

Crisis Appeal for Central America

Humanitarian Assistance to Children and Women Affected by Hurricane Stan
18 October 2005



Photo courtesy of Prensa Libre, Guatemala

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Health, Education, Equality, Protection
ADVANCE HUMANITY



UNICEF Crisis Appeal

Humanitarian Assistance to Children and Women in Central America affected by the passage of Hurricane Stan

- Hundreds of thousands of children across the region have been affected by flooding and landslides associated with the passage of hurricane Stan. They require urgent humanitarian assistance through interventions in health, nutrition, water and sanitation, protection and education;
- UNICEF requests \$8,055,000 to sustain on-going relief efforts throughout the region.

ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

The passage of hurricane Stan in the vicinity of Central America and its direct impact on Southern Mexico has sparked the gravest natural disaster to hit the region this decade. Continuous heavy raining associated with it has caused flooding and landslides on a massive scale, which have claimed a heavy toll in lives, have forced very large displacements of population and have destroyed infrastructures and livelihoods across the region.

The peoples of Guatemala and El Salvador have borne the heaviest burden. Yet, hurricane Stan has had devastating effects for communities throughout the region. The disaster has also struck heavily Southern Mexico, it has further aggravated the dire situation of indigenous communities in some parts of Nicaragua and it has caused significant destruction in some areas of Honduras and Costa Rica.

Official figures of 783 people dead in the region *as of 12 October* (of which 654 in Guatemala) will probably rise to around 2,000 dead, considering that hundreds have been declared missing (828 in Guatemala alone) and that some areas are yet to be accessed. Over five hundred thousand people across the region moved to shelters, and several thousands of them will stay in them for prolonged periods as thousands of houses have already been officially declared destroyed. The livelihood of hundreds of rural communities, dependent on farming, has been washed away. Damage to social infrastructure, including water and sanitation systems, health facilities and schools, has been very extensive in many parts.

The disaster has created acute and urgent humanitarian needs for children, which represent over a third of the victims. UNICEF, in partnership with Governments and civil society, is providing immediate humanitarian relief assistance to children and women, where most needed across the region. Yet, additional resources are required to ensure that the basic rights of children are met, while in shelters and when they return to communities where access to essential social services has been either totally disrupted or significantly reduced.

This regional crisis appeal is an initial request by UNICEF based on preliminary assessments of needs to provide humanitarian assistance to children and women affected by the natural disaster caused by the passage of hurricane Stan. UNICEF will continue to gather information on the situation of children and might in the future present additional requests if it establishes that needs beyond those identified in this request are not being met.

This regional appeal includes requests presented by UNICEF in joint United Nations Flash Appeals launched for El Salvador on 7 October and for Guatemala on 10 October. It also expands on the request formulated by UNICEF in a joint appeal launched by the United Nations on 19 September to meet humanitarian needs of some indigenous communities of Northern Nicaragua, as renewed flooding has further worsened their situation and affected other areas. In addition, this appeal formulates new requests to meet needs of children in affected communities in Honduras and to strengthen UNICEF's on-going

cooperation with Mexico to guarantee education for all in Chiapas, the state of that country most affected by hurricane Stan. Finally, the appeal includes a small component for essential preparedness measures which UNICEF considers vital in order to attend to the needs that new disasters in the region may generate before the current season of rains and hurricanes draws to a close in December.

IMPACT ON CHILDREN, ACTION TO DATE AND PLANNED ACTIONS PER COUNTRY

Notwithstanding the sub-regional dimension of this disaster, its consequences, the humanitarian needs for children it has created and the response of UNICEF vary from country to country. This section describes these elements country per country. Financial requirements have been consolidated into a single table that presents the overall budgets for the planned interventions. Unless otherwise specified, these interventions will be carried out within a three-month time frame. All interventions are coordinated with national authorities and with other UN agencies.

Guatemala

Overall impact: The scope of the disaster in Guatemala has been huge. Flooding and landslides have caused loss of life, injury, displaced persons and damaged housing and infrastructure in 251 of 331 municipalities in 15 of the country's 22 departments situated in the South and Western parts of the country. As of 12 October, 654 persons had been confirmed dead and 828 were declared missing (many of whom in hamlets which literally disappeared as they were engulfed by landslides). National authorities have recorded 224,000 persons as being directly affected and in need of assistance, of which over 140,000 have been displaced to more than 700 shelters. More than 6,800 houses have been destroyed or heavily damaged. Damage to social infrastructure, including health centres, schools and water and sanitation systems, has been widespread.

