

UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

THE AMERICAS AND

CARIBBEAN

IN 2007



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations

Regional Office financial needs for 2007

Sector	US\$
Technical support to emergency preparedness in 35 countries	500,000
Advocacy, technical support and capacity-building of national counterparts	400,000
Capacity-building of UNICEF and IASC partners for cluster-specific response	300,000
Regional surge response capacity	600,000
Support to risk reduction initiatives	600,000
Total*	2,400,000

* 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

Protracted conflict in Colombia, continued instability in Haiti and disasters affecting vulnerable communities in countries throughout the region created in 2006 dire humanitarian conditions for hundreds of thousands of children and women across the Americas and the Caribbean region.

This section reviews major emergency situations in the region in 2006 and their humanitarian impact on children and women and seeks to mobilize support for actions by UNICEF's Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean (TACRO) in 2007 that will improve preparedness for emergency response, will enhance humanitarian relief operations that better meet the specific needs of children and women and will reduce their exposure to risk.

Situation of women and children affected by conflict in Colombia and instability in Haiti

Levels of violence in Colombia, either directly or indirectly related to the armed conflict, remain alarmingly high. Children constitute 40 per cent of the population that continue to be displaced every year because of the conflict or that cannot yet return to their communities of origin. Disaggregated data show that displacement has a very significant negative impact on the satisfaction of the rights of children. The conflict also results in restricted access to communities which results in limited access to basic social services for children and women. Furthermore, children continue to be recruited by illegal armed groups, even as demobilization efforts are pursued and yield results. They are also victims of landmines and unexploded ordnance, in a country which in 2005 registered the highest number worldwide of victims of mine accidents.

Whilst Haiti registered overall progress in 2006, having conducted elections and increasing access to communities due to improved security, the situation for children and women in the poorest country of the Western hemisphere remains dire. Violence linked to years of political instability, leading on occasions to armed conflict, chronic poverty and a virtual absence of institutionalized safety nets are all factors that put children at risk. These conditions of high vulnerability also explain the magnitude of the disasters brought about by the seasonal passage of hurricanes over the island.

The humanitarian situation of children and women in these two countries, their needs and UNICEF's proposed action for 2007 is examined in further detail under separate chapters of this Appeal.

Other emergencies throughout the region

After the disastrous 2005 season, which registered the highest number of hurricanes ever and caused the highest damages in history, it is with relief that predictions for a 2006 season of similar intensity did not materialize. Tropical storms and a few hurricanes did create in 2006 humanitarian needs of limited scale in a few countries in the region. The more significant needs, however, remain those of communities across Central America that are still struggling to cope with the consequences of disasters caused by the passage of hurricanes Stan and Wilma in 2005. Whereas humanitarian assistance flowed generously in the immediate aftermath of these disasters, addressing their impact and reducing the vulnerability of communities requires that recovery efforts be sustained and, in some cases, intensified.

A significant number of countries endured in 2006 disasters caused by other types of natural phenomena, some of which are of recurrent nature. These disasters, spread across the continent and affecting very diverse countries, provide a stark reminder of the vulnerability of a high proportion of communities throughout the continent, of the shortcomings of emergency preparedness efforts and, sometimes, of the inadequacy of humanitarian response. All of these factors regularly put children and women at risk, create large scale humanitarian needs and hinder the attainment of development goals at sub-national and even national level.

Severe humanitarian consequences for children and women were brought about by flooding affecting parts of Guyana in January (albeit on a lesser scale than in 2005), six out nine provinces in Bolivia in February and, in what was the most serious disaster for that country in recent memory, the southern part of Suriname in May. Floods of a lesser scale also affected Haiti in August and countries across Central America, a direct result of the heavy rains which are characteristic of the late months of the Atlantic hurricane season. Repeated explosions of the volcanoes Tungurahua in Ecuador and Galeras in Colombia led to the long-term displacement of thousands of children and women. Other localized emergencies, which also occur seasonally, were linked to continued drought in the Eastern provinces of Cuba, in the North Eastern provinces of Brasil and in the Chaco region of Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay, and to the recurrent cold snaps that affect children and women in the Andean regions of Peru and Bolivia.

