

UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES IN 2007



Regional Office financial needs for 2007

Sector	US\$
Emergency Response Fund	200,000
Emergency preparedness and response planning/training	200,000
Total*	400,000

* The total includes a maximum recovery rate of 7 per cent. The actual recovery rate on contributions will be calculated in accordance with UNICEF Executive Board Decision 2006/7 dated 9 June 2006.

1. CRITICAL ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

Despite many advances in the overall economic and political situations in the region, the humanitarian profile of risks and vulnerabilities affecting children and families remains precarious in many parts of the region of Central and Eastern Europe, Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS).

Conflict

The unresolved instability in Georgia involving the separatist republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia remains volatile and has significantly worsened after new disputes breaking out between the country and the Russian Federation. Newly implemented economic sanctions against Georgia, expulsions of migrant workers and other measures threaten both the stability and economic welfare of communities in this region. Although the situation of Chechnya in the North Caucasus (Russian Federation) has somewhat improved in the past year, some instability has spread further into the neighbouring republics of Ingushetia, Dagestan, North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Karachaevo-Cherkessia, where political unrest has grown amidst deteriorating socio-economic conditions, and security incidents are occurring on an increasing scale. Security sweeps and human rights violations are frequent and social and economic infrastructure remains too weak to adequately support the provision of basic services.

Turkey has also seen a resurgence of security incidents in the south-east as well as Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) attacks in other parts of the country. With regard to the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, governments of both Armenia and Azerbaijan continue to participate in OSCE-mediated talks, but no significant progress has been made toward resolving the issue. In the separatist republic of Transnistria in Moldova, occasional security incidents and heightened rhetoric between local administrations and international power brokers continue to augment tensions in the region.

Negotiations over the future status of Kosovo are being led by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Mr. Martti Ahtisaari. While it is not known what the eventual decision might be, there is a concern that disagreements over the final outcome may increase tensions between communities and lead to new population movements, potentially impacting peace and security not only in Kosovo but also across the wider region.

Landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) remain a serious threat to children in the conflict-affected areas, particularly in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chechnya (Russian Federation) and Georgia. In addition, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has become a major issue in much of the region, negatively impacting the overall security and protection environment of children.

Displaced persons

Over half of the 20 countries in the region report having internally displaced persons (IDPs). Displaced children are often left without access to adequate education, health care, support or protection. The extended duration of the 'frozen conflicts' and the largely autonomous enclaves they have created is resulting in a generation that is growing up having known no other way of life and with little optimism for the future, leading to disruptive social behaviour. International access and humanitarian assistance to the conflict zones are hampered by security concerns and political obstruction in many parts of the region. Socio-economic conditions in these areas are often harsh given the insecurity, extensive damage to both social and economic infrastructure, and weak or collapsed governance structures. In these situations, children and women are particularly vulnerable to rights violations, malnutrition, and poverty-related diseases, as *de facto* authorities are often unable to provide for basic services and reconstruction. Psychosocial problems are generally widespread, and landmines and the spread of small arms and light weapons continue to pose a serious threat in many areas to children and local populations.

Natural disasters

The region is continually prone to a number of natural disasters. During 2006, six Country Offices supported local initiatives responding to floods, earthquakes, avalanches and mud slides. Most countries in the region are vulnerable to periodic devastating earthquakes, as have occurred most notably in Turkey. Flooding and landslides are frequent occurrences in mountainous countries such as Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and, if occurring in areas where vulnerable chemical and nuclear plants are located, pose a serious threat in certain areas of Central Asia where Soviet era waste dumps and chemical facilities are located in some of the most populated regions. These emergencies can pose a serious threat to children and women, particularly in distant rural areas, where basic services are usually severely limited. Drought is also a serious issue for all Central Asian countries, as was seen this year in certain areas in Kyrgyzstan. Droughts are particularly devastating for the pastoralist and agricultural communities and their families who are dependent on livestock and crops for their livelihood.

Avian Influenza

More than half of the countries in the region reported outbreaks of Avian Influenza in 2006 and of these, two countries (Azerbaijan and Turkey) experienced human cases, resulting in a total of nine deaths. Much of the region falls in the migratory bird routes and therefore remains vulnerable to future Avian Influenza outbreaks.

2. KEY ACTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2006

Early warning system

The Regional Office actively supported the Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS) in rolling out the early warning and early action (EW-EA) web system across the region. The system has enhanced constructive dialogue on emergency events, indicators and trends between the Country Offices and Regional Office. It has also become an important repository for strategic emergency documents, including emergency preparedness and response plan, contingency plans (e.g., for Avian/Human Influenza) and situation reports. In addition, as part of the EW-EA web page, the Regional Office established a dedicated emergency resource page for the CEE/CIS region. The page includes maps, links to key research institutions, risks and vulnerability profiles, country reports and studies and other resource materials.

Emergency preparedness and response planning

During 2006, half of the Country Offices were assisted in updating their emergency preparedness and response plans (EPRPs), and several other offices undertook independent updates. The EPRP remains a key mechanism for UNICEF to ensure and document necessary preparedness at the country levels. It is also an invaluable tool which helps Country Offices in reminding staff of their roles and responsibilities, identifying their response strengths and highlighting capacity gaps. A number of Country Offices were also assisted in developing specific contingency plans for Avian/Human Influenza. Given the potential risks linked to the Kosovo status issue, the Regional Office placed particular emphasis in providing support to the countries in the Balkans.