In recognition of the gravity of the situation, on 5 October the Government declared a state of national emergency ("estado de calamidad nacional") and on 7 October it requested assistance from the international community.

Immediate response by UNICEF: The humanitarian response of UNICEF was coordinated from the outset with national authorities and with other UN agencies. As an immediate measure, UNICEF reprogrammed \$350,000 from its regular programme to address the most pressing emergency needs of children. In this first phase, assistance provided by UNICEF has been directed at improving conditions in the shelters through interventions in the areas of health, nutrition, water and sanitation and child protection.

In the first days of the emergency, UNICEF was able to distribute 290,000 oral rehydration salts and 128,000 antibiotic tablets in the shelters. A plan to monitor the nutritional status of children and lactating women in shelters was put in place with national authorities and the availability of safe drinking water was enhanced through the donation of a water purifying machine. With a view to ensuring protection against abuse of children in shelters, UNICEF has cooperated with national authorities to start data collection and action planning regarding the condition of temporary shelters and affected communities with emphasis on the protection of unaccompanied and separated children. As part of this effort, information materials are being produced and distributed and over 400 teachers have been trained to assist with care and support to children in the shelters.

At the same time, UNICEF coordinated with UN agencies and with the Government the elaboration of a United Nations Flash Appeal, which was launched on 10 October for a total amount of \$21,557,000 to provide immediate humanitarian relief in sectors identified by the Government as being a priority. As part of that appeal, UNICEF is requesting \$3.6 million to carry out the essential humanitarian relief actions described below.

Planned actions: UNICEF will support humanitarian relief interventions both in shelters and in the communities to which children and women will return. UNICEF will coordinate all UN actions and will

provide the main interface with Government and other actors in the area of Water and Sanitation. It has also planned major interventions in the areas of Health, Nutrition, Child Protection and Education.

Water and Sanitation: (initial estimate of requirements: \$2.8 million)

- Support to the installation of a monitoring system to test water quality;
- Provision of inputs for water purification and mobile chlorination tools;
- Provision of devices for handling of water and of excreta;
- Provision of soap and dissemination of key hygiene messages related to water-borne diseases
- Support to community works for rehabilitation of water systems;
- Facilitate safe excreta and solid waste disposal through the provision of materials and the dissemination of communication messages

Provision of basic health services: (initial estimate of requirements : \$400,000)

- Provision of basic drugs and emergency supplies to attend children's needs;
- Support to the conduct of vaccination activities where required;
- Support to the distribution of health materials to isolated health facilities

Nutrition: (initial estimate of requirements: \$100,000)

- Support to nutritional surveillance mechanisms of children and lactating mothers in shelters and at community level;
- Provision of therapeutic feeding materials to acutely malnourished children;
- Distribution of vitamine A along with vaccination activities;
- Provision of folic acid and iron for pregnant women

Child Protection and psycho-social support: (initial estimate of requirements: \$180,000)

- Elaborate census and registration of the child population in affected communities and shelters;
- Coordinate registration of separated and unaccompanied children;
- Provide follow-up, integrated care and assistance to unaccompanied children and orphans;
- Conduct training of care givers and awareness raising campaigns to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation of children in shelters and communities

Education: (initial estimate of requirements: \$120,000):

- Adapt and reproduce educational materials for "Child Friendly Spaces"
- Support to recreational activities in shelters and communities
- Provision of educational materials and support to the resumption of schooling in affected communities

El Salvador

Overall impact: El Salvador has faced two simultaneous emergency situations with very severe consequences for the country. On 1 October over 5,000 people were forced to evacuate their homes as a result of the eruption of the Ilamatepec, one of the country's largest volcanoes located near Santa Ana. The volcano registered a second eruption on 3 October. At the same time, torrential rains associated with the passage of tropical storm Stan provoked intense flooding and numerous landslides for days on end. As of 13 October, 69 persons had died and over 160,000 had been affected. Since the beginning of the crisis, over 70,000 people took refuge in 653 shelters established throughout the country, and more than 40,000 of them are still there. Over 300 schools have been destroyed or seriously damaged and another 190 are being used as temporary shelters.