2. KEY ACTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2006

Coordination and partnerships

Coordination for emergency preparedness and humanitarian response with key humanitarian actors at regional level continued to be ensured through the Risk, Disaster and Emergency Task Force of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) represented at regional level. In 2006 the Task Force also established a joint inter-agency work plan which required the pooling of resources for a few key preparedness activities of interest to all members. The Task Force has established working groups on communication and logistics; a mechanism to share information on rosters of emergency personnel has also been agreed upon. The Task Force was key to advance at regional level humanitarian reform initiatives approved by the IASC: it ensured common understanding on reform issues by members, which agreed to a timetable for technical support to UN Country Teams (UNCTs) in the region on humanitarian reform, and facilitated information on preparedness activities undertaken at global level by cluster lead agencies. Cooperation with other UN agencies not part of the IASC include joint initiatives with Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) related to the impact of emergencies and risk reduction in the education sector.

Cooperation between UNICEF and sub-regional risk management international bodies (CEPRENAC for Central America, CAPRADE for Andean countries and CDERA for the Caribbean) was also strengthened, expanding from the traditional fields of emergency preparedness and response to increasing involvement with risk reduction initiatives. To respond adequately to this demand, UNICEF established in 2006 a strong partnership with ISDR (International Strategy for Disaster Reduction) and convened a continental meeting of agencies involved with risk reduction in the education sector, a key element of the Hyogo Framework for Action, as well as a contribution to the International Risk Reduction Campaign 2006-2007 'Disaster prevention begins at School'.

Key achievements

- Technical support to 24 Country Offices to review and enhance preparedness for emergency response, including contingency planning specific to avian-influenza-related emergencies;
- Capacity-building of all UNICEF officers and their counterparts in the region on planning for sector-specific response in emergencies in health, nutrition, water and sanitation and HIV/AIDS;
- Maintenance and upgrade of regional level surge capacity (roster of internal and external candidates in all areas of UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies (CCCs), buffer stock of key emergency relief items, regional logistical arrangements);
- Establishment of mechanisms to ensure capacity for discharge of cluster lead mandates, in accordance with humanitarian reform initiatives decided by IASC;
- Support to Country Offices for planning, delivery and monitoring of humanitarian relief actions in response to emergencies;

- Regional initiatives to raise preparedness, response and recovery standards in the sectors of shelter and education;
- Leadership of network of institutions supporting risk-reduction initiatives in the education sector;
- Co-sponsorship with ISDR of bi-annual risk-reduction campaign in education sector;
- Resource mobilization at sub-regional level for risk reduction initiatives.

3. PLANNED HUMANITARIAN ACTION FOR 2007

The UNICEF Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean (TACRO) will continue in 2007 to provide the first line of support to 24 UNICEF Country Offices through which cooperation programmes are supported in 35 countries of the region. Support by TACRO will focus on the following five main areas: 1) Preparedness for emergency response: technical support to country offices for adequate planning of response; 2) Advocacy for adoption of CCC standards by national response institutions and support for national capacity-building initiatives; 3) Capacity-building of UNICEF staff, IASC members and partners for planning and delivery of emergency response in specific sectors; 4) Surge response capacity maintained at regional level, taking into account cluster leadership arrangements; 5) Risk reduction initiatives, with a particular focus on the education sector: technical support to ensure mainstreaming in UNICEF and UN Country Teams programming and for planning and implementation of national or sub-regional initiatives.

All emergency preparedness, humanitarian response and risk reduction initiatives will continue to be coordinated by TACRO with all other stakeholders through mechanisms established at regional level. TACRO will also monitor the existence, and if required support the establishment, of similar coordination mechanisms at country level.

Technical support to UNICEF Country Offices for enhanced preparedness to meet humanitarian needs of children and women in emergencies (US\$ 500,000)

In 2007 TACRO will provide technical support to update preparedness for emergency response in 35 countries of the region where UNICEF operates in coordination with other IASC actors at national level. Priority will be given to countries in complex emergencies and to countries prone to disasters, as well as to highly vulnerable communities across the region.

Expected results

- UNICEF planning for emergency preparedness at country level involves other IASC members and national actors;
- Country Offices conduct in-depth analysis of national response capacities in all CCC sectors;
- Emergency preparedness plans in all countries of the region are updated and measures for enhanced preparedness adopted;
- Preparedness is tested in selected countries through disaster simulations.

