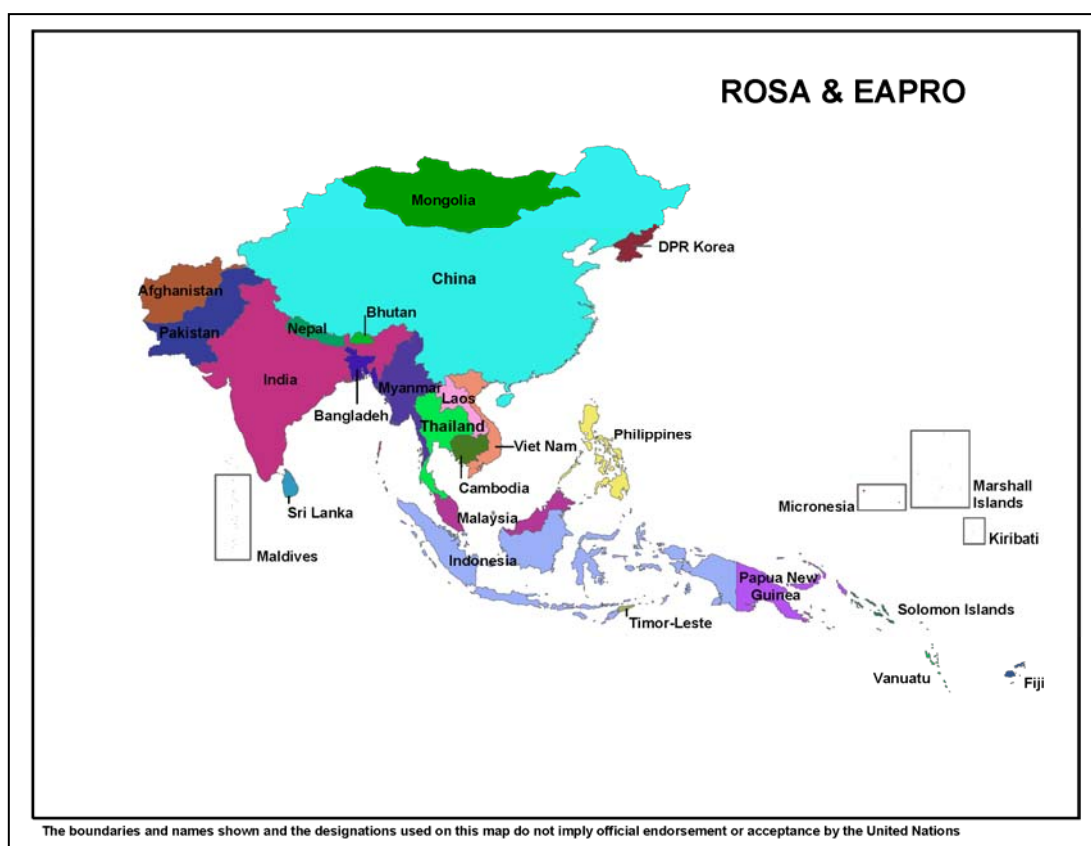


For every child
Health, Education, Equality, Protection
ADVANCE HUMANITY



UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION ASIA AND THE PACIFIC IN 2008



Asia and the Pacific Regional Offices financial needs for 2008

Sector	US\$
General and cluster-specific emergency preparedness and response planning support to Country Offices	750,000
Strengthening emergency response to natural disasters and other rapid onset emergencies (incl. contingency planning and regional surge response capacity)	220,000
Avian and human influenza pandemic and business continuity support and roll-out	220,000
Total*	1,190,000

* The total includes a maximum recovery rate of 7 per cent. The actual recovery rate on contributions will be calculated in accordance with UNICEF Executive Board Decision 2006/7 dated 9 June 2006.

1. CRITICAL ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

This chapter covers two UNICEF regions: East Asia and the Pacific and South Asia.

