Key issues in East Asia and the Pacific

East Asia and the Pacific is the most disaster-stricken region in the world.¹ The most common hazards in the region include typhoons, tsunami, earthquakes and drought. Factors including rapid urbanization, population growth, environmental degradation and climate change further accelerate and exacerbate hazard trends in the region.

Between 2000 and 2016, the region lost over 153,000 lives to natural disasters, which affected 1.67 billion people in East Asia and 1.2 million in the Pacific, around half from floods.² In 2015/2016, erratic monsoons and El Niño-induced droughts affected most countries. For instance, in 2015, Viet Nam had its worst drought in 90 years, affecting over 2 million people³ (including 520,000 children)⁴ in 52 of its 63 provinces, with a state of emergency being declared in 18 provinces. In 2017, internal armed conflict and ethnic strife, particularly in Myanmar and the Philippines, generated the internal and cross-border displacement and mass migration of more than 1 million people, more than 50 per cent of whom were children.⁵ These disasters have devastating consequences for children and their families across the region, causing death, displacement and disruption of basic services for child survival and development. In multiple risk contexts, these disasters interfere with social cohesion, widening gender inequality, increasing violence against women and girls and creating tensions in the context of emerging disparity.

While acknowledging that many countries in the region have invested substantially in national capacity and allocated dedicated resources for disaster risk reduction interventions, uneven distribution of support and adherence to international standards remains a concern. While several global and regional frameworks and platforms for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation highlight increased focus on the engagement of children, national policies and laws rarely emphasize child rights.

² UNESCAP. 2017. Asia Pacific Disaster Report.
³ Ibid.
⁴ UNICEF Viet Nam. 2016.
⁵ UNICEF East Asia Pacific. 2017.
Driving results for children

The ‘Grand Bargain’ (an agreement between more than 30 of the biggest donors and aid providers on humanitarian funding) emphasizes the need to place humanitarian action within a broader development and resilience framework. In line with the 25 disaster risk-related targets across 10 Sustainable Development Goals and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and building on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, UNICEF prioritizes support to: (1) ensuring that development programmes are risk-informed, address underlying drivers of inequity, deprivation and fragility, and contribute to strengthening the resilience of children, households, institutions and systems; (2) strengthening the linkage between social protection systems and humanitarian action, preparing social protection systems in advance to help families recover from disasters (e.g., through emergency procedures and cash transfers); and (3) enhancing coherence between humanitarian and development programmes.

Key programme strategies

**Systems and capacity**
- Facilitate capacity building for inclusive, multi-hazard risk assessments.
- Strengthen systems and capacity to develop and implement risk-informed programming, including in fragile and conflict contexts.
- Consolidate emergency preparedness and response capacity in line with global standards.
- Strengthen monitoring systems in humanitarian contexts.
- Increase capacity and foster the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in emergencies, including biometrics to register identity of refugees, ICTs for cash transfer systems, and ‘big data’ and digital technologies.

**Data, evidence and knowledge**
- Analyse disaster data and impacts on children, conduct risk assessments and evaluate their usability.
- Conduct research and studies on preparedness and risk reduction, including in fragile contexts.
- Document good practices and lessons learned from the disaster risk reduction and social cohesion, emergency preparedness and humanitarian response.

**Behavior change**
- Strengthen the implementation of Accountability to Affected Populations and Communication for Development in emergencies.
- Raise awareness of children and families of disaster risk and promote practicing preparedness and preventive measures.
- Explore the use of innovation and technology to engage children, youth and communities in advancing humanitarian response, preparedness and disaster risk reduction.

**Partnerships and alliances**
- Partner with the ASEAN Secretariat in contributing to policy framework and system strengthening.
- Collaborate with Inter-Agency Standing Committees on regional capacity building, standard setting and advocacy.
- Engage with UN Children and the UN Major Group for Children and Youth, a group formed of children and young people collaborating with the UN, on regional advocacy and evidence generation.
- Partner with the private sector in standard setting and capacity building.