Latin America and the Caribbean

Despite marked economic and political gains in Latin America and the Caribbean in recent years, humanitarian needs remain significant across the region, putting the rights, safety and well-being of millions of children at risk. The region remains highly prone to natural and human-caused disasters, and vulnerability to these events is largely driven by inequality, inadequate risk analysis, weak planning and rapid urbanization. As of October 2018, nearly 5 million people in Latin America and the Caribbean, including 1.5 million children, were affected by natural disasters. In October and November, flooding affected an additional 200,000 people in Central America and 150,000 people in Trinidad and Tobago. In Mexico, 13,000 people were evacuated with the arrival of Tropical Storm Willa. Political, social and economic challenges continue to exacerbate the impacts of disasters, conflicts, violence and migration. In 2018, the number of Venezuelan migrants in the region reached 2.4 million, and the migration crisis in Central America remained significant, as evidenced by the caravan of migrants traveling through Central America and Mexico in late 2018. Increased dengue and measles rates—due in part to migration—have also been reported. In Colombia, renewed violence by armed groups, internal displacement and criminal activity have tempered optimism around the peace process.

Regional humanitarian strategy

In 2019, UNICEF’s Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office will support country offices to deliver effective, child-centered humanitarian action. Whenever possible, UNICEF will prioritize an integrated response to national and regional crises that incorporates humanitarian action, development programmes, protection of children’s rights and resilience building. Working with governments and other humanitarian and development actors, UNICEF will emphasize strengthening national capacities for humanitarian action and ensuring the preparedness of both country offices and the Regional Office to support these partners. Emergency preparedness will be strengthened through the operationalization of the revised Regional Response Protocol across all Regional Office programme and operation areas, and by ensuring that programmes are informed by risk. Country offices will also be supported to utilize the Emergency Preparedness Platform, including to implement minimum preparedness standards and apply risk analysis tools, such as INFORM, to support risk-informed programming and monitor preparedness. UNICEF will also strengthen the regional rapid response roster and a regional humanitarian learning plan for UNICEF staff. Efforts will continue to mainstream gender in emergency programming, including through training on gender and humanitarian action for all country offices. UNICEF will place special emphasis on addressing emerging needs associated with migration across the region by scaling up advocacy and service delivery, particularly in countries affected by the Venezuelan migration crisis and during peaks in migration flows in Central America. UNICEF will also focus on recurrent and chronic situations, such as the El Niño-Southern Oscillation and the extended dry spell that is primarily affecting Central America. Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation efforts will focus on the promotion, implementation and evaluation of risk-informed programming, to set the stage for resilient development. UNICEF and partners will work together to gain a better understanding of the risks faced by children, address these risks through policies, strategies and programmes, and strengthen national systems that protect girls, boys and adolescents. Building on 2018 results, UNICEF will continue to support the implementation of the standards for inclusion, protection and care of persons with disabilities in emergencies in priority countries by advocating for the formal endorsement of the standards, facilitating their full integration into national and local policies, building capacities among national stakeholders and strengthening monitoring mechanisms.

Results from 2018

As of 31 October 2018, UNICEF received US$22.7 million for its US$37.4 million appeal (61 per cent funded). These funds covered UNICEF’s response to the Fuego volcano eruption in Guatemala, its response in countries affected by migration flows from Venezuela, and recovery activities in Mexico and the Caribbean. Eleven country offices scaled up their programming and humanitarian action in response to the Venezuelan migration crisis and migration in Central America, and provided rapid assistance and monitoring. The Regional Office mobilized 670 days of technical mission support for these responses through its rapid response roster and surge support. All 25 country offices rolled out the Emergency Preparedness Platform, which included updating their risk analysis, ensuring minimum preparedness standards and developing preparedness and contingency plans. A lessons learned exercise was conducted on UNICEF’s 2017 hurricane response, which generated key findings for improving the Regional Office’s response capacity. Over the course of the year, the UNICEF-supported INFORM risk assessment tool enabled governments to tailor their resilience and humanitarian responses. UNICEF strengthened national and regional capacities to implement shock-responsive social protection systems, communication for development, accountability to affected populations, gender-sensitive approaches in humanitarian action and humanitarian innovations. Finally, new and strengthened partnerships emerged with actors such as the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, which is developing a joint protocol for the protection of children in emergencies with UNICEF support.
Funding requirements
UNICEF is requesting US$16 million to sustain and intensify the aforementioned work and ensure that countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are prepared to effectively respond to ongoing and potential emergencies. The Regional Office will maintain its rapid response roster to rapidly reinforce country office teams when required. Regional funding may be used to respond to situations that are not included in a separate chapter of Humanitarian Action for Children 2019 and may not benefit from inter-agency flash appeals. Additional funds will allow the Regional Office to maintain technical support and quality assurance of country-specific actions, and ensure effective sectoral leadership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>2019 requirements (US$)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency preparedness and response</td>
<td>12,700,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaster risk analysis and reduction, resilience building and climate change adaptation</td>
<td>2,400,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication, information and knowledge management</td>
<td>350,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster/sector coordination and capacity building</td>
<td>550,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16,000,000</td>
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</tbody>
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7 As of 21 November 2018, following a period of low dengue transmission in the region of the Americas, an increase in cases has been reported in some countries (Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization, ‘Epidemiological Alert: Dengue’, PAHO and WHO, 21 November 2018). As of 9 November 2018, 10,342 confirmed measles cases had been reported in the Americas, compared with 895 cases in the same period in 2017 (PAHO and WHO measles and rubella surveillance data, 15 November 2018).
8 A specific Humanitarian Action for Children appeal will be dedicated to the situation of children on the move from Venezuela.
9 As reported by the World Meteorological Organization, predictions and expert opinions indicate that El Niño-Southern Oscillation conditions have a 70 per cent chance of reaching weak El Niño levels by the fourth quarter of 2018 and into the Northern Hemisphere by the winter of 2018-2019. World Meteorological Organization, ’WMO El Niño/ La Niña Update’, WMO, 10 September 2018.
10 In addition to the US$22.7 million received in 2018, US$16.6 million was carried forward from the previous year for ongoing humanitarian action in countries without a specific Humanitarian Action for Children appeal. Of the US$16.6 million carried forward, US$9.7 million was from the 2017 appeal for Latin America and the Caribbean, US$8.5 million was from the Zika outbreak and US$1 million was from the 2017 appeal for the Caribbean hurricanes. Although funds for the Zika and hurricane responses were received in 2013, activities continued to be implemented in 2018.
11 The Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Panama, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago country offices scaled up actions in response to increased migration flows from Venezuela. The El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico country offices quickly mobilized human and financial resources in response to the caravan of migrants moving through Central America, rapidly deploying staff to rest and transit locations and providing basic services.
12 This included 39 staff mobilized from Latin America and the Caribbean countries and four staff mobilized from outside of the region.
13 The INFORM index for Risk Management is a global, open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters. The Latin America and the Caribbean INFORM results are a valuable input into any analysis that supports planning or resource allocation processes at the regional level and regional prevention and preparedness actions and contributes to the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

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