

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



UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION THE AMERICAS AND CARIBBEAN IN 2008



Effective implementation of disaster risk reduction actions and special attention to emergency preparedness and response are the main challenges of the Americas and Caribbean region governments, organized civil society, NGOs, and UNICEF's cooperation. We must work together to mitigate and reduce the impact of armed conflict in Colombia, of instability in Haiti and of natural disasters that affect over 300 million women and children across the region.

Regional Office financial needs for 2008	
Sector	US\$
Capacity-building of national counterparts, subregional bodies (Caribbean Disaster Emergency and Response Agency – CDERA, Coordination Centre for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America – CEPREDENAC and The Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Assistance – CAPRADE), IASC partners and UNICEF Country Offices regarding CCCs for cluster-specific response	400,000
Strengthening emergency response to natural disasters and other rapid onset emergencies (incl. contingency planning and regional surge response capacity)	350,000
Support to disaster risk reduction initiatives, with focus on education sector	350,000
Total*	1,100,000

* 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

Natural disasters across the Americas and Caribbean region, Colombia's conflict and Haiti's instability continue to be the causes of lost lives, lost means of living, internal displacement, uprooted basic infrastructure and, even more gravely, children, youth and women who continue to be the most vulnerable groups of society and who are most affected by these situations.

Tropical storms and hurricanes are a constant threat to the Central American and Caribbean population. Cyclones Dean and Felix on their paths through the Caribbean islands, Central American countries and Mexico caused death and destruction. Hurricane Felix penetrated the autonomous North Atlantic region of Nicaragua with winds of 270 km/h and heavy rains that hit some 188,000 people and damaged 16,833 homes; latrines, schools, churches, boats, fishing equipment, and the forest did not escape the hurricane's fury.

Bolivia faced one of its most devastating disasters ever. The El Niño phenomenon struck more than 350,000 in eight of the country's nine departments with flooding and landslides, as well as drought, hail and freezing weather. A powerful earthquake in Peru affected half a million people, killed 514 persons, destroyed at least 80 per cent of houses and social service infrastructures in the southern cities of Pisco, Ica, Chincha and Canete, and 14 hospitals as well as a large number of schools collapsed. Flooding in Colombia, El Salvador, and Honduras, plus forest fires in Paraguay, the imminent threat of volcanoes in Colombia and Ecuador, and cold snaps in Bolivia and Peru, complete a scenario of natural disasters that, despite some improvement in government-led preparedness and disaster response systems, still weightily impact the most vulnerable population. Hence much remains to be done to meeting children's needs in emergency situations.

Internal displacement is the most evident humanitarian effect of the conflict in Colombia. According to official records, 1,976,970 persons have been displaced over the past 10 years; on average, at least 400 people are displaced every day. It is estimated that 48 per cent of the displaced are women and 36 per cent children. It is important to note that displacement increases the vulnerability of children to discrimination, abuse, violence, exploitation, child labour and forced recruitment, and undermines psychological and social support mechanisms. In Haiti, crime and lack of security caused by political instability as well as shortage of basic social services place the country on a high level of vulnerability, which is made clear with each natural disaster that hits the country. In addition, both Colombia and Haiti have been ravaged by natural disasters due to climate change, particularly hydro-meteorological, that have deepened impact on the humanitarian situation.

2. KEY ACTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2007

The various emergency situations that have devastated the countries of the region have shown that UNICEF and other UN agencies have improved their level of emergency preparedness and response. In partnership with the Government and in coordination with UN agencies and other partners, UNICEF assisted over 25,000 children in Bolivia, and approximately 7,000 children affected by hurricane Felix in Honduras and Nicaragua. In Peru, the establishment of child-friendly spaces, the provision of temporary classrooms and educational materials to resume schooling, the rehabilitation of damaged schools, and water and sanitation, health, nutrition and psychosocial actions are some of the undertakings through which UNICEF is supporting Peruvian children and women affected by the earthquake.

UNICEF's Regional Office for the Americas and Caribbean (TACRO) has constantly provided Country Offices with technical assistance. During the preparation phase it has facilitated the revision and updating of emergency preparedness and response planning processes, providing staff with training on general and specific aspects and sharing important information; during the response phase, it has facilitated technical support through rapid staff deployment and delivery of basic supplies, which in the majority of cases reached the affected countries within 72 hours.

In the framework of humanitarian reform and the regional Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Risk, Emergency and Disaster Task Force for Latin America and the Caribbean (REDLAC), TACRO has actively participated in the development of needs and damage assessment tools and in the establishment of a specific water and sanitation regional emergency and HIV/AIDS group. This inter-agency work at regional level has also translated into the concrete strengthening of national capacities and in UN Emergency Technical Team (UNETT) actions in specific countries selected by REDLAC.

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In coordination with subregional official requests for prevention and emergency aid as well as with other international cooperation partners, plans and intervention strategies regarding risk reduction in the area of education have been revised and updated. The expected results will allow for a greater involvement of ministries of education, civil protection systems and other counterparts whose responsibility it is to include prevention aspects in schools and their surrounding communities.

3. PLANNED HUMANITARIAN ACTION FOR 2008

Coordination and partnership

Important progress has been achieved regarding coordination inside the United Nations and with key partners. The functioning of UNETTs at country level and IASC-REDLAC at regional level are clear examples of these advancements. The strengthening of these mechanisms is a priority for UNICEF's cooperation.

Regular programme

As mentioned above, emergency preparedness and response and the development of risk reduction actions focusing on the education sector will be the main pillars of UNICEF's activities in 2008. UNICEF's *Humanitarian Action Report* allows for the continuation of work processes that will benefit the most vulnerable groups of population.

Capacity building of national counterparts, subregional bodies, IASC partners and UNICEF Country Offices regarding CCCs for cluster-specific response (US\$ 400,000)

The most vulnerable groups will benefit from improved preparedness capacity and emergency aid processes of national institutions and other key partners. Key activities will include:

- Provide technical assistance and training to government counterparts and other partners regarding the rights of children in emergencies, UNICEF's *Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies (CCCs)* and the specific area response;
- Produce information materials and promote the main subject matters to be considered when responding to emergencies from the standpoint of rights;
- Provide technical support to UNICEF Country Offices to guarantee the revision and ongoing updating of emergency preparedness and response planning processes;
- Develop and implement regional work tools, to be used within the framework of the inter-agency and multisectoral humanitarian reform.

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

Improved capacity to respond to emergencies will allow for greater support to Country Offices and directly benefit affected populations. Key activities will include:

- Ensure that emergency stocks of relief items are available and regularly replenished;
- Identify major suppliers of relief items and pass arrangements at regional/subregional level;
- Ensure regular update of roster for surge capacity, including internal and external experts in all sectors relevant to CCCs, and coordinate clusters in those sectors where UNICEF has the coordination role;
- Ensure rapid deployment of staff in emergency situations and participate in inter-agency missions;
- Establish enhanced early warning systems at regional level that integrate those of other UN agencies.

Support to disaster risk reduction initiatives, with focus on education sector (US\$ 350,000)

UNICEF will boost its capacity to mobilize and organize government players as well as the international cooperation of NGOs at regional, subregional, national and local levels in order to carry out risk reduction actions in the education sector. Key activities will include:

- Strengthen working relationships between subregional prevention and emergency aid authorities;
- Support national/subregional initiatives regarding risk reduction;
- Provide technical support to Country Offices on risk reduction actions in the education sector.