On 4 October the National Assembly approved the declaration of public emergency and the Government appealed to the international community to support relief efforts.

Immediate response by UNICEF: As part of its immediate response, UNICEF reprogrammed in-country resources and mobilized resources from its Emergency Programme Fund to provide relief assistance to the population in the shelters. The first interventions were designed to improve health and sanitation of women and children in the shelters as well as to ensure recreational activities which help children combat stress and assist in the identification of cases requiring additional support for psychological recovery. As early as 6 October, UNICEF arranged for a first distribution of over 2,000 personal hygiene kits and 2,000 recreation kits to children and women in the shelters, as well as larger hygiene and recreation kits to support shelter activities. The production of more than 6,500 additional kits was ensured in the following days. Support was also provided for basic health services and the provision of safe water through the distribution of over 80,000 packs of Oral Rehydration Salts and the distribution of 10,000 water purification tablets.

The United Nations launched on 7 October a Flash Appeal to provide immediate relief assistance to victims of this disaster in the amount of \$7.9 million. As part of that appeal, UNICEF is requesting \$2.2 million to carry out the essential interventions listed below.

Planned actions: Activities planned by UNICEF will focus on the immediate needs of children and women in shelters and on their most immediate needs as they return to communities. A more thorough assessment of needs in communities may result in additional needs for which funds may be required in the future.

Access to basic preventive and curative health services: (initial estimate of requirements: \$813,000)

- Provision of family hygiene and support kits to children and women in shelters
- Provision of family hygiene kits to facilitate returns to communities in more favorable conditions, reducing vulnerability to disease;
- Provision of basic health and hygiene materials for the prevention and control of infectious diseases;
- Provision of basic drugs and medical supplies to affected health centres;

Child nutrition (initial estimate of requirements: \$100,000)

- Support to nutritional surveillance mechanisms
- Conduct of sensitization activities for parents on adequate nutritional practices;

Water and sanitation (initial estimate of requirements: \$590,000)

- Provision of water purification materials and water containers or similar materials;
- Support to the rehabilitation of water systems at community level
- Support to the rehabilitation of community systems for the safe disposal of excreta
- Dissemination of communication materials on safe practices related to water and sanitation

Child protection, psycho-social support and recreation activities: (initial estimate of requirements: \$225,000)

- Distribution of recreation kits for children in shelters;
- Materials for psychosocial rehabilitation for use in shelters;
- Conduct of information activities on the protection of children against abuse
- Implementation of psychosocial recuperation programmes for children returning to school

Education activities: (initial estimate of requirements: \$460,000)

- Distribution of educational materials to children in shelters
- Provision of temporary school facilities
- Rehabilitation and equipment of damaged school facilities;
- Provision basic school supplies and materials

Mexico

Overall impact: The passage of hurricane Stan has struck five States in Mexico (Chiapas, Veracruz, Oaxaca, Puebla and Hidalgo), with 449 municipalities declared in a state of emergency, with over 2 million persons directly affected by the hurricane. The effects of the hurricane have been most severe on Chiapas, which registered the majority of the 51 deaths so far confirmed. In Chiapas alone, close to 80,000 persons were moved to shelters. Damage to infrastructure has been extensive.

The response of Mexican authorities to this disaster has been very rapid and commensurate with the scale of the disaster. Basic services were made available in shelters and specific measures were put in place to ensure the protection of children, as well as the speedy resumption of life in conditions of normalcy. Yet, this is still a formidable challenge in light of the destruction brought about by the passage of hurricane Stan. In Chiapas alone, State authorities reckon that 337 schools has been totally destroyed or damaged beyond repair.

Immediate response by UNICEF: The destruction of schooling infrastructures and the loss of education materials in Chiapas are of direct concern to the on-going programme of cooperation between UNICEF and Mexico. UNICEF has already redirected education materials and textbooks from its programme "Todos los niños a la escuela", which is funded through resources raised in Mexico, to meet needs in communities directly affected by hurricane Stan, donating more than 6,000 schooling kits to Chiapas authorities. UNICEF has also provided recreation materials to be used in shelters in Chiapas. An initial assessment of needs made clear that basic needs of children in shelters are being met by Mexican authorities and that basic social services will be restored in returning communities.

