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# Chile

## Emergency: Wildfires in Chile

Humanitarian Situation Flash Note  
13 February 2023

unicef for every child

February 13, 2023 – Flash Note No. 1

### Highlights:

- Chile is currently facing a wildfire alert season, which has worsened due to the drought affecting much of the country. In this context, amid a heatwave in the central-southern zone, a series of wildfires started on January 31st. Currently, there are 326 active fires, with 89 being fought and already 309,000 hectares have been burned.
- The main affected regions have been Ñuble, Biobío, La Araucanía, Los Ríos, Los Lagos, and Maule. Red alerts have been declared for the first three regions, as well as the districts of Longavi, Cauquenes, Chanco, Péncahue, Sagrada Familia, and Curepto in the Maule Region, Coral, Valdivia, and Mariquina in Los Ríos, and the district of Palena in the Los Lagos region.
- Even though the Telecommunications Undersecretary has been working to maintain connectivity in affected areas, 45 municipalities between Ñuble and La Araucanía have telecommunications problems. Efforts are focused on preserving emergency alert systems (SAE messages) and facilitating coordination among stakeholders. Additionally, a free telecommunications service for individuals impacted by the fires has been established.
- At least 24 people have been reported dead as a result of the wildfires and 2,000 people have been injured and hospitalized. In the past 24 hours, a growing number of individuals have been displaced, totaling 5,569 affected individuals and 1,180 destroyed homes. (Source: Senapred - <https://senapred.cl/noticias/cogrid-nacional-se-reune-para-analizar-situacion-de-incendios-forestales-que-afectan-a-la-zona-centro-sur/>)
- The available information today is limited and not disaggregated; however, ongoing conversations have been maintained with government and civil society organizations on the ground to raise information in a disaggregated manner. In this vein, for gender and age disaggregation, UNICEF, in collaboration with the Office of the Ombudsman for Children, has developed an information-gathering form, with a format similar to a "rapid need assessment" but simplified to allow the institution to conduct the assessment and have UNICEF systematize and represent it. Furthermore, the variable of people with disabilities and pregnant women is considered.

- 326 active fires**
- 89 combat fires**
- 24 deaths**
- 1182 injured.**
- 309,000 hectares consumed**
- 5,569 direct affected people**
- 3 regions in state of catastrophe**
- 889 in shelters**
- 12 communities evacuated**

# Overview of the situation and humanitarian needs and UNICEF response

## General Context

- The fires have impacted the populations of these regions, resulting in death, injuries, and hospitalizations, as well as a growing number of displaced individuals in the past 24 hours. In addition to the loss of homes and belongings, many have lost their means of subsistence. Tons of fruits and vegetables have been lost, as well as jobs. Unfortunately, the human loss toll has already exceeded that recorded during the wildfires of 2017 (11 deaths).
- Most of the fires were sparked by human recklessness and exacerbated by adverse weather conditions, poor forest management, and the lack of adequate means to combat them. At least 34 individuals are being prosecuted for causing the recent fires.
- The Government has announced a curfew in the regions of Biobío, Ñuble and La Araucanía, affected by fires. The defense chiefs of each region will announce areas in which the measure will apply from 11:00 PM to 5:00 AM.
- 45 municipalities between Ñuble and La Araucanía have telecommunications problems. The Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications reports more than 118 sites down only in Ñuble, Biobío and Araucanía.
- The Minister of Education reports over 900 students affected by damages in schools. The magnitude of damage to each school is being evaluated, with the possibility of deferring the start of the school year in those areas not being ruled out.
- The announcement of a new heat wave in the affected macrozone has been made, creating the perfect conditions for the spread of forest fires, known as the 30-30-30 Factor (temperatures above 30 degrees Celsius, winds of over 30 km/h, and relative humidity less than 30%). High temperature warnings remained in effect from Coquimbo to La Araucanía until Friday, February 10.
- The Meteorological Alarm has been announced for the next days in the regions of Maule and Ñuble, where temperatures are expected to surpass 35 degrees Celsius. The government has determined the preemptive closure of national parks and reserves in the coming days.
- The development of the wildfires is uncertain, greatly dependent on weather conditions, meaning the emergency may endure for several more weeks with varying levels of fire spread intensity. The impending heatwaves will extend further south of the already affected area, putting the metropolitan region, with the highest population density, on alert in the upcoming days.

UNICEF is coordinating efforts with other United Nations agencies to collaborate on information exchange, government engagement, international cooperation involvement, and the short- and medium-term response to affected populations.

Also, UNICEF is in direct coordination with the Ministries of Health, Education, Justice, and Social Development to gain access to information and define an action plan in accordance with the needs of the Chilean government.

### **Nutrition**

In terms of nutrition and food security, most of the affected regions report regular operations. In Biobío, rapid response teams have been deployed to food collection centres, reported by SENAPRED (National Service for Prevention and Response to Disasters), to verify sanitary conditions. In Los Ríos, the Ministry of Social Development and Family (MDSF) conducted a survey to distribute food boxes to evacuated families. The situation is being monitored and the response continues to be evaluated.

### **Health**

Record of medical treatments provided by healthcare services and number of severe burns have been documented. Most of the infrastructure remains operational, except for a rural medical station in Concepción which was completely destroyed by the fires and two additional facilities which were required to evacuate (one from the Biobío Service and another from South Araucanía). Other centres are undergoing damage assessments. Some teams have been strengthened with a focus on mental health, and there has been an increase in personnel and emergency supplies. Monitoring of needs and evaluation of the response by the Regional Ministerial Services and Health Services continues. UNICEF is offering technical support to the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Working Group convened by SENAPRED.

