East Asia and the Pacific

East Asia and the Pacific is one of the most hazard-prone regions in the world. In recent years, a series of disasters and conflicts have affected the well-being and protection of vulnerable populations, particularly children. The combination of climate change, deforestation, population growth, urbanization and the unfolding El Niño phenomenon suggests that more frequent and intense disasters are likely to have a greater impact on a larger number of people in 2016. El Niño, which developed in 2015, has already affected a number of countries and is predicted to reach maximum strength in 2016. El Niño has led to irregular rainfall patterns, resulting in drought and severe flooding, particularly in Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Vietnam and the Pacific sub-region. As outlined in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) 2015-2030, emergency preparedness and community resilience are therefore key priorities. In addition, internal armed conflicts and ethnic violence in Myanmar and the Philippines have resulted in the internal and/or cross-border displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, including children. The impact of these humanitarian crises has heavily strained families, communities and social systems, with children and women among the most vulnerable.

Regional humanitarian strategy

In response to monsoon-related floods, typhoons/cyclones, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and the unfolding El Niño phenomenon, the East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO) will continue to provide support in line with the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, particularly in the areas of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), nutrition, education and child protection. In line with its focus on equity, UNICEF will reach out to the most vulnerable children and their families, including boys and girls with disabilities, migrant households and ethnic minorities, to fulfill their basic rights in humanitarian action. Through the Regional Office and the 14 country offices, UNICEF will complement government emergency preparedness and response efforts in a tailor-made fashion that will focus on service delivery and/or technical cooperation, depending and building on existing government capacities. Acknowledging that various national governments have gained considerable capacity in emergency response, UNICEF increasingly relies on regional support mechanisms with quality assurance to service multiple countries by pooling resources. Building on the Sendai Framework, as well as the World Humanitarian Summit regional consultations, UNICEF will work on all aspects of DRR, including both natural hazards and conflicts, to reduce the vulnerability of children and build community resilience. In particular, technical support provided to governments via country offices will focus on enhancing emergency preparedness and response through the operationalization of child-centred risk assessment, preparedness systems and humanitarian performance monitoring, with further alignment of humanitarian and development programmes. With monsoons occurring annually, UNICEF remains focused on increasing investment in preparedness to reduce loss of life and avoid human suffering. UNICEF will also continue to strengthen humanitarian partnerships with regional and sub-regional actors, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Secretariat for the Pacific Community, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Regional Network, ASEAN Safe Schools Initiative and climate change adaptation initiatives for WASH, in close collaboration with governments in the region. Finally, UNICEF will continue to build regional knowledge management capacity by documenting best practices and lessons learned in emergency preparedness and response and supporting in-depth studies and research on emerging topics in humanitarian action, such as cash transfer in emergencies.

Results in 2015

As of 31 October 2015, UNICEF had received 11 per cent (US$400,000) of the US$3,594,000 2015 appeal, in addition to US$2.36 million carried forward from 2014. These funds allowed the East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO) to deliver efficient and effective responses to humanitarian crises and further invest in emergency preparedness and DRR, which enabled stronger support to partners and country offices. This included regional support to the response to Cyclone Pam in the Pacific in March 2015. EAPRO enhanced regional and country level capacity in emergency preparedness/DRR and response through regional workshops dedicated to risk assessment and preparedness. Regional debates on the Sendai Framework and the World Humanitarian Summit were facilitated among emergency focal points in all country offices to strengthen regional partnership and share lessons among countries. An innovative partnership with the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency enhanced capacity for UNICEF DRR and emergency preparedness activities in Cambodia, the Pacific sub-region and the Regional Office through the deployment of surge staff. Country offices in Cambodia, Malaysia and Timor-Leste benefited from regional support during emergency preparedness and response trainings with simulation exercises. China, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea received sector-specific technical support, including for drought assessments related to El Niño. In addition, the Regional Rapid Roster Mechanism (RRRM) continued to enhance its capacities and now comprises 80 staff from various sectors that have been trained in emergency response. Although various governments in the region have developed considerable capacity in emergency response, many have requested sector-specific humanitarian support from UNICEF to complement their relief efforts. To this end, the RRRM supported country offices in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar and the Pacific sub-region for cyclone, flood and drought emergency responses.
Funding requirements

EAPRO is requesting US$4,209,600 to carry out planned regional activities in resilience building, DRR, emergency preparedness and response. The budgeted amount includes US$3.1 million to prepare for and respond to situations elsewhere in the region that are not included in separate chapters of Humanitarian Action for Children 2016 and that may not benefit from inter-agency appeals to respond to small- or medium-scale emergencies such as El Niño. The funding is also critical to continuing to strengthen the technical and coordination capacity of country offices and their national partners to support children affected by emergencies, especially in sectors where UNICEF has cluster-lead responsibility.

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