Planned actions: In response to the destruction caused by hurricane Stan, in particular in Chiapas, UNICEF seeks to strengthen its on-going cooperation programme with Mexico in the area of education so as to ensure that the resumption of schooling activities is carried out under the best possible conditions. UNICEF is seeking \$1,035,000 to reinforce its on-going programme to support education in Chiapas but with a focus on communities affected by hurricane Stan. Most of these resources will be raised within the country, counting on the traditional solidarity of Mexicans. The following activities have been planned:

- Distribution of school kits for children and for teachers in most affected communities
- Distribution of basic schooling equipment in most affected communities
- Support to the rehabilitation of schooling infrastructures in most affected communities

Nicaragua

Overall impact: Indigenous communities situated along the river Coco in Northern Nicaragua were severely hit in July by a plague of rodents which destroyed the harvest of several communities and created acute food shortages, which brought the Government to declare a state of disaster in August for the municipality of Waspan (Northern Atlantic Autonomous Region). The intense rains of September and early October have further aggravated this situation and have put other communities of the same region also at risk. In October, the Government declared a state of disaster also for the municipalities of Cua, Bocay, Wiwili and Yali (Department of Jinotega). The whole region is both prone and particularly vulnerable to natural disasters, as a result of geographical isolation and very limited access to basic social services. The region has the country's highest levels of chronic malnutrition in the country, the lowest levels of routine immunization and deplorable hygiene and sanitation conditions.

Immediate response by UNICEF: In response to the original crisis of July, UNICEF redirected \$80,000 from its regular programme to meet most pressing of children in communities of the Waspan municipality. Its interventions focused on increasing access to basic health services through the establishment and equipment of mobile health brigades and on contributing to the provision of safe water to communities.

On 19 September, the United Nations launched an urgent appeal for \$883,332 to meet the most pressing humanitarian needs of 18 communities that had been most severely affected. This appeal, in which UNICEF had requested \$230,680, remains unfunded.

In light of the deteriorating situation of communities originally identified and of all other indigenous communities affected by heavy rains, rats infestation and loss of crops in the communities declared to be in a state of disaster, UNICEF has revised its original assessment of needs. Through this sub-regional appeal, UNICEF is seeking to raise \$612,000 to carry out the key humanitarian relief actions described below.

Planned actions: Through this intervention, over 60,000 young children and women in all affected communities of the area will receive emergency relief assistance in health, water and hygiene.

Access to basic health services (estimate of requirements: \$402,000). Access will be increased through mobile health brigades, which will carry out preventive and curative interventions. Main activities include:

- Basic health kits for mobile health brigades
- Materials for epidemiological surveillance
- Logistical equipment for mobile health brigades

Nutrition (estimate of requirements: \$60,000). Establishment of community-based nutritional surveillance networks. Main activities include:

- Training of community workers on nutritional surveillance
- Provision of basic equipment and communication materials

Water and sanitation (estimate of requirements: \$150,000). Provision of safe water to families, through both short term (purification tablets and water containers) and medium term measures (chlorine producing equipment). Main activities include:

- Provision of family hygiene kits
- Provision of water purification tablets and jerrycans
- Provision of chlorine producing equipment
- Hygiene education training for community workers

Honduras

Overall impact: The passage of hurricane Stan also triggered heavy rains that mostly affected the departments of Valle, Choluteca, Lempira and Ocotepeque in the Western and Southern parts of Honduras. Seven people died as a result of flooding, which affected over 15,000 persons, 7,000 of which were evacuated to shelters. In addition to loss of life, economic damage in the affected Departments, including destruction of crops, housing and social infrastructures, is significant.

The response to the emergency has overstretched the response capacity of national and local bodies, which require additional resources in order to ensure that conditions in shelters are adequate and that basic needs of those that return to their communities are met.

Immediate response by UNICEF: UNICEF has established close cooperation with the Permanent Commission for Emergencies (COPECO) to assess immediate needs in flood-affected areas. In coordination with national authorities, the most communities in the four Departments mentioned totaling a number of 28,000 beneficiaries have been targeted for priority relief assistance for an initial period of 90 days.

Through this sub-regional appeal, UNICEF is seeking to mobilize \$220,000 to carry out the key humanitarian relief actions described below.

