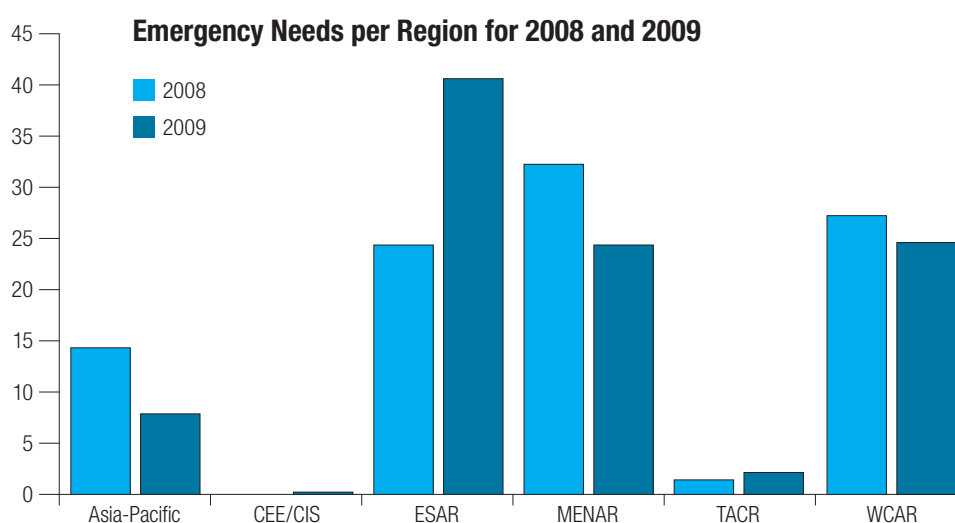


# UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

## 1. THE HUMANITARIAN ACTION REPORT

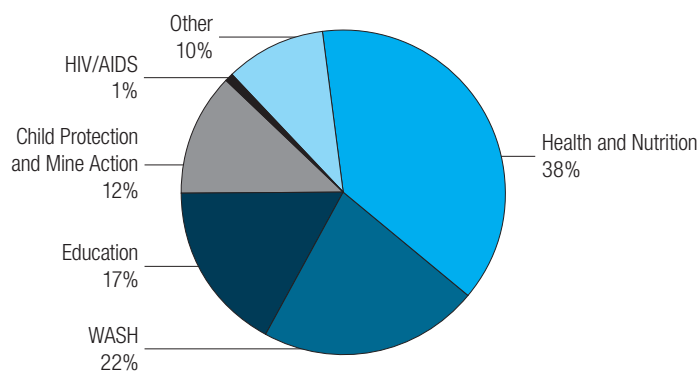
The *Humanitarian Action Report (HAR)* is UNICEF's annual humanitarian funding appeal for children and women affected by protracted emergencies. In 2009, requirements to support UNICEF-assisted emergency response total US\$ 1,000,494,205 – a 17 per cent increase compared to 2008. The HAR 2009<sup>1</sup> includes 36 countries, compared to 39 countries in 2008,<sup>2</sup> with the addition of Myanmar, Tajikistan and Yemen.

Compared to 2008, the Eastern and Southern Africa region has almost doubled its financial needs for protracted emergencies. Ethiopia, Somalia and Zimbabwe were most decisive in this development, with Zimbabwe requiring nearly five times more funding. Over half of the funds raised will ensure the continuation of UNICEF's support to the five largest humanitarian operations worldwide: Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe.



By sector, health and nutrition needs amount to 38 per cent of the total emergency funding, followed by water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) with 22 per cent. UNICEF is global cluster lead for nutrition, WASH and child protection and co-leads the education cluster with Save the Children.

### Emergency Needs per Sector for 2009



<sup>1</sup> The HAR is complementary to the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP). Its funding requirements are equal to or higher than UNICEF's requirements outlined in the CAP and the number of countries is also higher.

<sup>2</sup> Jordan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Pakistan, Swaziland and the Syrian Arab Republic were separate country chapters in 2008.

## 2. THE HUMANITARIAN ACTION REPORT – JUST A SMALL FRACTION OF UNICEF'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE<sup>3</sup>

Emergencies included in this *Humanitarian Action Report* represent only a small fraction of UNICEF-assisted emergency response. UNICEF is present in the field in more than 150 countries, which gives it a comparative advantage in addressing new emergencies. Between 2005 and 2007,<sup>4</sup> UNICEF responded annually to some 276 emergencies in 92 countries. On average, only 25 per cent were ongoing or protracted emergencies, while 75 per cent were new emergencies.

