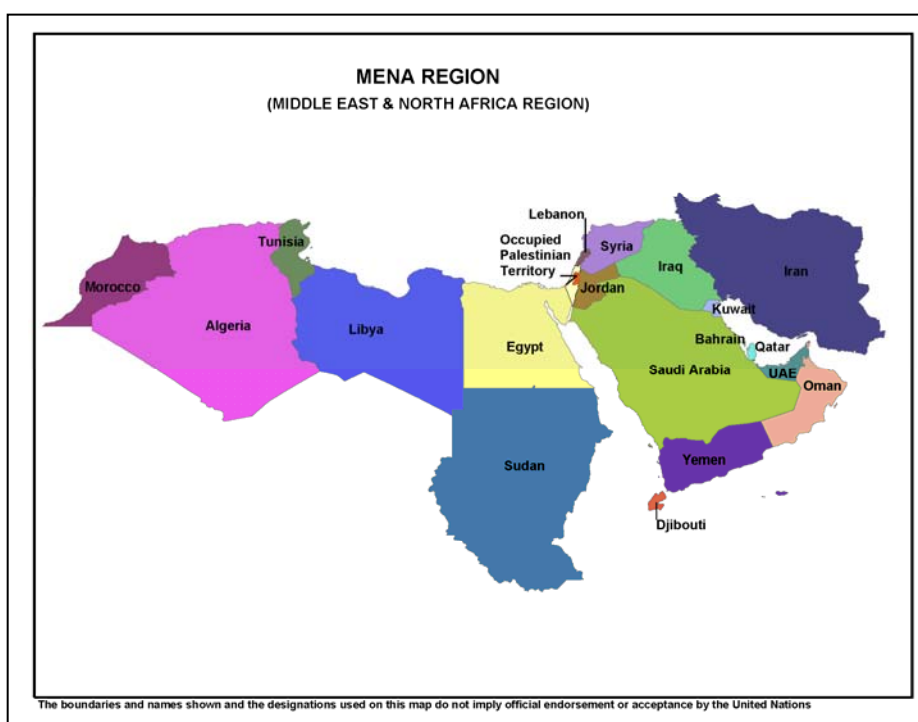


For every child
Health, Education, Equality, Protection
ADVANCE HUMANITY



UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA IN 2008



The Middle East and North Africa region, with its heterogeneity of oil-rich, middle-income and least developed countries is also one of the most politically volatile regions in the world. The ongoing conflicts and insecurity in Iraq, Darfur, the occupation of the Palestinian territory, the situation of the refugee populations, especially Iraqis and Palestinians, the general sense of instability in Lebanon, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Maghreb and the recurrence of natural disasters have devastating implications for women and children in the region.

Regional Office financial needs for 2008	
Sector	US\$
Emergency preparedness and capacity-building	100,000
Strengthening emergency response to natural disasters and other rapid onset emergencies (incl. contingency planning and regional surge response capacity)	350,000
Building partnerships and coordination	50,000
Total*	500,000

* 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

Amongst the many and different crisis that were witnessed in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region during 2007 the most critical was the simultaneous deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Iraq and the unprecedented exodus of Iraqis to neighbouring countries, and its similar pendant in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) as well as in Darfur which, to compound the already dramatic levels of suffering for the vulnerable populations on the ground, saw an unprecedented number of attacks against UN and humanitarian personnel, resulting in dozens of deaths amongst humanitarian workers and subsequent cuts in humanitarian access.

Inside Iraq, over 1 million people have fled their homes since February 2006; insecurity has closed schools, eroded access to quality health care and safe water, and left many children without caregivers and communities hosting displaced families are being overwhelmed by the influx of new families. Some 2 million Iraqis are said to have migrated abroad: with commonly quoted figures of around 1.5 million to Syria, 750,000 to Jordan and up to 100,000 to Egypt. This population movement is posing a growing strain on the already overstretched public services in host countries, and it presents a major challenge to host governments and the international community to ensure that the urgent humanitarian and protection needs are being adequately met. A rising concern that is requiring serious and urgent attention for UNICEF is the psychosocial impact that this crisis is having on children and women together with the emerging reported engagement of children in insurgency and terrorist activities.

Recurrently concerning is the steady deterioration of the situation of Palestinian women and children in the subregion, and in oPt in particular. During 2007, across oPt, a deadly escalation in violence, financial and political crisis, along with unprecedented internal clashes, has pushed humanitarian conditions to the edge of disaster. UNICEF-supported interventions have been focusing primarily on preventing a worsening of all basic indicators, mitigating the impact of violence and strengthening development capacity. There are 451,000 Palestinians living in the Syrian Arab Republic, 1.8 million in Jordan, and 394,000 in the 12 refugee camps mandated by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and 16 gatherings spread throughout Lebanon. Some 20,000 displaced Palestinians from the Gaza Strip live in the Al-Salleh camp in Jordan. While the situation of the Palestinian refugees in the region is different from the most recent Iraq exodus, there is still much to do to ensure basic rights are guaranteed and protected.