A. REGIONAL CONTEXTS

East Asia and the Pacific

Throughout 2007, the East Asia and Pacific region, and particularly Indonesia, faced an increased number of natural disasters, epidemics of infectious diseases, and renewed outbreaks of violence and conflicts. The Regional Emergency Unit, in its technical advisory and support role for Country Office response to humanitarian crises, further strengthened the capacity of Country Offices – and of the Regional Office itself – for preparedness and response in line with UNICEF's *Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies*, increasingly in an inter-agency context, in the framework of the UN humanitarian reform and the cluster approach.

One particularly significant event occurred in the early hours of 2 April 2007, when an earthquake of magnitude of 8.1 struck the Solomon Islands, damaging houses and buildings and triggering a powerful local tsunami less than five minutes later. The earthquake and subsequent tsunami took the lives of 52 inhabitants, injuring another 40 and displacing 36,588 people, many of them women and children. The earthquake in the Solomon Islands was only the strongest of dozens more that, together with volcanic eruptions, affected several countries in the region, mainly along the Ring of Fire.

A number of other events required humanitarian responses in 2007. Torrential rain leading to severe flooding and landslides devastated China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and particularly DPR Korea, leaving more than 1700,000 people homeless, causing heavy damage to and loss of infrastructure, disrupting basic services and destroying extensive farmland. Given the extremely complex political and programmatic context, access to the affected areas was a challenge, as was the timely provision of assistance and delivery of basic services to the affected population; this threatened particularly the survival of children and women.

In 2007, the region was also significantly affected by severe outbreaks of otherwise manageable diseases. DPR Korea reported an outbreak of measles, with more than 600 persons falling sick within the space of one month, requiring the mobilization of an intensive vaccination campaign led by UNICEF and WHO, during which 6 million children and 10 million adults were immunized. Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore and Thailand were burdened with more than the usual number of dengue cases. In some countries the problem has approached epidemic proportions and caused increased child mortality.

Unresolved conflict characterized by fragile ceasefires and escalating tensions and political instability triggering civil unrest continued to roil the region, especially Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Timor-Leste. As a result, as refugees or displaced within their own country, the most vulnerable continue to suffer the worst humanitarian consequences: weakened, collapsed or non-existent basic social services and the partial or complete breakdown of social coping mechanisms that jeopardize particularly the protective environment for children and women.

Increasingly effective coordination and collaboration with local authorities and other humanitarian partners paired with a stronger role being played by the Regional Office have greatly enhanced UNICEF's capacity to prepare for and respond to humanitarian crises throughout the region.

South Asia

Previous editions of this report have highlighted the major endemic and structural imbalances that affect developmental efforts in South Asia and also create huge vulnerabilities to both natural and man-made disasters: the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) remain unmet in most countries in the region and more children live in absolute poverty in South Asia than in any other region in the world. South Asia has by far the largest prevalence of underweight children under five. The level of child mortality is also one of the highest: one of every three children who die is from South Asia. While the region has made progress in providing drinking water and sanitation, over 900 million people, many of them children, still live without

access to improved sanitation facilities. The region also lags behind in primary school enrolment and completion, and is home to the greatest number of primary school-aged children who are out of school.

The children of South Asia also face myriad challenges that compound those relating to poverty and access to quality social services. Social exclusion due to gender, caste, religion, ethnicity, language, disability and geographical location figures prominently in many children's lives and impedes their access to education and health services. Children also suffer systemic abuse of their rights through such practices as child labour, bonded labour and trafficking.

The profile of South Asia, which contains some of the greatest population concentrations of urban and rural poor anywhere, as one of the most emergency-prone regions in the world, was again evidenced in 2007, when nearly 60 million persons were affected by the cyclone and flood emergencies that struck during the annual monsoon season in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan. Recurrent natural disasters in the form of floods, drought, and severe winter weather combine with the permanent threat of sudden onset events of cataclysmic proportions such as the December 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami and the October 2005 South Asia earthquake. In addition, prolonged, and in 2007, escalating armed conflict in Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, as well as in regions of both Nepal and Pakistan, do not appear to augur any early solution. These conflicts affect the lives of millions of children, robbing them of their childhood and, in many cases, their lives. In Afghanistan 2 million primary school-aged children (54 per cent) are out of school with an estimated 1.3 million of them being girls. Several attacks against schools, mainly torching and explosions, were reported in 2007 in all parts of the country. In Sri Lanka, targeting of civilians, killing and abductions and blocked access to towns have all contributed to create a large number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the northern and eastern parts of the country and increased acute malnutrition rates among children. In Pakistan, civil unrest and fighting in some parts of the country, combined with restricted humanitarian access, is further deteriorating the health and nutritional situation of children. In Nepal, despite the peace agreement, there are continuous reports of violation of human rights and recruitment of children. Civil-political disorders in Bangladesh and, on a lesser scale in the Maldives, also remain of concern.