Emergencies may take the form of disasters, socio-political conflict, epidemics, systematic human rights violations, or any other situation which puts at risk the rights and well-being of women and children to such an extent that extraordinary measures are required. Between 2005 and 2007, over 50 per cent of emergencies were caused by disasters, whereas conflict-related interventions accounted for 30 per cent and health-related emergencies for 19 per cent of UNICEF's emergency response.

## 3. THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS AND CAPACITY-BUILDING

UNICEF is committed to enhanced and sustained partnerships in emergencies, which contribute to the realization of children's and women's rights. UNICEF has a significant and diverse range of partnerships in humanitarian action and beyond, mainly with other UN agencies, NGOs, the Red Cross movement and other international and regional organizations. This is true at the level of practical delivery and coordination on the ground, in standard-setting, in humanitarian advocacy and in achieving policy change.

UNICEF has endorsed the Global Humanitarian Platform (GHP) principles,<sup>5</sup> which are being institutionalized across UNICEF and addressed in a variety of processes, including cluster leadership functions, the NGO-UNICEF Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA) framework, emergency and preparedness response training and the revision of UNICEF's *Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies*, among others. Consultation mechanisms will be sustained to engage key humanitarian NGOs more systematically as strategic partners for UNICEF in emergencies. NGO capacity-building in emergencies will be jointly initiated to strengthen emergency preparedness, response and early warning systems. Communication in emergencies will be enhanced and an NGO liaison function established at the global level.

In addition to building and sustaining partnerships, UNICEF is committed to further enhancing its own capacity to prepare for and respond to emergencies. UNICEF's Global Humanitarian Capacity-Building Programme aims to bring about an improved humanitarian action. Achievements to date include: strengthening cluster coordinators; developing simplified financial and administrative guidelines for emergencies; implementing the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave child rights' violations; improving the capacity for addressing gender programming within humanitarian action; deploying efficient surge staff and improving rosters; continue expanding standby partners; and increasing logistics capacity.

Country-level risk reduction efforts will be strengthened in programme initiatives and pilot projects to enhance knowledge, skills and resources of partners in all points of the risk management cycle – before, during and after emergencies. It is expected that UNICEF will work closely with a variety of partners – governments, NGOs, Red Cross/Red Crescent organizations and other civil society actors – while maintaining its own high level of internal emergency preparedness and response capacity.

3 Information based on the global study undertaken by the Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS) – Early Warning and Preparedness Unit, *UNICEF's Emergency Response in 2007*, Summary Data, July 2008.

4 Data for the year 2008 were not available at the time of writing.

5 UNICEF endorsed the following GHP principles of partnership: equality, transparency, result-oriented approach, responsibility and complementarity.

## 4. CHALLENGES AHEAD: HIGH FOOD PRICES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

### *The Impact of High Food Prices on UNICEF's Humanitarian Action*

A majority of the countries included in the HAR have been negatively affected by the high food prices to consumers, which have aggravated the nutritional situation of children and women in vulnerable settings. Whereas in 2007 it was estimated that 850 million<sup>6</sup> people persisted in a hunger status of concern, the high prices have likely increased that number to 950 million.<sup>7</sup> Even prior to 2008, many families were struggling to survive, although prices fell by 75 per cent between 1974 and 2005. Between May 2007 and May 2008, the food price index rose by 50 per cent,<sup>8</sup> making it impossible for some families to afford basic foods for their children.

Furthermore, existing vulnerabilities in countries affected by protracted conflicts and political crises, disasters as well as endemic HIV and AIDS are exacerbated and deepened by high food prices, which force families to take extreme measures. Child protection issues gain additional importance in such an environment as child labour is likely to increase, child marriage becomes more common and school attendance is negatively impacted. UNICEF is conducting a wide range of child protection activities in order to militate against these adverse consequences.

Under the Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA)<sup>9</sup> some 27 countries,<sup>10</sup> of which 17 are included in this HAR, have been identified for intensified implementation of coordinated responses to high food prices. The global partnership REACH, convened by UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP), is another key initiative to eliminate child hunger and undernutrition.

UNICEF's response in cooperation with its partners is to help governments ensure nutritional security, especially for children and pregnant and lactating women. Nutritional security implies not only access to adequate food, but also access to appropriate micronutrients, safe water, sanitation and hygiene, quality health-care services, and improved household and community practices in childcare, food hygiene and preparation.

