Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States

The region of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE CIS) continues to be highly exposed to disasters caused by natural hazards; major economic downturn; deteriorating social infrastructure; outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases; and political instability. This situation causes ripple effects on the survival and well-being of families, including loss of life and injuries, displacement, protection concerns and severe health problems.

The May 2012 Rasht Valley earthquake in Tajikistan affected more than 2,500 people, who are still struggling to rebuild their lives. Fighting broke out in Khorog, in eastern Tajikistan, disrupting social services and livelihoods. Turkey has seen a steep increase in the number of Syrian refugees fleeing the conflict in the areas along the shared Syria-Turkey border. As of end November, there were more than 123,000 refugees in camps who remain dependent upon humanitarian assistance and between 60,000 to 70,000 Syrians in urban settings. The unresolved disputes – such as Nagorno-Karabakh, in the South Caucasus and Region of Abkhazia, Georgia – continue to make life difficult for the affected populations and prospects for resolution have not been successful, with tensions in the disputed areas frequently high.

In early 2012, several countries in Eastern Europe were hit by severe cold weather and heavy snowfall causing several governments to declare a state of emergency in the affected areas. This emergency resulted in loss of lives, communities being cut off from power, communication and other basic social services such as schooling, health care and access to food and water supply. Following the large polio outbreak in Central Asia in 2010, eight countries in the region continue to remain at high risk for polio transmission in 2012.

Planning Results for 2013

The Regional Office (RO) will continue to support the country offices in the CEE CIS region in undertaking humanitarian action and advancing disaster risk reduction (DRR) programmes.

In disaster risk reduction, the Regional Office will continue to guide and support the implementation of DRR programmes in 10 countries across the CEECIS region. The RO will provide technical guidance to country offices in developing specific strategies as well as in implementing capacity development initiatives for UNICEF staff and government counterparts in sectors such as emergency, education, social protection, health and nutrition. The RO will continue to engage with regional organizations working in disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness and participate and advocate for child-centred disaster risk reduction; and at country level, UNICEF will continue supporting government with strengthening their capacity on child-centred DRR.

In humanitarian action, the RO will continue to work with the country offices and United Nations country teams in planning and conducting emergency preparedness and contingency planning exercises to strengthen staff and partner capabilities in ensuring timely and effective emergency response in accordance with the Core Commitments for Children (CCCs). With funds received through the 2012 Humanitarian Action for Children, the RO plans to conduct nutrition and health in emergency trainings targeting at risk countries and is currently exploring WASH capacity in the region to deliver on the CCC WASH commitments in the event of emergencies. The CEE-CIS RO will continue to provide support to Turkey in their contingency planning and response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Organization of simulation exercises at the country level will be a key strategy to assess preparedness and capacity gaps, which will be addressed through targeted technical assistance so that country offices are better equipped to support their counterparts’ own preparedness and response.

Results from 2012

As of end October 2012, the CEE CIS regional chapter had received US$ 5,583,093 or 68 per cent of the required US$ 8,241,000 for activities needed in 2012. The Abkhazia Region of Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were included in the regional chapter, and results achieved can be found within their country chapters. With the funds received at the regional level, the following activities were carried out:

In the area of disaster risk reduction, the development of three multi-country DRR projects has been a key achievement during the year. These regional projects help promote sharing of information, experiences and tools among countries, thereby contributing to the overall quality of the activities implemented in each country. The RO supported UNICEF’s engagement and contribution to the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, which took place in October 2012 in Indonesia. In particular, the RO facilitated Kyrgyzstan’s presentation on a countrywide school safety assessment methodology as well as the dissemination of good practices from the region at the conference.

In the area of humanitarian action, the RO provided technical support, both on-site and remotely, to the Turkey Country Office in planning and implementing the humanitarian response to the Syrian refugees in the country. The RO also provided technical assistance on the design of its education emergency response to Syrian refugees.

The RO also contributed to coordinated humanitarian response in the wider region through continuous liaison with UNICEF’s Regional Office for Middle East and North Africa. Other countries and territories, such as Azerbaijan and Kosovo*, were supported through emergency preparedness and contingency planning exercises. The RO provided technical support and fundraising assistance to the measles-rubella outbreak response in Ukraine and diphtheria and polio preventive vaccination campaigns in Tajikistan. The RO conducted nutrition in emergency training sessions for government partners and UNICEF staff in Georgia, Kosovo*, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey (with Turkmenistan’s participation) and Uzbekistan, with a focus on infant and young child feeding and the new SMART survey methodology.

In education, a regional strategic framework on education in emergencies (EIE) and DRR has been developed. The document will guide UNICEF COs on capacity development strategies for government and frontline responding partners in the region. Additionally, in follow-up to the EIE for Frontline Responders Trainings conducted in 13 countries in 2010 and 2011, the RO provided technical support to four countries to develop national action plans for improving government capacity in EIE.

The first-line responders regional roster has been a major initiative to establish a regional capacity for responding to small- and mid-scale emergencies in the CEE/CIS region. Some 24 first-line responders went through a four-day simulation and training where they were exposed to the latest humanitarian policy, tools and practice in an emergency-simulated environment.
The first-line responders regional surge capacity mechanism, which was established in 2012, will be further strengthened and institutionalized, thereby making it a critical component of the regional human resources system for managing initial response to humanitarian emergencies in the region. All regional sector network meetings will include sessions on emergency preparedness response and the latest humanitarian policy and tools to continue to strengthen the capacity of staff in the region. In 2013, the RO will continue to provide high quality technical support to strengthen emergency preparedness in education sectors in priority countries in CEE-CIS.

UNICEF Funding Requirements for 2013
UNICEF CEE-CIS region is requesting a total of US$8,222,500 for regional and country activities in humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction. The funding will allow UNICEF to support governments and partners in delivering quality and timely assistance during emergencies. Part of the regional funding will be used flexibly to respond to new or escalating emergencies within the region. The country specific requests are as follows: Georgia: US$2,310,000; Kyrgyzstan: US$1,540,000; and Tajikistan: US$1,872,500, while US$2,500,000 is required for the regional office activities.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional Office</th>
<th>HAC 2013 requirements (US$)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>150,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>150,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disaster Risk Reduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emergency preparedness and response</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,500,000</td>
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Photo Caption: Kindergarten children seek shelter under a table during an earthquake preparedness exercise, in Batken Province, Kyrgyzstan. Children are taught, first and foremost, to protect their heads at the nearest secure location, such as under a table. The school is among those piloting the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) programmes.