

UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

NORTH CAUCASUS

DONOR UPDATE

13 MARCH 2006

UNICEF SEEKS \$ 7,470,000 TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF OVER 300,000 CHILDREN AND MOTHERS IN THE REGION

- Slight improvements in the security situation are observed in Chechnya, but instability is increasing across the region
- While socio-economic recovery priorities are increasingly relevant, humanitarian needs remain considerable
- Some 29% of UNICEF's financial requirements for 2006 have been met so far. Additional funds will soon be required to ensure the smooth continuation of essential projects



1. ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

Slight improvements in the security environment and living conditions have been observed in Chechnya in the second half of 2005 and early 2006. However, general instability continues there and has even increased in neighbouring republics: bombings, ambushes, sweep operations, target killings and disappearances of civilians have been reported throughout the region. Humanitarian needs, stemming from two military campaigns conducted over the past decade and severe economic underdevelopment, remain considerable: with an unemployment rate of at least 80%, much of the population of Chechnya continues to depend on humanitarian aid for survival and a significant reduction in needs appears to be at least several years away. Access to basic social services – particularly in the water, education and health sectors – remains problematic for most civilians in Chechnya, especially women and children. IDPs, estimated at over 160,000 in Chechnya, 25,000 in Ingushetia and up to 10,000 in Dagestan, continue to comprise a large portion of the vulnerable population.

The education system in Chechnya has witnessed some progress in 2005. According to the local Ministry of Education, some 98% of primary and secondary school-age children (for a total of 212,000 pupils) are currently enrolled in 456 schools in the republic. Steps forward have also been made in the rehabilitation of the education infrastructure in the republic. The overall situation, however, remains precarious. Preliminary findings of the survey on the physical state of schools and kindergartens in Chechnya (conducted by UNICEF in late 2005) highlight that some 57 schools and 27 kindergartens were totally destroyed during the two armed conflicts, while many others, located in remote and mountainous areas, remain severely damaged or dilapidated. At the same time, the school-age population in Chechnya is increasing, also as a result of the steady flow of returning IDPs. As a result, in 343 schools classes are organized on the basis of 2 shifts per day, while in 92 schools children attend classes on a 3-shift per day basis, with consequences for the quality of education provided. The pre-school education sector is of particular concern: out of some 80,000 children aged 3-6 years, less than 8,000 have access to 79 state kindergartens. In Ingushetia, in particular, over 1,500 IDP children in temporary settlements continue to rely on the education services provided by UNICEF and NGO partners. The availability of textbooks, stationery, school furniture and other educational materials also remains insufficient. Similar gaps affect the quality of education provided to children in Ingushetia and Dagestan. Improving the technical/methodological skills of teachers and education administrative staff remains another key priority.

The general health status in Ingushetia and Chechnya still compares unfavorably to the Russian Federation (RF) average. Physical destruction, coupled with years of neglect and lack of maintenance, have left many structures in a dysfunctional state. Essential medical diagnostic and laboratory equipment as well as physical rehabilitation of primary health facilities continue to be high on the list of needs. Communicable and vaccine preventable disease are common and prevalence of chronic disease is rising, with little capacity for sustained treatment. In Chechnya, nearly two-thirds of all babies are born with low weight, and at least 75% require an extended hospital stay or intensive medical treatment. The Chechen Ministry of Health (MoH) reports that infant mortality rate stands at 14.6, which is nearly twice as high as the RF average; the under-five mortality rate reaches 17.8, while maternal mortality rate stood at 43.6 in 2005. The vaccination coverage of children, especially of those displaced, is dangerously low. A growing number of infants face lifelong disease and disability as a result of unhealthy pregnancies and disease transmission from their mothers. The persistent inefficiency of the public health system pose specific threats to the health and well-being of adolescents and youth as well. Many reports claim that more than 80% of teenage girls and boys have various pathologies which affect their fertility.

