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UNICEF Croatia

Earthquake Flash Appeal

29 January 2021

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for every child

Situation Overview

Two strong earthquakes measuring magnitudes of 5.2 and 6.3 on the Richter scale, hit the area of Petrinja town in Sisak-Moslavina County on December 28 and 29, 2020 taking the lives of eight people, including a 13-year-old girl, and affecting thousands of people. The earthquakes caused widespread damage to buildings and infrastructure, including the only regional hospital in Sisak, smaller health care facilities in Petrinja and Glina, 33 school buildings (58.9% of all schools), electricity lines, and water pipes. To date, authorities have reported that at least 1,500 families near Sisak, Petrinja, and Glina have lost their homes and over 3,400 people remain displaced. Approximately 500 of them, including approximately 30 children, are currently residing in Sisak-Moslavina County in collective shelters in six locations and two sites are quarantined due to COVID 19 cases.

Mobile homes, trailers, and containers are being delivered as temporary shelter for people who lost homes and decided to stay near their ruined homes. Approximately 2,700 people are displaced in other parts of Croatia or abroad. With the increasing COVID-19 caseload across the country, there is a growing concern about the surge of COVID-19 cases among the thousands of displaced persons, those living in the collective shelters or with extended families, with limited options of maintaining social distance and practicing hygiene. The aftermaths of the earthquakes and constant aftershocks have further added psychosocial and emotional disturbance to the affected populations who were already finding it challenging to cope with the COVID 19 pandemic.

Response to date

On 2 January 2021, the Government of Croatia (GoC) declared a state of Emergency in Sisak-Moslavina County and parts of Zagreb and Karlovac Counties and formed the Government Coordination Body, led by the Deputy Prime Minister, to coordinate the national response. The GoC released USD 19 million from the state budget for immediate intervention and assistance to the affected areas. The European Commission also pledged to support the GoC and the first relief aid arrived through the European Union (EU) mechanism of civil protection.

UNICEF Response

Under the leadership and coordination with the Government, on 31 December, UNICEF deployed an emergency team to conduct a rapid assessment of the situation of children to identify the most critical humanitarian needs in the affected areas. UNICEF immediately delivered 13.5 tons of emergency supplies and approximately 29,000 packages of hygiene

Situation in Numbers



13,750
children in need



70,000
people in need



4,896
children with disrupted
access to education

UNICEF Appeal US\$ 1,361,000

products to 24 public and health institutions - schools, kindergartens, general hospitals, and health centres - in the areas of Petrinja, Sisak and Glina.

Addressing the immediate need for child protection, UNICEF, in partnership with the Society for Psychological Assistance (SPA), trained 28 experts who are deployed in three mobile teams to provide mental health and psychosocial support, targeting foster care families and other families at heightened risk. Also, these mobile teams are conducting a detailed assessment of the most urgent needs of children.

Since the earthquake affected the social workforce as well, psychological first aid was provided by 20 January 2021 to 55 critical child protection professionals in centers for social welfare Sisak, Glina and Petrinja. The mobile outreach teams will act as additional support to other deployed mobile teams from the line ministry, which oversee the administrative workload linked to processing approvals for cash benefits. The earthquake severely damaged the building of the social welfare centre in Glina, leaving the social workforce without the necessary work equipment. To ensure the continuation of work and immediate functionality, UNICEF donated 10 notebook computers with pre-installed official governmental software and necessary social welfare applications and databases to the centres for social welfare in Glina and Petrinja. Through UNICEF-supported parenting programmes and a phone-helpline for foster parents' peer support, additional psychosocial support is being provided to children and professionals working in kindergartens, as well as foster caregivers in affected areas.

Immediate needs of children

The start of school was delayed for up to two weeks for 4,800 students from 17 schools (16 primary and one secondary school), out of a total of 14,700 students in 50 schools in the county. By February 1, all schools are anticipated to start schooling, either online for all students or in the cases where buildings have been made safe and operational again, the primary grades 1-4 and the final year of secondary will attend in-person, following epidemiological rules. Schools collect information on the whereabouts of students every week to determine whether they have left the area or returned. According to reports from schools over 50% of students are currently in the Sisak-Moslavina county.

There are 2,400 children (age 0 – 18) who have some form of disability, and immediate support is required to reach them. With the dual challenges of the aftermath of the earthquakes and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, there is an immediate need for mental health psychosocial support for children, youth, and their families.

Furthermore, the needs for health care services and facilities are high and critical, given that most of the healthcare facilities have been damaged. Temporary structures have been installed at different locations to continue to deliver healthcare services, however, with the current COVID 19 pandemic, needs are higher than ever before, resulting in a lack of space for work, lack of PPE for health service providers, critical medical equipment and other supplies. There are seven pediatric primary health teams in Sisak, Petrinja and Glina, covering 8.766 children age 0-18 (out of which 4.772 children age 0-7).

Among the youngest group of children, about 10% of children are at risk of developmental delays and should be timely screened by pediatricians and referred to get diagnosed to either health or/and social welfare diagnostic teams, which is not possible in the current situation.

Immediate and medium-term priorities

In line with the UNICEF Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action and with the Government's response to the current emergency, UNICEF will pursue a two-pronged approach, which will involve the continued provision of immediate relief assistance in the areas of shelter and non-food items (NFIs), as well as maintaining critical basic services for children over the next few months, including the establishment of temporary learning and child-friendly spaces and access to essential protection and education services. Special consideration will be given to children with disabilities as well as vulnerable girls and women.