Advocacy for adoption of CCC standards by national response institutions and technical support and capacity-building of national entities in 10 countries (US\$ 400,000)

Recognizing the key role of national entities for humanitarian relief in many countries of the region, TACRO will in 2007 support advocacy by Country Offices in the region for appropriation by national actors of CCC standards in all sectors. Wherever national emergency response capacities are developed, they invariably fall short of meeting many of the more specific needs of children in emergencies (e.g., infant nutrition, psychosocial recovery, education in emergencies, protection, etc.). TACRO will therefore provide technical support to 10 countries in the region for inclusion of CCC standards in national preparedness instruments and will support capacity-building of national counterparts for emergency response in accordance with CCC standards further to identification of training needs in 10 countries.

Expected results

- Advocacy for CCC standards is ensured at central and departmental levels in all countries of the region;
- National emergency response training materials and standards are revised in 10 countries in the region and adapted to meet CCC standards in all sectors;
- Needs assessment of capacity-building of national counterparts for emergency response in accordance with CCC standards is conducted in 10 countries;
- Capacity-building of national counterparts for sector-specific CCC-compliant emergency response is conducted in countries to be determined by needs assessment.

Capacity-building of UNICEF staff, IASC members and partners for planning and delivery of emergency response in specific sectors (US\$ 300,000)

TACRO will work with other IASC members to identify gaps in national and regional emergency response capacities in all sectors. TACRO will ensure capacity-building of UNICEF staff, staff of other IASC members and partners in order to meet these gaps. These capacity-building efforts will focus, in particular, on those sectors where UNICEF has been designated cluster lead by the IASC or where it plays a recognized leadership role.

Expected results

- Analysis of regional capacities to support emergency response in nutrition, water and sanitation, education and data communications is conducted;
- Support is provided to UN Country Teams to review capacities of IASC partners at country level in nutrition, water and sanitation, education and data communication sectors;
- Staff from UNICEF and other IASC partners receive training on technical standards of response to emergencies in nutrition, water and sanitation, education and data communication sectors.

Surge response capacity maintained at regional level, taking into account cluster leadership arrangements (US\$ 600,000)

TACRO will maintain the capacity to provide direct assistance from the regional level to Country Offices faced with medium- and large-scale emergencies in 2007. Buffer stocks of essential relief items will be maintained in Panama and in three logistical bases operated by WFP in cooperation with sub-regional international bodies in Barbados, Ecuador and El Salvador. The existing roster of internal candidates for rapid deployment in emergencies will continue to be updated and training will be provided to its members; the roster of external candidates will be expanded, with particular attention paid to those sectors in which UNICEF plays a leading role. A mechanism will be established, in coordination with other members of the regional IASC task force, to review and complement early warning/early action assessments by Country Offices in the region.

Expected results

- Emergency stock of relief items available and regularly replenished;
- Sub-regional emergency relief stocks established with WFP in San Salvador, Quito and Bridgetown;
- Major suppliers of relief items identified and arrangements passed at regional or sub-regional level;
- Roster for surge capacity including internal and external experts in all sectors relevant to the CCCs is regularly updated;
- Rapid deployment of staff in emergency situations and participation in inter-agency missions;
- Enhanced early warning systems at regional levels that integrate those of other UN agencies.

Support to risk reduction initiatives, with focus on the education sector (US\$ 600,000)

TACRO will pursue partnerships with sub-regional risk management entities (CEPREDENAC, CAPRADE and CDERA) and with international organizations mandated to reduce risk in order to ensure mainstreaming of risk reduction in all programmes supported by UNICEF in the region and to support specific initiatives that reduce risk. Building on work carried out in 2006 and on the opportunity provided by the 2006/2007 international campaign on risk reduction in schools, these efforts will particularly focus on the education sector.

Expected results

- UNICEF Country Offices are equipped with tools for effective advocacy for risk reduction initiatives;
- UN Country Teams receive support for inclusion of risk reduction in all programmatic documents;
- Design and implementation of risk reduction initiatives in the education sector in 10 countries: inclusion of risk reduction in education curricula, review of school safety plans, review of safety of school infrastructure.