Water and sanitation pose a major problem in Chechnya. Despite the local authorities' efforts to rehabilitate parts of Grozny's water system, the city water networks remain in critical condition: as a result, more than 133,000 people (over 60% of Grozny's population), including patients at hospitals and students in schools, still rely on the water delivered by UNICEF and other aid agencies.

A strong and comprehensive approach to effectively protect children from harm and neglect is also a priority, especially in Chechnya. The lack of a strong monitoring and reporting system on the violations of children's rights is a matter of concern, as is the low level of awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) among children and youth as well as among the professionals who work with and for children. The provision of policy support to the authorities, so as to improve the quality of social services for the most vulnerable children, is also required. Meanwhile, the presence of landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) continues to pose a serious threat to civilians, including children, in Chechnya. According to the UNICEF-managed IMSMA (Information Management System for Mine Action) database, 3,037 civilians (including 778 children) have been killed or injured by mines/ERW since 1995.

2. UNICEF RESPONSE: ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS

UNICEF's Programme for the North Caucasus (NC), which is part of the 2006-2010 UNICEF's Country Programme in the RF, is fully integrated in the 2006 Inter-agency Transitional Workplan (TWP) for the NC, which presents an expanded framework for the humanitarian operation that had been previously coordinated (from 1999-2005) under the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal Process (CAP). In 2006 UNICEF will build upon the significant results achieved (and the partnerships built) over the past six years and contribute to pursuing the assistance and protection goals outlined in the Inter-Agency Transitional Workplan. UNICEF will maintain its primary focus on children – with a particular emphasis on particularly vulnerable groups – and strive to address both immediate needs as well as mid- and long-term recovery priorities. In doing so, the organization will focus on fostering capacities (knowledge, skills and resources) at three mutually reinforcing levels: physical rehabilitation; provision of equipment/supplies; training and technical support. In terms of protection, the underlying global objective of the organization will be to contribute to the enjoyment by all children in the NC of all their fundamental rights, as enshrined in the CRC. In more specific terms, the organization will aim at promoting the awareness on children's rights and to strengthen the existing protection framework, including its monitoring, reporting and advocacy elements.

UNICEF continues to act as focal point for the Education and Mine Action sectors; in addition, since January 2006 the organization has taken up the coordination responsibility of the new Peace & Tolerance sector group (with a particular focus on peace education) and may be requested to play a coordination role, at least on temporary basis, in the Water & Sanitation sector as well. UNICEF maintains solid partnerships with other UN agencies, the ICRC, international and – increasingly – local NGOs. By the end of 2006, the organization plans to have exhausted almost completely its partnerships with international NGOs. In addition, cooperation is steadily being expanded with republican governments and other public institutions in the NC.

As in past years, the operational environment for agencies remains highly complex. The UN continues to designate Chechnya a phase V security area, which precludes extended access to the republic. Despite this, the number of UN missions conducted in 2005 (99, compared with 70 in 2004 and only 26 in 2003) increased significantly. Problems with permits still occasionally hamper the delivery of assistance by NGOs.

Education

In 2006, availability of financial resources permitting, more than 110,000 children as well as 5,000 teachers would benefit from a range of activities implemented by UNICEF. The organization continues to manage 12 IDP schools hosting over 1,500 children as well as 4 Children's Centres providing daily education and health care to 590 IDP children (aged 4-6) in Ingushetia, while promoting their gradual integration – to be hopefully achieved by the end of the year – into the regular education system. In addition, UNICEF is supporting a network of 25 community-based Early Childhood Education (ECE) centres providing basic pre-school education and care to 1,250 children in Chechnya, with the active involvement of their parents. UNICEF is also promoting vocational training and catch-up classes for 240 vulnerable adolescents in Chechnya. In addition, the organization plans to rehabilitate up to five schools/kindergartens in Chechnya; to support the professional training and/or re-qualification of teachers, Ministry of Education officials and school methodologists (in Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan); as well as to provide schools and kindergartens in the three republics with basic school materials (30,000 textbooks, 1,350 sets of furniture, 200 blackboards, 450,000 pieces of stationery, 7,000 schools bags), so as to benefit some 55,000 pre-school and schoolchildren.