In Darfur, where over 5 million people between internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host population are affected by the war, the decision to deploy an African Union-United Nations hybrid operation has given hopes of improvement and progress towards the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement. Nevertheless, insecurity keeps dominating the agenda and regular shifts in alliances and splintering of armed groups present a considerable challenge to delivering humanitarian assistance. While Southern Sudan continues to witness slow progress in the implementation of the 2005 comprehensive Peace Agreement, the majority of the population lives below the poverty line and with limited access to basic services. In addition, Sudan is very vulnerable to major natural disasters, such as floods and epidemic outbreaks all over the country.

In addition to all of the above, the general political instability in Lebanon, the continuing low-key conflict between the government and rebel forces in the north-western Saada province of Yemen, the influx of refugees from Somalia into Yemen, the nuclear programme debate in the Islamic Republic of Iran and recent terrorist attacks in the Mahgreb, are but some of the additional developments which require close monitoring in the event of serious humanitarian implications, in addition to the recurrent risks of vulnerabilities to natural disasters (Algeria, Iran and Morocco), disease outbreaks (Iraq, Sudan) and recurrent emergencies (Djibouti).

2. KEY ACTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2007

The UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office (MENARO) continued to be the first port of call for Country Offices facing small and significant humanitarian crises and worked on enhancing Country Offices' staff members and partners' preparedness.

UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION REPORT 2008

Emergency preparedness and capacity-building

- MENARO supported Country Offices for the revision of all emergency preparedness and response plans (EPRPs) in the region with technical advice and missions when necessary. Emergency simulation exercises were also conducted in five non-emergency countries of the region in order to test Country Offices' preparedness;
- Trainings on emergency preparedness and response (EPR) and on specific topics like child protection in emergency were organized for over 200 staff members in Iraq and the Sudan, and for key staff in the region;
- Support to evaluation/lessons learned of emergency programming in Iraq and Lebanon were organized and facilitated;

Emergency response

- MENARO supported the subregional coordination, information-sharing, fundraising and preparedness efforts to enhance UNICEF's response towards the Iraq crisis – including its implications for Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic in particular –, as well as continued significant support for strategic review of ongoing responses in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt);
- Staffing support was provided to Country Offices facing emergencies with the deployment of emergency personnel especially in Jordan, Syrian Arab Republic and Sudan; efforts to improve surge capacity were made with the review of the regional emergency roster;
- Prepositioning of health, nutrition, information technologies (IT) and water-related supplies used to respond to emerging needs and cluster/sector accountabilities and responsibilities in Algeria; oPt and Yemen,

Building partnerships and coordination

- MENARO organized a major information and coordination event around the issue of the humanitarian reform in partnership with the MENA desk of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and reached out to over 100 key UN humanitarian stakeholders, international and national NGOs and civic organizations from/working in the region;
- Contact with key humanitarian partners in the region (particularly the national Red Crescent societies) was initiated and emergency preparedness and response training provided for over 90 partner staff in Iraq and Sudan.

3. PLANNED HUMANITARIAN ACTION FOR 2008

MENARO will continue to enhance UNICEF's capacity to respond in an effective and timely manner to the needs of women and children living in unstable environments. During 2008, MENARO will work on increasing emergency preparedness and response capacity in the region, with emphasis on response planning, thereby prioritizing countries facing ongoing and/or potential new emergencies, especially Iraq, Lebanon, oPt, Sudan, and their subregional implications.

Emergency preparedness and capacity-building (US\$ 100,000)

- Support countries considered most volatile/at risk in order to a) update scenarios, b) operationalize and c) practise advanced response planning, including at subregional and subnational levels and within an interagency framework. This will be particularly important in areas where UNICEF has global cluster leadership, which induces crucial accountabilities in the areas of preparedness and response.
- Assist in reviewing the capacity of national partners and establish/reinforce existing technical partners' coordination networks as well as expand partners' skills through continued efforts in training on emergency preparedness and response;

Strengthening emergency response to natural disasters and other rapid onset emergencies (including contingency planning and regional surge response capacity) (US\$ 350,000)

- Should funding be available, ensure that at-risk countries can respond rapidly to the needs of at least 50,000 affected people at the onset of any crisis; preposition limited supplies in high-risk countries or, when more appropriate, in a regionally central location;
- Strengthen the 'surge capacity' mechanism for the MENA region to allow fast deployment of experienced staff, particularly in sectors of UNICEF's cluster leadership;
- Roll out performance monitoring and assist all Country Offices facing emergencies to maintain/develop evidence-based indicators that will allow them develop advocacy tools when speaking out for children;

UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION REPORT 2008

- A dedicated water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) emergency officer will work closely with Country Offices on reviewing WASH capacity in high-risk countries and mapping of partners in other priority countries.

Coordination and partnerships (US\$ 50,000)

- Continue to coordinate efforts with regards to the subregional implications of the Iraq and oPt crises, promoting inter-country coordination and sharing good practices, with a special focus on child protection and education;
- Forge partnerships with national/regional bodies and partners with a view to undertaking joint training on emergency response for staff of respective partners;
- Continue to strongly support regular coordination efforts through the consolidated regional inter-agency network on emergency preparedness and response.