B. AVIAN AND HUMAN PANDEMIC INFLUENZA

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI)/H5N1 continues to circulate throughout East Asia and the Pacific, threatening the livelihoods of smallholder poultry farmers and the health of families in some of the most vulnerable communities. Children have been acutely affected by exposure to sick birds as they live and play in close contact with their animals. While human cases are still rare (265 cases and 173 deaths in East Asia through the end of September 2007), there is growing concern that each new human case increases the chance of the mutation that will trigger a pandemic of a new, highly transmissible virus. The effects – especially on children – of such an event would be catastrophic in this part of the world. South Asia, too, has experienced outbreaks of HPAI/H5N1 in poultry in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, triggering the culling of thousands of birds. While there have been no confirmed human cases of avian flu in humans in South Asia yet, UNICEF remains vigilant.

2. KEY ACTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2007

Coordination

The UNICEF Regional Office for East Asia and the Pacific (EAPRO) has further strengthened coordination and contacts with other humanitarian actors in the region. The establishment, in February 2007, of an Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) network system in Bangkok, including key UN agencies and intergovernmental organizations, for which EAPRO continuously advocated, has allowed for a great increase of regional inter-agency coordination and joint initiatives in support to the UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and local IASCs. On two occasions, in the Philippines and in Timor-Leste, in collaboration with the respective UNICEF Country Offices and the Regional Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), EAPRO took the lead in organizing comprehensive inter-agency emergency preparedness and contingency planning workshops in the framework of the United Nations humanitarian reform and the cluster approach. A specialized working group, including FAO, UNICEF, WHO, and other UN partners, and coordinated by the Asia-Pacific Regional Office of the UN System Influenza Coordination (UNSIC), has been established in Bangkok to address avian and human influenza issues and to provide support to UNCTs as required.

The UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) collaborated on a range of inter-agency emergency preparedness support measures at the country level with other UN regional offices, notably those of OCHA, based in Bangkok, and WHO, based in New Delhi. Coordination, including a progressive synchronization of technical assistance to Country Offices, is especially developed with ROSA in such areas as pandemic simulation training and contingency planning and the rolling-out of newly developed UNICEF emergency programming tools, such as those for rapid assessment and monitoring and evaluation.

Achievements

East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO)

Throughout 2007, the Regional Emergency Unit further strengthened the capacity of EAPRO, as well as its management and coordination systems, to support Country Offices in their emergency preparedness and response processes, in the framework of the United Nations humanitarian reform's components, especially the cluster approach, and the overall inter-agency coordination context.

As part of emergency preparedness and disaster mitigation, the Regional Emergency Unit participated in advisory missions and facilitated workshops and trainings organized in Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, Thailand, Vanuatu and Viet Nam, supporting them in effectively mainstreaming and planning emergency and preparedness response in the framework of UNICEF's *Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies*, and in the wider inter-agency United Nations humanitarian reform context.

At the onset of new emergencies (Malaysia, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste), EAPRO provided direct technical support to Country Offices, with missions comprised of the Regional Emergency Unit and other technical advisers and officers. EAPRO also acts as a main liaison within the region and/or between Headquarters (Office of Emergency Programmes and Programme Division) and the Country Offices during emergency response operations.

In the Solomon Islands, for example, as part of the direct technical support provided to the Country Office at the onset of the emergency, EAPRO facilitated the release/loan of assistance from several countries in the region (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Timor-Leste) both in terms of staffing and supplies. It also engaged Regional Office technical advisers in direct support missions, in the revision of planning and fundraising documents, human resources support, activation of Headquarters' support and fundraising activities.