As reflected in the HAR, UNICEF has undertaken various initiatives to tackle the negative impact high food prices can have on the health and nutritional status of children. However, UNICEF will require more resources to be able to respond to the needs of children and women worldwide in 2009.<sup>11</sup>

### *The Impact of Climate Change on UNICEF's Humanitarian Action*

Recent climate change studies suggest a series of alarming predictions:

- a five degree increase in temperature by 2080;
- risk of hunger for some 50 million people by 2010;
- risk of flooding for millions of people in Asia;
- an increased toll on countries already with high degrees of poverty;
- an increase in the number and intensity of hurricanes;
- more extensive droughts in sub-Saharan Africa;
- more variable and extreme climatic events in general.

6 World Food Programme, World Hunger Map, WFP, 2007.

7 World Food Programme, WFP says high food prices a silent tsunami, affecting every continent, WFP, April 2008.

8 International Food Policy Research Institute, Issue Brief 54, IFPRI, October 2008.

9 The CFA was issued by the High-Level Task Force, which was formed by UN Secretary-General in April 2008, of which UNICEF is a member.

10 **Afghanistan**, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, **Burundi**, **Central African Republic**, **Djibouti**, **Eritrea**, **Ethiopia**, **Guinea**, **Guinea-Bissau**, **Haiti**, Honduras, **Liberia**, **Madagascar**, **Malawi**, Mali, **Mauritania**, **Mozambique**, **Nepal**, **Niger**, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, **Tajikistan**, Togo, **Yemen** (countries in bold are included in the HAR 2009).

11 UNICEF, High Food Prices / Nutrition Security, Action for Children, 19 November 2008.

UNICEF recognizes that children must be central to global, national and subnational policy frameworks on climate change and human security, on account of their unique vulnerabilities. There is convincing evidence that many of children's main killers (malaria, diarrhoea and undernutrition) are highly sensitive to climatic conditions. Moreover, children and women typically represent 65 per cent of all those who will be affected by climate-related disasters every year in the next decade, of which 175 million will be children.<sup>12</sup> While the loss of lives and livelihoods typifies sudden-onset disaster impacts, the nature of climate-related disasters, such as long-term sea level rise or sustained periods of drought and flood, could see a dramatic rise in the number of people forcibly displaced.

While UNICEF is currently formulating its own strategy to meet the challenges of climate change, it fully recognizes the important contribution of disaster risk reduction measures to climate change adaptation. UNICEF is therefore prioritizing measures that both strengthen the resilience of individuals and communities to likely hazards, while also strengthening early warning, preparedness and response systems to meet the expected increase in disaster events. UNICEF will also develop explicit measures to build the capacity of its local and subnational partners to mitigate, prepare for and respond to disasters.

In 2008 a number of explicit disaster risk reduction initiatives were developed. For example, in Central Asia a regional disaster risk reduction initiative was established in four countries, aimed at strengthening government disaster management capacity, while also promoting community resilience and safe schools. Meanwhile in Haiti, in the aftermath of a particularly deadly hurricane season, steps were taken by UNICEF not only to include disaster risk reduction measures in the recovery programme, but to ensure that similar measures are mainstreamed into its longer term Country Programme Action Plan. UNICEF believes that these and other similar projects to be implemented in 2009 – in Honduras, India, Madagascar and elsewhere – have a crucial role to play in reducing the risk posed to children and women by climate-change related hazards.

Disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness are key concerns for UNICEF, in order to enhance efficient and timely humanitarian action and to foster capacity-building of partners, including governments, NGOs, UN agencies and communities. UNICEF will increasingly engage in climate change adaptation, risk mitigation, early warning, preparedness and emergency response in order to reduce the impact disasters can have on vulnerable populations, especially children and women.

## 5. CONCLUSION

High food prices have put increased hardship on the populations of many countries around the world in 2008 and will likely continue to be of concern in 2009. Climate change and the rising frequency and intensity of disasters will be further challenges. Other global trends, including population growth, steadily increasing urbanization and the spiralling costs of fuel and energy, will also impact on the rights and well-being of children and women. UNICEF is committed to ensuring appropriate adaptation of its support and practices in order to minimize loss of lives and livelihoods. Enhanced and sustained partnerships will be vital to meet the challenges ahead. UNICEF looks forward to working together with donors and other partners to advocate for and to fulfil the rights of the most vulnerable children and women.

<sup>12</sup> Save the Children Fund, Legacy of Disaster, SCF, 2007.