### **WASH**

The fires have caused serious damage to the rural potable water system, of which 42 are partially damaged, and 23 of them completely lost. There are 21 weather stations that are monitoring the air quality in the area, however, there are 7 districts in air quality emergency, according to the Ministry of Environment.

SENAPRED reports that the installation of potable water tanks, differentiated sanitary elements by age range and gender, water collection and distribution systems, along with the continuous need for animal care elements is necessary. UNICEF is coordinating with other UN agencies and international cooperation to identify and support the emergency response in the matter of water, both in the short term and in the rehabilitation phase.

### **Education**

According to available information, there are 154 schools defined as shelters (14 in Maule, 23 in Ñuble, 47 in Bío Bío, 70 in Araucanía), and 25 as damaged (1 in Ñuble, 17 in Bío Bío, 7 in Araucanía)<sup>1</sup>. Of the latter, 11 have partial damage, with a total enrollment of 573 students; 10 have total damage, with an enrollment of 347 students. The Ministry of Education identifies preliminary immediate needs starting from March. UNICEF is advocating for alternative shelters that are not schools, so as not to impact the planned restart of classes in March. UNICEF is also

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Internal Report Ministry of Education

supporting the Ministry of Education to provide emotional containment materials, as well as resources that can support recreation for children, adolescents, and young people in shelters or in highly affected areas, for different educational levels.

## **Protection**

UNICEF is monitoring the potential impacts on children, girls and adolescents targeted by specialized protection programs, including alternative residential care and family programs, ambulatory services for victims of violence, and private and non-private detention centres for adolescents in conflict with the law. The reported impacts include loss of homes and/or evacuations of a limited number of foster families, evacuation of one of the outpatient services, with no significant harm to the children, and some officers working in the services lost their homes or had their residences evacuated. Nevertheless, no residential program or internment institution was physically affected structurally, and they report normal functioning. UNICEF proposed joint monitoring of the situation of childhood in the affected areas to the Children's Ombudsman.

## **Social Protection**

The Ministry of Social and Family Development is responsible for implementing the Rapid Emergency Survey (FIBE), which allows information to be collected from individuals or families affected by emergencies. The survey collects information, declared by a member of the affected family group, who must be 18 years or older, about the location of the home, the composition of the family group and its characteristics, identification of special needs, existence of networks and participation, information, and assessment of damage to the housing.

Based on this information, the Recovery Bonus of USD1,800 approx. per family will be provided depending on the impact on the families. Its goal is not the reconstruction of the housing, but the recovery of clothing, important items for the family, furniture, what is required to eventually enable their residency. To date, no information is available on the implementation of the FIBE, as it is still in the process of being raised. UNICEF is coordinating with the MDSF to provide technical assistance in the field of social protection and in strengthening the inter-sectoral coordination capacities that this Ministry will play in the recovery and rehabilitation phase of the territories.

## **UNICEF response**

UNICEF has identified 5 key sectors for this emergency: Education; Mental Health; Child Protection; Social Protection and WASH.

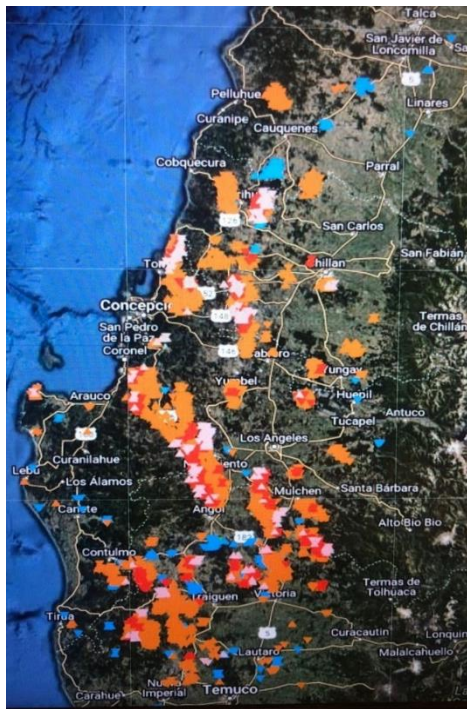
The government is focused on combating the wildfires. There is still a major challenge with consolidating figures and disaggregating data. UNICEF is focusing efforts on i) gathering information; ii) coordinating with other actors; iii) identifying demands where the government requires technical and financial assistance; iv) advocating for the visibility of children and adolescents, migrant population, and indigenous peoples.

Regarding the location and security of those in need, UNICEF continues to gather information to determine the presence of children in areas that are challenging to access due to security concerns.

For this immediate response phase, UNICEF anticipates a need for USD550,000, currently counting on USD25,000.00 of immediate availability. After defining a more concrete plan with the government, UNICEF will have a sense of the real need to respond to this emergency.

Funds USD	Description
\$ 150,000	Coordination support
\$ 50,000	Child protection
\$ 150,000	Education
\$ 100,000	WASH
\$ 50,000	Social protection
\$ 50,000	Health
<b>\$ 550,000</b>	<b>INITIAL NEED*</b>

\*USD550,000 initial need (-) 25,000 mobilized by UNICEF Country Office = **TOTAL need as of February 9, 2023 → USD525,000**



Fires situation by February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

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