Humanitarian situation

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is a region characterised by significant economic inequalities and recurrent natural disasters, which together can undermine modest development gains and perpetuate continuous cycles of poverty for the most vulnerable. A cholera epidemic, which began in 2010, has continued to spread throughout the region, with the largest caseloads in Haiti (with over 700,000 reported cases), the Dominican Republic (with over 31,000 reported cases), and Cuba and Mexico (with hundreds of cases reported to date). In June-July 2014, severe floods in Paraguay affected some 240,000 people, and impacted 84 schools, including 12,000 school-age children, country-wide. On 7 July 2014, a 6.9 magnitude earthquake hit Guatemala and Mexico, affecting some 53,300 people in remote communities, and causing severe damage to 4,600 houses across seven departments. The confirmed presence of a strong El Niño phenomenon this year may result in widespread drought in the north and northeast of the country, affecting subsistence farming families in particular. Recurrent hurricanes and tropical storms increase the vulnerability of populations already living in fragile conditions (including displaced persons), and throughout the region, prolonged droughts can worsen food and economic insecurities and the related risk of nutritional crises. In Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, a decrease in global coffee prices, combined with a "coffee rust" (a fungus seriously affecting coffee plantations and production) which destroyed crops, has left some 1.4 million people at risk of food insecurity and has heightened the risk of moderate and severe acute malnutrition (MAM/SAM) among children. In addition to their immediate impact, natural disasters may hamper access to proper water and sanitation services, undermining children’s health (e.g. water borne diseases, cholera, dengue and other epidemics), interrupting access to education and increasing the risk of violence, exploitation and abuse, including gender-based violence.

In Colombia, while there are signs of real progress in the Havana peace negotiations between the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), the armed conflict continues to produce forced displacement on a massive scale, murder, mutilation, landmine-related accidents, gender-based violence, forced disappearances, and child recruitment by armed groups. Even after an eventual future signature of peace accords, levels of violence and displacement may well increase due to the actions of other non-state armed groups. Irregular migration of minors is of growing concern in the region, with children, some as young as four years old, taking the long and extremely dangerous journey across borders to escape conditions of poverty and violence, especially youth gangs (maras) and organized criminality connected with drug trafficking. As of June 2014, an estimated 52,000 unaccompanied children from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Mexico crossed the border into the United States, with numbers expected to rise to 90,000 by year end. United States authorities have qualified this as an ‘urgent humanitarian situation,’ and along with the Governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico, have stressed the need for a regional approach to address the underlying causes.

Humanitarian strategy

The LAC region is composed of high, middle and low income countries with varying levels of capacity for emergency preparedness and response. In cooperation with partners from the Risk Emergency Disaster Working Group for Latin America and the Caribbean (REDLAC), the UNICEF LAC Regional Office (LACRO), is working through UNICEF country offices to provide authorities with technical advice on strengthening emergency preparedness and response. This includes reviewing countries’ preparedness levels through the online Early Warning, Early Action system, identifying the necessary operational support (e.g. supply and human resources) and providing in-country support on preparedness and response. LACRO is also working with regional partners to strengthen disaster risk reduction (DRR) national capacity in key sectors of education (including through UNICEF’s role as co-chair of the regional Education in Emergencies cluster), water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), child protection, health and nutrition. This includes supporting the promotion of school safety preparedness and innovative water and sanitation systems, strengthening surveillance and early detection and treatment of malnutrition in areas prone to drought and natural disaster, strengthening effective knowledge and information management mechanisms in the nutrition sector, and developing national capacities in the areas of resilience, social cohesion, violence reduction and the prevention of all forms of child abuse during emergencies. Key sectoral tools and training modules have been developed and will be rolled out, through the end of 2014.

Results 2014 (January to June)

During the first six months of 2014, UNICEF regional efforts focused on strengthening country-level emergency preparedness and response capacity through support to UNICEF country offices ahead of and during emergencies (including floods in Bolivia and

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1 Haiti had 703,867 reported cholera cases and 8,568 deaths as of June 2014; the Dominican Republic had 31,090 reported cases since November 2010; Cuba had 678 reported cases as of July 2012; and Mexico had 187 reported cases and one death in 2013 and three new reported cases in first half of 2014 (Source: Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization, Epidemiological Update: Cholera (PAHO and WHO, October 2013)).

2 Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection and OCHA, July 2014
Paraguay, conflict in Colombia, and earthquakes in Guatemala, Mexico and Nicaragua). LACRO supported country-level preparedness by helping offices review their online Early Warning, Early Action systems and supporting inter-agency emergency simulations jointly with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). As lead of the regional WASH working group, LACRO and its partners organized a regional workshop on WASH cluster coordination definitions and responsibilities, with participants from 11 countries, including government officials, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and NGOs. As a result of this workshop, 11 national WASH in emergency platforms have reviewed and updated their work plans and have committed to undertake concrete actions aimed at improving the coordination mechanisms among their members.

**Funding requirements**

UNICEF appealed for US$3.5 million to address the humanitarian needs of children and women in the Latin America and Caribbean region for 2014. As of 30 June 2014, a total of US$950,000 or 27 per cent of requirements, have been met. Additional funding is critical to enable UNICEF to continue strengthening capacity in preparedness, response and disaster risk reduction, especially in the areas where UNICEF has global sector/cluster responsibility. Activities carried out will be undertaken in coordination with regional

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**Who to contact for further information:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LACRO Regional Office</th>
<th>2014 HAC requirements (US$) (Jan-Dec)</th>
<th>Funds available against 2014 appeal (as of 30 June)</th>
<th>Funding Gap</th>
<th>Per cent Funded (as of 30 June)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water, sanitation and hygiene</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>160,000</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child protection</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>170,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>85,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emergency preparedness and response</td>
<td>1,400,000</td>
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<td>940,000</td>
<td>32.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaster risk reduction coordination</td>
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<td>135,000</td>
<td>965,000</td>
<td>12.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian partnership/south-south cooperation</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (US$)</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,500,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>950,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,550,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>27.14%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes emergency funds carried over from 2013, not including recovery costs.*