In line with the application of UNICEF's *Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies*, the Regional Emergency Unit intensified its collaboration with participatory monitoring and evaluation colleagues in assisting Timor-Leste, Viet Nam and the Pacific Islands' Country Offices in testing and applying monitoring and evaluation tools in emergencies. Increasingly, this collaboration has been expanded to other agencies and organizations, as well as governmental counterparts.

With the aim of strengthening regional coordination of emergency response, EAPRO is developing regional emergency surge capacity rosters, including internal and external qualified candidates, to be interfaced with the Headquarters' main global rosters.

South Asia Regional Office (ROSA)

In the South Asia region, a special area of emphasis has been on operationalizing Country Office preparedness and response plans through specific training and the application of newly developed programmatic tools in areas such as rapid assessment and emergency monitoring and evaluation as well as the cluster leadership approach that emerged from recent United Nations humanitarian reform measures as an inter-agency coordination mechanism in emergency settings.

Specific achievements in 2007 are as follows:

UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION REPORT 2008

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka Country Offices have received direct support for the update of their respective preparedness plans. The UNICEF Early Warning-Early Action (EW-EA) system was adopted and regularly updated in seven of the eight Country Offices of the South Asia region. With the support of ROSA, India and Nepal conducted a simulation exercise to test their level of preparedness.

New emergency preparedness tools have been rolled out at country level. UNITRACK (a UNICEF supply management and tracking system for emergency settings) has been installed in Afghanistan and Pakistan Country Offices in early 2007. A multisectoral rapid assessment (MRA) toolkit is now available for UNICEF offices and counterparts in Afghanistan, Assam and the Maldives. The toolkit was immediately used in India during the floods in July-August 2007. By end-June 2007, following two years of sustained effort, an Education in Emergencies Toolkit had been field-tested and rolled out in all eight ROSA Country Offices and endorsed by Headquarters for dissemination and use in UNICEF offices throughout the world.

Concerning preparedness and response in the framework of the cluster approach, two nutrition in emergency specialists and one water and sanitation in emergency specialist are now available in ROSA to support Country Offices. A diagnosis of nutrition cluster capacities in two countries (Nepal and Sri Lanka) has been conducted. Pakistan and Sri Lanka have been supported for the definition/revision of the protocol for case management of severe malnutrition using the community-based approach.

In support of surge capacity needs, ROSA staff were immediately deployed for the 2007 flood emergencies in India and in Pakistan, to provide technical support in the implementation areas.

Avian and human pandemic influenza

UNICEF has been a key actor in the overall response to avian influenza and in pandemic preparedness planning coordinated by the UN System Influenza Coordination (UNSIC). At the regional level, UNICEF plays a lead role in shaping and providing technical support on initiatives for effective risk communication and pandemic preparedness planning. The South Asia emergency team, in collaboration with the Early Warning and Preparedness Unit of the Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS), developed a pandemic influenza simulation module. The simulation exercise has been carried out in eight offices in South Asia and two offices in East Asia and the Pacific, with more exercises planned throughout 2008. Using a functional exercise approach, UNICEF tests the operational quality of pandemic contingency plans and identifies shortcomings in preparedness planning while enhancing staff understanding of their roles in a pandemic response to support governments to meet the needs of children for lifesaving information, essential supplies and protection. As a follow-up activity, all eight offices in South Asia have received support to update their plans based on the lessons drawn from the exercises. During the latter half of 2007, EAPRO has supported UNSIC in the field-testing and roll-out of an adaptation of the UNICEF methodology for the testing of full UN Country Team (UNCT) plans – an initiative which will significantly strengthen the role of the entire UN system in supporting governments during a pandemic emergency.

