

LEBANON



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UNICEF REQUIRES US\$ 7,300,000 TO RESPOND TO THE IMMEDIATE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN (18 JUL – 18 NOV 2006)

GENERAL OVERVIEW

The humanitarian situation in Lebanon is rapidly deteriorating following the outbreak of armed hostilities in the country. Already, the conflict is estimated to have killed over 200 civilians and wounded more than 400 – approximately 30% of whom are children. It has destroyed significant portions of the country's infrastructure, including airports, roads, power plants, bridges, and fuel stations, disrupting the delivery of vital social services. 400,000 people are believed to have fled their homes. Most of them have sought refuge with families and friends living in safer areas, but up to 40,000 are believed to have taken shelter in unused school buildings. 70 schools have been occupied at the time of this report. These figures are likely to increase in the coming days and weeks.

The country is increasingly being put in a state of complete isolation, with access being denied through air, sea and land – except for a few by-pass roads towards Syria. Military activity has cut off territories and villages in the south, making access between them or to other parts of the country impossible. This compounds the security and logistical challenges of assessing humanitarian needs and providing assistance to vulnerable populations.

This document provides an overview of the critical issues currently affecting children and women, and outlines UNICEF's estimated funding requirements to cover their immediate needs over the coming four months (18 July – 18 November 2006). These requirements are likely to be revised in the coming weeks, as more information becomes available and longer-term strategies are developed. UNICEF will participate in any consolidated appeal prepared by the UN system, incorporating any such changes to its funding needs.

CRITICAL ISSUES AFFECTING CHILDREN AND WOMEN

Humanitarian Access

Access to vulnerable populations is a major concern. Given the level of insecurity, it is imperative that the universal principle of unhindered and unconditional humanitarian access be respected by all parties. To date, although the most vulnerable populations are most likely to be found in the south of the country, including in refugee camps, access to these areas has been restricted for humanitarian agencies. As a result, the developing scenario is one of a country divided into small, isolated compartments, with populations in the south unable to access vital humanitarian assistance.

Access is problematic due to insecurity and the devastation of transport infrastructure. With infrastructural damage transport routes have become complicated and humanitarian operations will now incur extremely high costs in ensuring that life-saving supplies reach populations in need.

Displacement

Following intensified military activity in the south and aerial bombardments of the capital, an estimated 400,000 people have fled their homes. Most of these have found refuge with family and friends living in more secure areas of the country. Yet with roads cut off and access between urban areas virtually impossible, stocks of vital supplies such as food and medicine are severely stretched. For host families, supporting additional family and friends will place significant strain on dwindling resources.

Reports also indicate that some 40,000 people have taken shelter in schools and public gardens. More than 70 schools have already been occupied, and it is expected that this number will increase in the coming days and weeks. Overcrowding of these facilities is a serious concern.

With the escalation of bombardments, it is expected that further displacement will occur, perhaps on the scale of many hundreds of thousands. UNICEF is attempting to map out the locations of major displacement areas in order to accurately assess the situation and target support where it is most needed.

Disruption of basic social services

Insecurity, lack of access and damage to infrastructure have severely disrupted the delivery of basic social services. For populations residing in the south, where military activity has greatly intensified, access to health services is in serious jeopardy. Isolation and insecurity prevent the re-stocking of emergency medical supplies, and health facilities may be damaged or destroyed. Over-crowding in public buildings such as schools, that were not built to service the needs of large numbers of people, puts enormous strain on existing water and sanitation facilities, creating ideal breeding grounds for disease. Cramped living conditions also raise the risk of infectious diseases spreading rapidly among the population.

Even in some relatively safe areas of the country, access to social services has been reduced. One of the country's power plants has already been hit, requiring electricity in the capital to be rationed. Serious concerns exist about reliable electricity for crucial public institutions such as hospitals, water and sewage treatment plants, and schools.

Protection and Psychosocial issues

Displacement can result in children becoming separated from their families, and heightens the risk of exploitation and abuse, including domestic violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, and trafficking. Experience has shown that early advocacy with authorities and communities is vital to protecting children from these threats.

Violence and displacement can also have enormous psychological impacts on children. Many will have been subjected to distressing and frightening experiences, including having to flee their homes, or having witnessed violence. Parents are themselves often unable to cope or provide comfort for their children. Those children who have been traumatized by their experiences will require psychosocial care.

