Latin America and the Caribbean

The Latin America and the Caribbean region is facing a number of challenges, including the recent economic slowdown, the more than 130 million chronically poor people, pervasive inequality, high levels of violence and recurrent natural disasters, all of which underlie the humanitarian situation, undermine substantive development gains and reinforce persistent poverty. The region also has the highest homicide levels in the world among children and adolescents. The level of adolescent homicide in Central America, in particular, represents a significant cause for concern. The region is increasingly affected by climate-related disasters, including the strongest El Niño phenomenon in the past 40 years, which is severely impacting the already drought-prone region. Already, some 3.5 million people across Central America and the Caribbean are feeling the effects of El Niño in regards to their sanitation, nutrition, health and livelihoods.

It is anticipated that El Niño will remain a principle driver of humanitarian need and will continue to challenge community resilience in 2016. Caribbean islands, in particular, will be affected by rising sea levels and increases in the intensity of both tropical storms and rainfall deficits. The region is also impacted by disease epidemics, such as chikungunya and cholera in Haiti, where, despite gains in controlling outbreaks, the disease remains a threat. The region has continued to experience high levels of forced displacement and migration due, in part, to drought, food insecurity and violence. In Hispaniola and on the Venezuelan-Colombian border, forced displacement and migration are largely related to national policies and political tensions. In Colombia, progress towards a peace agreement is encouraging, but the armed conflict continues to generate human rights violations against children. While the eventual outcome is likely to yield a demobilization of children engaged in armed conflict, many observers foresee an increase in violence against children during the initial post-accord period.

Regional humanitarian strategy

In 2016, UNICEF will continue to provide sectoral leadership and support in response to ongoing crises, such as the drought in Central America, the child migrant crisis and population displacement. To support country offices, the Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO) will strengthen capacity and reinforce common standards. In particular, LACRO will integrate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and nutrition interventions and ensure that contextualized messages and guidelines for infant and young child feeding in emergencies are available. The Regional Office will also consolidate and expand its response capacity by extending and reinforcing the Regional Response Roster and the Regional Response Plan, and developing its logistics and supply capacity through a regional supply strategy. LACRO will strengthen risk-informed programming through the development and implementation of risk analysis tools that examine vulnerability and equity. The INFORM model, which was piloted in Colombia and shared with other countries in 2015, will be further developed in 2016 and adapted to country-specific contexts. Across the region, LACRO will develop multi-sectoral interventions in education, child protection and emergencies to reduce violence against children. The Regional Office will also continue the partnerships initiated in 2015 with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to promote analysis and planning to strengthen local capacities for violence reduction and ensure that humanitarian interventions contribute to reducing rather than increasing violence. South-South or horizontal cooperation and partnerships with sub-regional organizations will continue to build on the progress made. LACRO will support cooperation among states in the region to build capacity, including through the promotion and dissemination of the Protocol for Protection of Children in Emergencies. The Regional Office will work with partners to ensure that the results of the World Humanitarian Summit and the Sendai Conference and the Sustainable Development Goals are incorporated into humanitarian, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and resilience work in the region both in terms of emergency preparedness and response, as well as DRR and resilience building. In the Amazon basin, for example, LACRO has developed a multi-sectoral strategy that will include resilience to climate change as one of several focus areas in 2016. This strategy also aims to improve preparedness and support national responses to the El Niño phenomenon throughout the region, such as though strengthening national capacities for health and nutrition surveillance to support the response to the drought in Central America. LACRO will also increase its action in communication, information management and knowledge sharing in order to strengthen advocacy for regional and national humanitarian issues, increase capacity development, and support evidenced-based humanitarian programming. The Regional Office will continue to work with key regional humanitarian partners to strengthen preparedness and DRR capacities at regional and national levels.
Results in 2015

As of 31 October 2015, UNICEF had received 33.4 per cent (US$2.2 million) of the US$6.59 million 2015 appeal, in addition to US$1.45 million carried forward from 2014. The Regional Office supported emergency response in Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico and Paraguay through technical assistance and supply procurement. A Regional Rapid Response Roster was created to ensure the rapid deployment of staff during emergencies. UNICEF, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the World Food Programme (WFP) expanded support to country preparedness – including for the El Niño phenomenon – through contingency planning, simulation exercises and trainings. UNICEF supported national agencies contributing to the El Niño response by helping to map in-country capacity and the multi-sectoral impacts of the crisis. In Guatemala, LACRO and partners conducted a rapid assessment to determine the nutritional status of children under 5 years in six departments in the ‘dry corridor’. The Regional Office has been particularly active in providing psychosocial support to displaced and evacuated families. In Mexico, responding to Hurricane Patricia in October, UNICEF supported national public service messaging through extensive use of social media and provided School-in-a-Box supplies for 12,000 children to resume their education. UNICEF also signed its first cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Interior to support Mexico’s National Civil Protection System to expand risk management by involving children in community preparedness and resilience. LACRO also facilitated a workshop during Mexico’s National Civil Protection Convention in November.

Funding requirements

UNICEF is requesting a total of US$6.65 million for the Regional Office to respond to and prepare for ongoing emergencies, such as addressing the effects of El Niño; strengthening the capacity of country offices in preparedness, response, DRR, resilience building and risk analysis; reinforcing South-South cooperation; strengthening monitoring, information management, communication and advocacy for emergencies; and improving sectoral coordination in the areas in which UNICEF has a global sector/cluster responsibility. The increase in the amount requested as compared with 2015 reflects growing evidence and concern related to the impact of El Niño. Funding may also be used to respond to related climate emergencies throughout the region, strengthen preparedness and resilience activities and ensure effective response. In addition, regional funding may be used to respond to situations elsewhere in the region that are not included in a separate chapter of Humanitarian Action for Children 2016 and may not benefit from inter-agency flash appeals to respond to small- or medium-size emergencies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>2016 requirements (US$)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency preparedness and response, disaster risk reduction and resilience</td>
<td>5,500,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional technical assistance and support capacity</td>
<td>750,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication, information and knowledge management</td>
<td>125,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cluster/sector coordination and capacity building</td>
<td>275,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,650,000</td>
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</tbody>
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Included here are identified humanitarian needs in UNICEF-led sectors of the Humanitarian Needs Overview for El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.


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