Planned actions:

- Provision of basic health services: (estimate of requirements: \$70,000)
 - Support the functioning of health facilities in most affected communities through minor rehabilitation and provision of equipment
 - Supply of basic drugs in affected communities
- Nutrition: (estimate of requirements: \$30,000)
 - Restoration of community-based nutritional surveillance centres
 - Supply of micronutrients for children
- Water and sanitation: (estimate of requirements: \$85,000)
 - Support to minor community-based rehabilitation works of water systems and systems for the safe disposal of excreta
 - Provision of family kits to improve hygiene conditions in affected areas
- Education: (estimate of requirements: \$35,000)
 - Provision of school materials to schools and children most affected in selected areas
 - Distribution of recreational kits

Costa Rica

Overall impact: Heavy rains that fell over Costa Rica in the first days of October caused flooding in a number of cantons, resulting in the displacement to shelters of up to 1,000 persons, with hundreds more displaced to parents' homes. Damage to housing and infrastructure was significant in some areas.

On 12 October intense rains that affected the zone of Guanacaste and the Northern Zone forced again the evacuation of communities, with a total of 1,273 seeking again refuge in shelters.

Immediate UNICEF response and planned actions: In response to a request by the Government, the United Nations country team mobilized resources available to the United Nations to support access by national authorities to provide immediate relief assistance to isolated communities. UNICEF has also redirected resources so as to provide support to education and recreational activities in affected communities.

UNICEF remains in close contact with authorities to assess additional needs as they may arise. At this stage, however, no specific request for funds is made to donors.

ACTIONS TO ENHANCE PREPAREDNESS AT SUB-REGIONAL LEVEL

The current humanitarian crisis is highlighting once again the importance of preparedness for rapid response. The immediate availability of basic humanitarian supplies and the ability to dispatch them rapidly to the populations in affected areas saves lives in crisis situation.

In this emergency, essential supplies were rapidly made available by UNICEF to meet basic needs of the population in shelters. The immediate availability of a considerable stock oral rehydration salts stored by UNICEF at regional level enabled rapid distribution of over 100,000 salts in Guatemala and El Salvador. Additional ORS packages for Guatemala were mobilized through the UNICEF office in Nicaragua. Prior agreements established with local suppliers ensured that UNICEF in El Salvador could donate in the first days of the emergency over 2,000 hygiene kits to improve sanitary conditions in shelters and a similar number of recreation kits to contribute to activities for children in shelters. The availability of collapsible

water containers and purification tablets in large quantities contributed to facilitating access to clean water by children and women in shelters in El Salvador.

Preparedness measures are all the more important now. Whereas the season of rains and hurricanes will only end in December, with the possibility that new disasters may hit the region, the response capacities of its Governments and societies have been overstretched by the response to the current crisis. UNICEF seeks to ensure that the most basic needs of children of the region will be met by ensuring the availability of key supplies and their prompt distribution in case of a new emergency in the region in the coming three months.

Planned actions: UNICEF seeks to mobilize \$400,000 to enhance preparedness measures. These funds should be seen as the first installment of response to the next disaster. The following activities will be carried out:

- Technical support to national authorities to assess present availability of key supplies for children in emergencies at national level;
- Pre-positioning of some key supplies at sub-regional level, for rapid dispatch in case of disaster;
- Support to UNICEF country offices for the rapid purchase of pre-identified relief items at local level;
- Logistics costs for distribution of key supplies to children

UNICEF CRISIS APPEAL –CHILDREN AND WOMEN AFFECTED BY HURRICANE STAN IN CENTRAL AMERICA

SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR UNICEF RELIEF INTERVENTION

Sector / Country /	Guatemala	El Salvador	Mexico (Chiapas)	Nicaragua	Honduras	Regional Preparedness	Total by sector
Basic Health Services	400,000	813,000	--	402,000	70,000	--	1,685,000
Child and Maternal Nutrition	100,000	100,000	--	60,000	30,000	--	290,000
Water and Sanitation	2,800,000	590,000	--	150,000	85,000	--	3,625,000
Protection	180,000	225,000	--	--	--	--	405,000
Education	120,000	460,000	1,035,000	--	35,000	--	1,650,000
Regional Preparedness	--	--	--	--	--	400,000	400,000
Total by country	3,600,000	2,188,000	1,035,000	612,000	220,000	400,000	<u>8,055,000</u>

This summary table provides an overview of financial requirements of UNICEF to carry out the relief interventions described in this Crisis Appeal. More detailed financial information on the planned information may be obtained from UNICEF's Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean (TACRO) or from UNICEF's offices in the countries directly concerned.

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