Interventions in priority areas are as follows:



Emergency Supplies

UNICEF will mobilize resources to address the urgent and life-sustaining needs of children and their families, with a focus on the most vulnerable. These will include delivery of critical emergency supplies, including personal protective equipment to prevent the spread of COVID-19, medical equipment for health care facilities, hygiene kits, education supplies, early childhood development and recreational kits, etc.



Risk Communication and Community Engagement

UNICEF will support the production and dissemination of information to support recovery and resilience of at-risk and affected populations, including parents, caregivers, children, adolescents and youth, as well as to promote and protect the best interest of the child among experts, service providers, and other stakeholders involved in response and recovery in the affected areas. Informal interventions and messaging on the mental health of young people will be designed according to their needs while ensuring accessibility and engagement of vulnerable adolescents and youth.



Child Protection

In close partnership with the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, and other partners, UNICEF will ensure the continuation of child protection services and systems that have been disrupted by the earthquakes. This includes the provision of supplies to continue the services, building the capacity of front-line responders, ensuring that all children and adolescents affected by the earthquakes will have access to protection services and are provided with mental health and psychosocial support. Furthermore, UNICEF will work with partners to establish mobile child and adolescent-friendly spaces in the non-urban affected areas and/or container temporary settlements to provide stability and structure in traumatic situations that can jeopardize children's and young people's long-term well-being.



Education and ECD

About 10 per cent of children whose education has been disrupted as a consequence of the earthquake belong to vulnerable groups and face dropout and social exclusion. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, UNICEF will provide support to enable the continuation of education and full inclusion of those children, that is, children with disabilities and Roma children into the school system again. UNICEF and partners will also work on finding the best solutions for providing psychosocial support to all students and teachers. Sisak-Moslavina County hosts one of Croatia's largest Roma suburban settlements, with many Roma girls and boys living in poverty, which has also been heavily affected by the earthquakes. UNICEF will provide mentors to Roma primary- and secondary-school-age children who are at risk of falling behind or dropping out of school due to fear of earthquakes and/or COVID-19. Since many Roma girls and boys do not have adequate home learning environments and established routines for long-term success in school, UNICEF will also provide psychosocial and other support to their parents so that they can better assist children. Where necessary, learning materials for children will be provided as well. Adaptations and additional support will be provided to children with disabilities so that they can better access and participate in school lessons. In cooperation with youth organizations, UNICEF will ensure non-formal education for young people to develop their sense of agency and purpose, build resilience and coping skills. Skills building intervention for young people will also benefit the community as well as young people themselves, by building their skills and engaging them in employment and voluntary activities. UNICEF will work with partners on the reestablishment of early intervention (EI) services for children 0-8 years of age with developmental delays and disabilities in the areas most affected by the earthquakes. This also includes supporting occupational and sensory integration therapy, physiotherapy, and speech therapy for children with disabilities. Also, UNICEF will work with the mobile team (educational rehabilitators), to reach those children and families who are not able to come in person for therapy.





Health and Nutrition

In cooperation with the Ministry of Health, UNICEF's intervention will focus on providing critical support for the improvement of health services and facilities with the provision of necessary equipment and capacity building for enabling the continuation of health services in Sisak-Moslavina County. UNICEF will support home visiting nurses to deliver evidence-based interventions by increasing their knowledge, skills, and capacity in Infant and Child Feeding (IYCF¹), online pregnancy courses, and strengthening intersectoral cooperation.



WASH

UNICEF will support authorities of the affected areas to establish access to safe water supply, where needed, support infection prevention control in health facilities, collective shelters, and schools. The support also includes the provision of WASH supplies, such as hygiene kits to the most vulnerable families.

Funding requirement

UNICEF Country Office in Croatia requires **US\$ 1,361,000** to provide relief and support for the first 6 months of 2021 and address the critical needs of children and adolescents affected by the earthquakes in Croatia. To date, the UNICEF Country Office has mobilized US\$ 501,000 using the Country Office's resources, UNICEF Global Humanitarian Thematic Funds as well as generous contributions from public, private sector donors and the UNICEF National Committee in Slovenia.

Individual donations can be made via the UNICEF Croatia website: <https://www.unicef.hr/help-children-affected-by-earthquakes/>.

The UNICEF Office in Croatia thanks all donors for their contributions to date to support to the earthquake relief efforts.

Programme areas	Funding needs	Funding identified	Funding gap
Emergency supplies	\$500,000	\$100,000	\$400,000
Education and ECD	\$250,000	\$158,000	\$92,000
Health and Nutrition	\$50,000	\$10,000	\$40,000
Child Protection	\$360,000	\$137,000	\$223,000
WASH	\$161,000	\$86,000	\$75,000
RCCE	\$40,000	\$10,000	\$30,000
Grand total	\$1,361,000	\$501,000	\$860,000

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¹ Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) refers to the feeding of infants and young children aged 0-23 months. IYCF programmes focus on the protection, promotion and support of early initiation of breastfeeding within one hour of birth, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, timely introduction of diverse complementary foods and age-appropriate complementary feeding practices along with continued breastfeeding for two years or beyond.