3. PLANNED HUMANITARIAN ACTION FOR 2008

In light of the results of the Organizational Review, the UNICEF Regional Offices for East Asia and the Pacific (EAPRO) and South Asia (ROSA) agreed to create, starting from July 2008, a Shared Function Unit in Bangkok, including, among others, an Emergency Section. This Shared Function Unit will be tasked with providing advice and support to all the Country Offices in the two regions. The new Emergency Section will include – funding permitting – Senior Emergency Specialists for each of the clusters for which UNICEF has leadership responsibility: water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), nutrition, education and child protection.¹ The Emergency Sections in EAPRO and ROSA have already started harmonizing their approaches to planning and resource utilization.

The new expanded Emergency Section, in light of the evolving inter-agency context and in the framework of the United Nations humanitarian reform, will continue to ensure strengthened capacity of UNICEF Country

¹ Under the cluster leadership approach, within the protection sector, where child protection is a component for which UNICEF has the lead role, UNICEF will coordinate its efforts with other agencies that have complementary roles, notably UNHCR and OHCHR.

UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION REPORT 2008

Offices to be prepared and able to respond to arising humanitarian crises, taking a cluster leadership role whenever required, with sound and predictable advisory and technical support from the Regional Office.

Key activities will include:

- Continue supporting Country Offices in the two regions on UNICEF emergency preparedness and response capacity-building activities (training, coaching events, workshops, simulation exercises), disseminating the expected new emergency preparedness and response planning (EPRP) matrix, reflecting revised *Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies* and other EPRP-related tools, and reinforcing linkages leading from preparedness to early action at the country level in order to ensure minimum levels of readiness.
- Within the inter-agency framework and the United Nations humanitarian reform, improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response by ensuring greater predictability, accountability and partnership. Further strengthen, through cluster-specific trainings and tools, the dissemination of the cluster approach in WASH, education, nutrition and protection, for which UNICEF has been given the global responsibility. As part of the regional IASC network, continue to advocate and support Country Offices to organize inter-agency EPRP events, aiming at developing inter-agency specific contingency plans with clearly defined action plans for each cluster/sector, with clear roles and responsibilities for each member partner.
- Ensure provision of direct assistance to Country Offices affected by new, emerging crises, in terms of generic initial humanitarian response support, inter-agency coordination, fundraising, liaising between the Country Offices and Headquarters (Office of Emergency Programmes and Programme Division) within the region, and deploying, when required, emergency staff and/or cluster specific staff to support the Country Offices in delivering UNICEF's *Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies* and cluster accountability.
- Reinforce the development of regional cluster and non-cluster specific surge capacity rosters, interfaced with global ones to establish a comprehensive rapid response team in line with UNICEF's global cluster approach leadership roles as well as UNICEF Regional Office technical support and guidance.
- Strengthen the information management component within all emergency and response activities in Country Offices through continued enhanced collaboration with regional participatory monitoring and evaluation colleagues. This includes technical assistance for the development of rapid assessment methodologies, including specific measures for the development of relevant baseline datasets in emergency preparedness activities (i.e., DevInfo), performance monitoring and gap analysis as well as other information management tools in line with the latest IASC *Guidelines*. Contribute to effective information management between and within clusters through enhanced monitoring and evaluation capacity of Country Offices.
- As part of a multi-year strategy for avian and human pandemic influenza (AHPI), continue to support more long-term and strategic work on risk communication and emergency communication systems to increase community resilience to cope with and respond to a range of threats, including a human influenza pandemic. Collaboration with UN partners on pandemic preparedness initiatives will contribute to increased national capacity to prepare for and respond to a pandemic in other programme areas that have critical implications for children and their families. The coherence of this work will be enhanced and sustained by integration within broader emergency preparedness and response systems. The long-term vision will shape intensified support to Country Offices for AHPI preparedness, through strengthened communication systems, inter-agency coordination, technical advice, and simulations of a pandemic response. Roll-out of business continuity training and preparation of business continuity plans in all Country Offices by the end of 2008 will complement this work by addressing the anticipated direct consequences of a pandemic on UNICEF staff.
- Liaise and coordinate with the Office of Emergency Programmes and Headquarters for global processes and discussions on key humanitarian initiatives, and at the regional level continue and optimize inter-agency coordination, mainly through the regional IASC network, as well as interact with other relevant regional and subregional organizations.