in its work to institutionalize the correct cleaning wells after floods and, more importantly, to modify existing wells by raising and sealing well-platforms, so that flood water cannot seep in. This will help to make a tremendous difference in reducing the risks to children during a flood emergency,” said Rana Flowers, UNICEF Representative in Cambodia.

The initiative will also support the training of 500 village-level officials on how to promote basic hygiene and sanitation so that households value their importance as a critical means to prevent diseases such as diarrhea. In Cambodia an estimated 2,300 children die annually from preventable diseases like diarrhea. The training will include the piloting of portable ecological *floating* toilets which allow excreta and urine to be hygienically contained and composted during floods, after which, the contents can be safely used as agricultural fertilizer.

“The EU acts where emergency relief is needed. Cambodia is often hit by devastating floods. When humanitarian needs overwhelm local capacities, we stand ready to assist those affected by disasters. The work of UNICEF is of great importance to better preparing the

populations to future floods", said Bernard Jaspers Faijer, ECHO Programme Manager in Cambodia.

The funds will also be used to train sub-national officials in the innovative use of mobile phones to upload assessments of flood-damaged wells to a national database during and after an emergency. The information will provide government, the UN and other aid agencies with timely and critical information about affected households and areas with limited access to safe drinking water to enable them to take immediate action.

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About UNICEF

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere. For more information about UNICEF and its work in Cambodia visit: www.unicef.org.kh

About the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO)

The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) funds relief operations for victims of natural disasters and conflicts. Aid is channeled impartially, straight to victims, regardless of their race, ethnic group, religion, gender, age, nationality or political affiliation. ECHO is among UNICEF's largest humanitarian donors.

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