

IMMEDIATE NEEDS:

FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AFFECTED BY FLOODS IN VENEZUELA

Issue:

At least 178,000 people have been affected by the torrential rains and flooding in Venezuela that began during the second week of February. At least 10,000 children have been forced to flee their homes along with their families, among the country's poorest citizens. They face trauma, hunger, disease and increased risk of exploitation and abuse.

Action:

UNICEF responded immediately, providing \$100,000 in relief supplies and human rights emergency training for Civil Protection personnel. Together with other UN agencies, UNICEF will provide ongoing support to the affected populations, while continuing its regular Country Programme. Pending a possible Joint UN Appeal, UNICEF is providing this Donor Alert in advance of a formal appeal for approximately US\$600,000.



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Eleven out of Venezuela's 23 states have been badly affected by the floods.



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UNICEF's supplies are ready to be sent off to the relief centres.

Impact:

As the UN agency with strongest field presence in the country, UNICEF emergency response is expected to reinforce Government and civil society efforts, particularly in terms of clean water and hygiene, psychosocial and back-to-school support for children.

URGENT REQUEST: US\$ 600,000

1. Emergency Situation

Attributed by the Venezuelan weather service to the effects of global warming, unusual dry season rains beginning on 6 February caused large-scale flooding in 11 of the country's 24 states, six of them now under official State of Emergency.

As of 18 February, official reports put the number of people affected at 178,000, with 61 deaths, 127 missing and 24,000 homeless.

Overflowing rivers caused the rupture of dams, destruction of bridges and roads, cuts in water and electricity, leaving communities isolated and lacking basics for survival. Health clinics and schools have been hard-hit. Factories, businesses and crops have been destroyed or damaged. In the state of Zulia alone, at least 60,000 hectares of crops were lost.

Even though the rains and flooding have ceased or subsided, the situation for many affected communities continues to worsen, especially those located in hard-to-reach areas. Traditional unsafe constructions of homes on hillsides and along riverbanks have exacerbated the situation, raising the issue of where to relocate poor, displaced communities.

Latest developments indicate that the potable water supply has worsened in many areas, particularly in Vargas state, where Minister of the Environment stated that 75% of Vargas will remain without water until further notice.

2. The situation of children affected by the emergency

The government's Civil Protection office provided UNICEF with the following figures, regarding children affected as of 16 February:

State	Children affected
Mérida	90,132
Miranda	3,320
Tachira	1,821
Trujillo	1,435
Yaracuy	2,067
Vargas	6,210
Zulia	6,710
Aragua	880
Carabobo	3,438
Falcón	1,428
Caracas	3,559
Total:	121,000

Government and Red Cross reports -- confirmed by a UNICEF rapid assessment in the state of Falcon -- indicate that diarrhea, respiratory and skin infections are the main health problems faced by children. Dengue and malaria have not yet been reported, but outbreaks could occur under conditions of flooding and poor sanitation. 180 schools have been damaged, while at others, 148 classrooms have been converted into refugee centers.

3. Emergency Response

3.1 Government: the Government has declared an emergency in six of the 11 affected states. The National Permanent Risk Management Committee was organized, headed by the Minister of the Interior and Justice. The Army and National Guard were called in to help Civil Protection personnel evacuate endangered communities and provide food and other relief supplies to flood-hit areas. Efforts to clear

blocked roads and restore basic services are underway. Ongoing social programmes implemented by the Government (“missions”) have shown to be useful for emergency response.

3.2 UNICEF’s response: in coordination with Civil Protection, Red Cross, State Councils for Children’s Rights and other agencies, UNICEF immediately allocated \$100,000 for emergency actions, as follows:

- a) A rapid assessment of the impact of the crisis on children was conducted in two states;
- b) 10,000 sachets of oral rehydration salts; 6,000 boxes of water purification tablets; 3,000 family hygiene kits and 600 mattresses and blankets were provided for the hardest-hit areas of Vargas, Falcon and Merida, and to a lesser extent, Caracas;
- c) TV and radio spots with messages about health and personal hygiene, sanitation and water purification were distributed for broadcast by the local media;
- d) In conjunction with the Ministry of Interior and Justice and other UN agencies, a 3-day training workshop was organized for key Civil Protection personnel on human rights of children and women in emergencies;
- e) A psychosocial recovery workshop for community volunteers and local government staff was conducted in Falcon State.

UNICEF is closely coordinating its response with the other UN agencies in Venezuela. OPS/OMS is focusing on health issues, together with the Red Cross and Civil Protection.

4. Objective of UNICEF’s cooperation

Contribute to improve the living conditions and keep watch over the human rights of 121,000 children in 11 states, affected by the emergency, through the donation of basic supplies, and particularly with actions aimed at psychosocial recovery to ease family relations, eliminate intra family violence and support back-to-school activities.

In accordance to the scale of the emergency, approximately **US\$600,000** is needed to provide immediate attention to the basic needs of children affected.

5. Approximated Budget by lines of action

Item	Amount (in US\$)
Basic supplies: SRO, hygiene kits, water purification tablets, communicational materials on health and hygiene	300,000
Psychosocial recovery: human resources training, technical assistance and production of educational materials	150,000
Back- to-school support, including distribution of school materials, monitoring and assessment, technical assistance	150,000

Further information on the UNICEF Emergency Programme in Venezuela can be obtained from:

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