In the area of Peace Education, building on the significant results achieved in 2005, UNICEF plans to organize several events with the participation/involvement of some 50,000 children and youth, 4,000 educators and at least 100 government staff from 7 republics/regions in the NC.

Health

In 2006 UNICEF plans to focus its action on four main areas, so as to reach some 285,000 beneficiaries. In the field of Child Immunization, following the assessment conducted in Chechnya and Ingushetia in late 2005, UNICEF will continue to support the rehabilitation of the cold-chain infrastructure in the two republics, with a special focus on primary and secondary health care facilities, through the provision of basic supplies and equipment. UNICEF will also provide training support, in close coordination with the local Ministries of Health and WHO, to at least 50 health workers involved in child immunization. Families and communities will also be targeted through educational and awareness-raising campaigns promoting the benefits of child immunization. Meanwhile, UNICEF's Mother Empowerment Programme will continue to provide information on child health care and appropriate parenting practices to some 20,000 vulnerable mothers, particularly among IDP communities living in settlements and TACs in Chechnya and Ingushetia.

Within the framework of its Young People's Health and Development and HIV/AIDS programme, UNICEF will strengthen access for young people and adolescents to youth-friendly services and further consolidate – through the provision of equipment, furniture, methodological and information materials as well as training – the capacity of 3 Youth Friendly Clinics and 3 Youth Information Centers that were established in 2005 in Chechnya (Grozny and Achkhoy-Martan) and Ingushetia (Nazran and Malgobek). The number of young people and teenagers provided with counselling on reproductive health care, family planning, HIV/STI and substance abuse prevention will thus increase. Communication and social mobilization activities and information campaigns will also be conducted, in partnership with government counterparts and local NGOs.

In the area of Psychosocial Rehabilitation, UNICEF will continue, in partnership with the local MoE, to support the provision of assistance to some 3,000 crisis-affected children and adults in Beslan (North Ossetia). In addition, the organization will continue to provide support (training and equipment) to health and education structures in the area. In Chechnya, UNICEF is conducting the second and final phase of its Psychosocial Baseline Study (phase 1 was carried out in late 2005), so as to obtain an accurate mapping of the existing response and outstanding needs. UNICEF's overall goal is to support the establishment of a multi-faceted psychosocial response system that would be in charge of developing overall guidelines and standards. UNICEF plans to contribute, through equipment and training, to the establishment of a republican psychosocial rehabilitation centre in Grozny. In addition, the organization is working on the establishment of a Government-led Steering Committee on Psychosocial rehabilitation (its first meeting will take place on 17 March). UNICEF also wishes to upgrade the knowledge and skills of some 100 professionals (psychologists, teachers, social workers) in providing psychosocial support. Information campaigns will also be launched to raise the population's awareness on the availability and relevance of such services.

Water & Sanitation

In 2006 UNICEF will continue, in cooperation with the Polish Humanitarian Organization (PHO), to manage its water production and distribution project in Grozny, with a daily target of 117,000 beneficiaries. About 600,000 liters of water will be purified and distributed on a daily basis through some 250 distribution points located in the city, with a special focus on school and kindergarten and hospital patients. In cooperation with other stakeholders, UNICEF will also sustain its efforts to promote appropriate hygienic practices and the careful consumption of potable water among schoolchildren and the general population. In parallel, and in partnership with PHO and its key WES donor (the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department - ECHO), UNICEF has engaged Chechen authorities in a dialogue aimed at promoting the gradual hand-over of the water programme to the local public provider (Grozvodokanal). Furthermore, UNICEF will continue to advocate for federal authorities to address in a structural manner the persistently critical situation in Grozny and undertake the comprehensive rehabilitation of the local water, sewage and waste management system.