UNICEF'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE

In close collaboration with sister UN agencies, NGOs and civil society, and under the overall leadership of the Lebanese authorities, UNICEF will provide assistance according to its Core Commitments to Children in Emergencies, which set out our minimum priorities in the areas of health; nutrition; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); education; and protection.

Health and Nutrition

Access to hospitals and clinics has been greatly reduced due to the infrastructural damage of roads and bridges. Over-crowding in school shelters and lack of access to safe water poses a threat of acute respiratory infections, water-borne diseases and the spread of contagious diseases such as measles. Urgent medical supplies and some nutrition support will be needed to support displaced families.

UNICEF-Lebanon, in coordination with WHO and under the leadership of the Ministry of Health, will provide:

- Essential drug kits, emergency health kits, fortified nutritional packs, micronutrients and oral dehydration solutions to ensure proper child and maternal health.

- UNICEF will support the pre-positioning of a number of generators in key health facilities, both in the southern areas of the country (when accessible) and in schools or other locations where displaced populations reside, without adequate services
- Likewise, UNICEF will provide fuel reserves to health facilities to ensure their continued functioning.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

The availability of safe water, sanitation and hygiene is vital for the health and well-being of affected populations in any emergency. Initial assessments in Lebanon suggest that support will be needed for internally displaced persons currently residing in schools and community centres, along with additional support to the sanitation and water infrastructure which may have been affected/damaged. UNICEF proposes to carry out a package of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) emergency measures consisting of:

- Initial tankering of water and setting up of water storage for centres of displacement, as well as water distribution points for isolated areas (where possible)
- Family water and hygiene kits
- Sanitation facilities at centres of displacement – toilets, bathing and washing areas
- Chlorine for additional water treatment facilities
- A limited number of generators and fuel in displacement centres
- Support for the assessment of damage to water and sanitation infrastructure

Education

UNICEF's experience in disasters has demonstrated that providing children with schooling activities and an environment that gives them the opportunity to play provides children with a sense of normalcy. This sense of normalcy is crucial to their psychological wellbeing in times of crises. An increasing number of displaced families are seeking shelter in schools. At present, at least 70 schools are believed to be occupied by 30 to 200 families each. The number of occupied schools is expected to rise significantly in the coming days.

While striving to ensure that these school buildings better are adapted to the needs of these populations, UNICEF will:

- Support teachers and facilitators from parents groups
 - Organize available parts of classrooms into recreational areas for displaced children and provide schooling materials
- Set up sport and other recreation activities for children.

Protection/Psychosocial

In conflict situations, it is invariably children who suffer the most. Early interventions are critical to establishing a protective environment for children in order to mitigate their exposure to exploitation, abuse, or separation from their families. Psychosocial care is also vital, helping to protect children's mental and emotional health.

In the immediate term, UNICEF will monitor the status of children and provide the necessary support, including:

- Working to prevent the separation of children from their families. Where separation has occurred, providing support, family tracing and follow up
- Advocating with appropriate authorities and communities for the protection of children from violence, exploitation and abuse

- Sensitizing caregivers on how to identify children with trauma and providing psychosocial support to children suffering from trauma
- Providing recreational and educational support to ensure a return to normalcy

Access and logistics/security

In such a volatile and insecure environment, UNICEF has a duty to ensure that its staff and partners are as safe as possible. Security equipment will be required to ensure safe travel in unstable areas, including the procurement of reliable communications material such as radios.

ESTIMATED FUNDING REQUIREMENTS FOR PLANNED ACTION FROM 18 JULY TO 18 NOVEMBER

This is an initial estimate of immediate funding requirements for the coming 4 months to cover the needs of approximately 400,000 displaced persons. These requirements are likely to be revised in the coming weeks, as more information becomes available and longer-term strategies are developed. UNICEF will participate in any consolidated appeal prepared by the UN system, incorporating any such changes to its funding needs.

The following table indicates initial interventions planned with partners:

Table 1. Estimated funding requirements 18 July – 18 November 2006.

SECTOR	BUDGET
HEALTH & NUTRITION	2,400,000
WATER and ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION	2,900,000
PROTECTION/PSYCHOSOCIAL	600,000
EDUCATION/RECREATION	600,000
IT/ TELECOM and ADMINITRATIVE SUPPORT	500,000
SECURITY / LOGISTICS	300,000
TOTAL BUDGET REQUIRED	7,300,000

More details can be obtained from:

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