Life-saving assistance is urgently needed for 4.5 million people in the drought affected areas of Ethiopia

The short rainy season this year, which usually lasts from February to March, was poor, delayed and finished early. The impact was severe on crop production from the first harvest, which in a normal year, would provide 20 percent of the national food production. The expected long rainy season did not offer any respite; the Ethiopian Meteorological Agency reported, at the end of July 2015, that the volume of rain was much below normal and only sporadic in large parts of the country. This is expected to have a damaging impact on the second harvest of the year, which usually contributes up to 80 percent to the national food production. The sparse and irregular rains have also created critical water shortages, particularly in the pastoral areas of the country, causing death and weakened conditions of livestock and a decline in milk production. The country now faces deepening food insecurity and soaring malnutrition rates, especially among children.

As of June 2015, 144,072 children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) were treated nationwide, reflecting an increase of 10 percent compared with the numbers reported during the same period last year. The situation is not likely to improve. In preparation, the Government of Ethiopia has already revised the number of people who require relief food assistance from 2.9 million people to 4.5 million people, as of August 2015. In addition to the drought, there is a measles outbreak with over 6,732 confirmed cases as of May 2015 – the largest outbreak in Ethiopia since 2009. Urgent and immediate interventions are required to address the drought and malnutrition and in public health to avoid preventable deaths among children.

**UNICEF Preparedness and Response**

UNICEF assistance is guided by its Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action which prioritises timely emergency response in key life-saving sectors, namely nutrition, health, water, sanitation and hygiene. UNICEF continues to support the Government of Ethiopia to build disaster risk management capacity in regions affected by food insecurity and has prepositioned emergency life-saving supplies in Addis Ababa as well as three regional hubs to address the humanitarian needs of 125,000 people in a timely manner. Some of these supplies are being used to initiate an immediate response in drought affected areas. In addition to regular programmes in nutrition ‘hot spot’ districts of the country, UNICEF has taken swift action to scale up its nutrition programmes to treat severely malnourished children by procuring and distributing additional life-saving emergency nutrition supplies to affected regions. UNICEF and the Ministry of Health are operating 30 Mobile Health and Nutrition Teams (MHNT) in remote, drought affected areas of Somali and Afar Regions. The MHNT teams are now reaching the most critical areas in these two Regions and provide life-saving health care, routine vaccination, treatment for malnourished children, and emergency referrals. UNICEF is actively mobilizing additional resources to increase the number of MHNTs.

**Nutrition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical additional funding needs: US$16,000,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

To avoid preventable deaths of the most vulnerable children, additional emergency nutrition supplies are required to treat severely malnourished children in therapeutic feeding programmes across the country. At the beginning of August 2015, UNICEF supported the Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH) to deploy 70 epidemiologists in nutrition ‘hot spot’ districts to assist with the monitoring, follow-up and reporting of malnourished children, as well as with transportation of emergency nutrition supplies to the most remote and inaccessible districts of the country. More funds will be required to transport critical supplies to the nutrition ‘hot spot’ districts and ensure that supplies are readily available in all health facilities across Ethiopia. There is also an urgent need to support frequent nutritional screening in emergency affected areas in order to refer
malnourished children to appropriate nutrition programmes. The nutrition information system needs to be strengthened to ensure that accurate information is available to make informed decisions for timely emergency response activities.

**Measles Vaccination**

Critical additional funding needs: US$ 2,400,000

It is important to limit the further spread of the current measles epidemic, particularly in nutrition ‘hot spot’ districts, were children are most vulnerable. If children are malnourished and become infected with measles, the risk of life-threatening complications increases significantly. FMoH has requested UNICEF Ethiopia to provide financial support of US$2.4 million to vaccinate 5.31 million children against measles through a mass campaign in the priority districts. Vitamin A Supplementation (VAS) is crucial to be provided together with measles vaccination in emergencies. Without VAS, immunity is weakened which increases the risk of contracting measles. Therefore, nutrition screening activities, referral of malnourished children to appropriate health and nutrition programmes, as well as VAS will be integrated into the vaccination campaign.

**Health**

Critical additional funding needs: US$ 600,000

In Somali and Afar Regions, there are approximately 655,000 drought affected pastoral community members with limited access to primary health care services. There is an urgent need to provide additional primary health care services to prevent excess morbidity and mortality. UNICEF will aim to assign 13 additional MHNTs to provide life-saving consultations, safe deliveries, and emergency referrals to an estimated 62,400 people over a period of six months in Somali and Afar Regions. Essential medical supplies, including emergency drug kits, will be procured and distributed.

**Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)**

Critical funding needs: US$4,650,000

The Government of Ethiopia and WASH partners estimate that up to 1.28 million drought affected men, women, girls and boys are in need of emergency WASH services. Immediate funds are required to provide water in a sustainable manner by expanding boreholes in drought prone areas and by repairing and upgrading damaged water facilities. As a last resort, emergency water supply will be provided to the most vulnerable communities by water trucks.

Furthermore, floods are expected later in the year, particularly in the vicinity of large rivers in Afar and Somali Regions. Flood mitigation and preparedness interventions are urgently required. There is a high risk of a WASH related diseases outbreak in the next six months of 2015. To minimize this risk, construction of appropriately designed emergency latrine facilities, provision of environmental cleaning kits, strengthening of solid waste management systems, as well as hygiene promotion and soap distribution initiatives are required.

**UNICEF Ethiopia Humanitarian Action for Children – 2015 Funding Requirements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appeal Sector</th>
<th>Requirements, US$**</th>
<th>Received in 2015, US$</th>
<th>Funding gap, US$</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>10,090,800</td>
<td>2,758,692</td>
<td>7,332,108</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>9,137,000</td>
<td>914,292</td>
<td>8,222,708</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WASH</td>
<td>17,817,500</td>
<td>1,692,266</td>
<td>16,125,234</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child protection</td>
<td>3,428,300</td>
<td>690,933</td>
<td>2,737,367</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>6,056,300</td>
<td>2,112,213</td>
<td>3,946,087</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster coordination</td>
<td>2,554,552</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,554,552</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total**</td>
<td>49,086,452</td>
<td>8,168,396</td>
<td>40,918,056</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The additional amount US$19,100,000 needed for the drought response is not yet reflected in the HAC 2015. Out of the overall requirement of US$67,186,452, UNICEF Ethiopia urgently requires US$23,650,000 to provide life-saving services in the priority nutrition ‘hot spot’ areas of the country. **As the humanitarian situation in the country is expected to deteriorate, UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children 2015 will be revised. **Programme operation, transport costs and M&E costs are included in the sectoral budget lines.

**Contact details**

Gillian Mellsop  
Representative  
gmellsop@unicef.org

Alhaji Bah  
Chief, Field Operations & Emergency  
abah@unicef.org

Alexandra Westerbeek  
Chief, Media and External Relations  
awesterbeek@unicef.org