Avian Influenza

The Regional Office provided technical expertise and support to the Country Offices in responding to the outbreaks of Avian and/or Human Influenza in a number of countries across the region. In particular, support was extended to the Country Offices for Azerbaijan, Moldova, Romania Tajikistan and Turkey in conducting assessments, establishing information management and dissemination system, mobilizing funds and/or coordinating response activities, especially in public awareness and behaviour change. Special emergency funding was also granted to Armenia, Russian Federation and

Ukraine to develop preparedness and communication materials for use by government and partner agencies. In addition, a special three-day workshop was organized for 12 key at-risk and affected Country Offices in the region to help prepare for and respond to the Avian Influenza outbreaks in the affected countries. Staff from UNICEF Regional Offices for Middle East and North Africa and Eastern and Southern Africa were also invited to benefit from the presentations and discussions.

Tools and guidance

Particular efforts were made to disseminate new emergency-related tools and guidance throughout the region. For example, the UNICEF *Emergency Field Handbook* was translated into the Russian language which remains a lingua franca throughout much of the CEE/CIS region. Also, guidance documents on the cluster leadership approach and emergency appeals were shared with the Country Offices.

Training and learning

Emergency trainings were held in Armenia, Montenegro, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Turkmenistan during the year to enhance the knowledge and capacities of the staff from UNICEF and, in some cases, from sister UN agencies, government counterparts and NGO partners. This is crucial for the humanitarian action reform process and for ensuring awareness of the legal basis for advocacy concerning the rights of women and children. These trainings also have an impact on future programme development, and clarify roles and responsibilities during humanitarian response.

Logistics capacity assessment

In close cooperation with UNICEF's Supply Division, the Regional Office commissioned a logistics capacity assessment for Central Asia. The two-week assessment, part of which was jointly conducted with WFP, mapped out supply and logistics capacities in the sub-region.

Early warning

The Regional Office continues to monitor events and trends in the region, producing regular regional emergency updates. In addition, risk and vulnerability profiles have been developed for each country in the region, providing an overview of the principle issues of risk and vulnerability affecting the country and populations. The profiles also provide links with research institutions in the region and within the countries, to facilitate further linkages with the country-specific academic research being conducted.

3. PLANNED HUMANITARIAN ACTION FOR 2007

The Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe, Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) aims to enhance UNICEF's capacity to respond to the needs of women and children in all forms of emergency and instability in an effective and timely manner. It acts as a central hub through which information is shared, problems solved, guidance given, and initiatives developed. The capacity built at the regional level, and the involvement of the Regional Office in all emergency programming, gives it the broad overview necessary to provide appropriate advice and support. This includes the integration of humanitarian preparedness and response into the regular programme cycle, and direct technical assistance and support during emergencies. Regional Office support to country programme development is carried out within the framework of Common Country Assessment and UN Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF) and within the new frameworks and 'cluster' responsibilities, ensuring that issues related to humanitarian assistance and response are factored in system-wide and at the outset of programme design.

Emergency Response Fund (US\$ 200,000)

Monitoring and assessment

The Regional Office continuously monitors potential and existing emergencies in the region and regularly produces updates to keep the wider organization abreast of the humanitarian developments in the region. It maintains risk and vulnerability profiles of the countries in the region. It also contributes to the global early warning system, which plays a vital role in triggering preparedness actions for any potential emergency situation. The system also functions as a central repository for information, lessons learnt and best practices on emergencies.

Emergency response

Direct technical assistance will be provided to those Country Offices which are involved in humanitarian response. Country Offices will be supported in conducting rapid needs assessments, coordinating with government, UN and other humanitarian partners, liaising with Headquarters divisions, mobilizing resources (financial, staffing and supplies), and implementing response activities. In addition, the Regional Office will aim to establish a contingency fund to support the immediate needs of countries in emergencies. These might include the costs involved in contingency planning, rapid assessments, immediate supply procurement, and immediate human resource mobilization amongst others.

Emergency preparedness and response planning/training (US\$ 200,000)

Emergency preparedness planning

The Regional Office will continue to provide technical guidance to Country Offices in reviewing and updating their emergency preparedness and response plans (EPRPs) as well as linking those plans to the broader inter-agency contingency planning processes. Specific attention will be given to the development and enhancing of inter-agency partnerships, initiating common assessments, utilizing inter-agency guidelines and commonly developed tools, and ensuring the implementation of the sectors in which UNICEF has a lead role, i.e., water and sanitation, nutrition and data communications as well as education and child protection. Priority will be given to countries identified at risk in the early warning/early action system and those with a record of frequent disasters.

Capacity development

Building on the capacities already developed in the CEE/CIS region, a series of specialist coaching and simulation exercises will be organized for various Country Offices in 2007. The events will focus on the core 'cluster' responsibilities and programmes identified for UNICEF in water and sanitation, nutrition, IT, education and child protection as well as continued training in human rights, humanitarian principles and our Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies, which underpin UNICEF's work in emergency situations. These activities will be implemented within the inter-agency capacity development framework. In addition, the Regional Office will support knowledge development initiatives at the country and regional levels through organizing briefing sessions, holding inter-country/agency consultations and commissioning studies.