Child Protection/Mine Action

In 2006 UNICEF plans to support the further refinement of the IMSMA database and to strengthen the professional capacity of the staff managing the database itself, with technical assistance from resource centres abroad. The surveillance system created in 2005 through the designation of 'letter boxes' for mine/UXO incidents in each district of Chechnya will be further consolidated. In the area of Mine Risk Education (MRE), and in partnership with local NGOs and authorities, UNICEF plans to: establish 8 additional MRE working groups in affected villages in Chechnya; support and monitor the MRE basic school course, thus targeting some 180,000 students in Chechnya; conduct MRE presentations for some 75,000 children through the State Chechen Drama Theatre, Voice of the Mountains and the State Chechen Youth Committee; design and disseminate new MRE materials (T-shirts, leaflets, posters, schoolbags) and train 250 teachers from secondary schools of Chechnya. In the area of survivor assistance, UNICEF plans to provide prosthetic/orthopedic support and physical rehabilitation, as well as supportive devices (wheelchairs, crutches, stumps) to over 400 child survivors and other disabled children. In addition, availability of resources permitting, UNICEF plans to provide psychosocial support and vocational training to over 200 mine/UXO survivors as well as disabled children and youth.

In the area of Child Protection, UNICEF plans to continue to support 22 leisure centers providing, on a daily basis, a safe environment to some 700 children in Chechnya, as well as promote the awareness on children's rights and the CRC, with a special focus on teachers, schoolchildren and government officials. In addition, support will be provided to the establishment and/or capacity-building of Child Rights Ombudspersons in the region. Moreover, training will be offered to local NGOs in the area of collection and analysis of information (disaggregated by gender and age), with a view to establishing a solid monitoring and reporting system on violations of children's rights.

3. 2006 TRANSITIONAL WORKPLAN: REQUIREMENTS AND RECEIPTS

In the framework of the 2006 Inter-Agency Transitional Workplan for the NC, UNICEF outlined its financial requirements, for a total of US\$7,470,000, so as to be able to respond to the needs – and contribute to fulfilling the fundamental rights – of children and women in the North Caucasus. The response from the donor community, which was exceptionally positive in 2005 (when all UNICEF’s requirements were met), has been encouraging, but still insufficient, with US\$2,186,289 received or firmly pledged to date. Moreover, additional funds may be expected from ECHO to support the ongoing water programme in Grozny.

Table 1: Funds Received against the 2006 TWP

Appeal Sector	Requirements by Sector	Funds Received/Pledged (US\$)	Unmet requirements (US\$)	% Unfunded
Education	2,800,000	1,106,892.5	1,693,017.5	60.5
Health (including Psychosocial Rehabilitation)	2,670,000	650,000.0	2,020,000.0	75.6
Mine Action	980,000	277,514.5	702,485.5	71.7
Water and Sanitation	840,000	100,000.0	740,000.0	88.1
Child Protection	180,000	51,882.0	128,118.0	71.2
Total	7,470,000	2,186,289.0	5,283,711.0	70.7

Table 2: Funds received by Donor

Donor	Funds Received/Pledged (US\$)	Sector
ECHO	177,514.5	Mine Action
ECHO	906,892.5	Education
Sweden (pledge)	501,882.0	Unearmarked
Netherlands (pledge)	600,000.0	Unearmarked
Total	2,186,289.0	

4. IMPACT OF UNDER-FUNDING AND CURRENT PRIORITIES

Most of UNICEF’s financial requirements for the North Caucasus are unmet. Consequently, some of the key projects outlined in the 2006 Inter-Agency Transitional Workplan remain on hold, due to the shortage of funds. Should additional contributions fail to materialize in the coming weeks and months, UNICEF may be obliged to revise the size and scope of its planned activities in the North Caucasus, particularly in the areas of Health, Psychosocial rehabilitation and Peace Education. UNICEF expresses its gratitude to the donors who have thus far contributed to its 2006 programme in the North Caucasus and hopes that other donors will soon extend their support as well. The timely provision of resources, in fact, will allow UNICEF to avoid any disruption in the provision of key services and supplies across its sectors of intervention, as well as to launch new important projects.

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