



On 27 March 2025, two young girls stand amid the flooded remains of a structure in Ucayali, located in the Amazon region of Peru, after the region's heaviest rainfall in 15 years. The floods severely disrupted children's health, education and protection.

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for every child

## Humanitarian Action for Children

# Latin America and Caribbean Region

### HIGHLIGHTS

- UNICEF estimates that approximately 11 million people, including 4 million children and adolescents, will require humanitarian assistance to cope with disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2026.
- This assessment follows a year of high-impact natural hazards, including floods, droughts, storms and wildfires that strained national and local response systems and displaced thousands of children, particularly in vulnerable communities. For example, Hurricane Melissa caused catastrophic damage across Jamaica, Cuba and the Dominican Republic in October 2025 and significantly increased humanitarian response needs in the Caribbean.<sup>1</sup>
- In partnership with governments, civil society and the private sector, UNICEF will strengthen child-centred, shock-responsive systems by improving coordination, enhancing data management, promoting disaster-risk financing and safeguarding the continuity of essential services, while prioritizing localized anticipatory action.
- For 2026, UNICEF is appealing for \$53.8 million to support emergency preparedness, enhance anticipatory action and respond to the humanitarian needs of children affected by disasters across the region.<sup>2</sup>

### IN NEED



**2.5 million**

People in need of health and nutrition services



**3.2 million**

Children in need of protection services



**3 million**

Children in need of education support



**7.7 million**

People in need of access to safe water



**11 million**

People estimated to be impacted by disasters<sup>3</sup>



This map does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. The countries in darker blue have individual country appeals.

### FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

**US\$53.8 million**



2022

2026<sub>1</sub>

Figures are a preliminary estimation of 'at risk' populations, based on the average number of people affected by

## HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

Each year, approximately 11 million people, including nearly 4 million children, are directly affected by natural hazards in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>4</sup> Children, especially those already vulnerable due to poverty, displacement or limited access to services, suffer the most. They face both immediate harm and long-term physical, psychological and educational consequences.

Seventy-four per cent of countries in the region are highly exposed to floods, droughts and storms.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, although several countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are classified as high or upper-middle income, the region has the highest level of inequality in the world, with more than 33 million people living in multidimensional poverty.<sup>6</sup> Fragile systems, political and socioeconomic instability and limited humanitarian access – including insecurity, administrative impediments and logistical constraints – continue to undermine governments' ability to anticipate, absorb and adapt to shocks.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, sustained preparedness support remains critical for strengthening resilience and enabling effective anticipatory action.

In 2025, the region continued to experience multiple high-impact hazards that strained national and local emergency response systems, including heavy seasonal rains and floods that displaced thousands in the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Peru and more recently in Mexico;<sup>8</sup> wildfires and heatwaves that forced evacuations and damaged housing in Argentina, Bolivia and Chile;<sup>9,10</sup> and low river levels and drought in Brazil and Guatemala that disproportionately affected indigenous communities.<sup>11</sup>

In October 2025, Hurricane Melissa, a catastrophic Category 5 storm, struck Jamaica before sweeping across Cuba and the Dominican Republic, causing widespread flooding, infrastructure destruction and severe disruption of essential services.<sup>12</sup> The storm affected more than 8 million people, 3.7 million of whom require humanitarian assistance, including 984,000 children. This event, among others, underscores the region's acute vulnerability to high-impact hazards and the urgent need to further enhance emergency preparedness, anticipatory action and resilience measures across all sectors.

## HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

UNICEF's humanitarian strategy in Latin America and the Caribbean is based on a risk-informed approach that links preparedness, anticipatory action and emergency response to protect children before, during and after crises. In 2026, UNICEF will enhance emergency preparedness by integrating disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and shock-responsive systems, improving governance and coordination, advancing disaster risk financing, enhancing data management and addressing bottlenecks in supplies, logistics and workforce capacity.

Anticipatory action is embedded within emergency preparedness. Using pre-agreed frameworks and early action protocols in hazard-prone countries including Cuba, Guatemala and Honduras, among others, UNICEF will implement forecasting and early-warning systems to initiate timely action, pre-position supplies, rapidly deploy services and use pre-committed financing to enable timely, child-centred measures. In 2026, UNICEF will further enhance anticipatory action in the region and promote innovative disaster risk financing tools, including contingency funds and parametric insurance instruments such as the Today & Tomorrow Initiative,<sup>13</sup> to reinforce rapid early action.

UNICEF will also continue to respond to residual humanitarian needs and emerging crises. This includes early-recovery support to Hurricane Melissa-affected areas in Jamaica, Cuba and the Dominican Republic; and continued operations to respond to the ongoing drought in Brazil's Amazon basin (with targeted assistance to approximately 20,000 people), an energy crisis in Cuba, food and water insecurity in Guatemala and Honduras, an oil-spill response in Ecuador and flood response in Mexico. Emergency response modalities will combine rapid needs assessments, surge deployments, pre-positioned stocks, multipurpose cash transfers and the delivery of emergency WASH, nutrition, education and child protection services.

At the regional level, UNICEF will strengthen technical guidance, logistics and sectoral coordination and enhance partnerships and knowledge management to reinforce anticipatory action and build long-term preparedness and resilience across the region. However, anticipatory financing remains chronically underfunded; sustained, flexible funding is therefore critical to shift from reactive response to more proactive preparedness.<sup>14</sup>

This appeal is aligned with the revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, which are based on global standards and norms for humanitarian action.

## STORY FROM THE FIELD



Following Hurricane Melissa, which made landfall in October 2025, UNICEF supported the deployment of three portable water-treatment plants to eastern provinces to restore safe water to affected communities. The plants, powered by independent generators, can produce potable water for 21,000 people per day; one installation in Río Cauto serves around 8,000 people.

UNICEF also delivered 3,372 family hygiene kits, 14 large water tanks benefiting more than 26,000 people and 4,400 ten-litre containers for household use. The operation demonstrates the value of pre-positioning, rapid coordination with authorities and community engagement to protect child health and prevent waterborne disease.

**[Read more about this story here](#)**

In October 2025, in the wake of Hurricane Melissa, a UNICEF staff member shares information with the community of Cauto Cristo, in Granma, Cuba, where a water-treatment plant was installed.

## FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2026

For 2026, UNICEF's Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office seeks \$53.8 million<sup>15</sup> to strengthen disaster preparedness and emergency response across the region. Flexible financial resources will reinforce shock-responsive systems and ensure that protection of children and adolescents remains central to all humanitarian action while bridging humanitarian and development programming. Funds will be allocated according to identified gaps and evidence-based needs across the region.

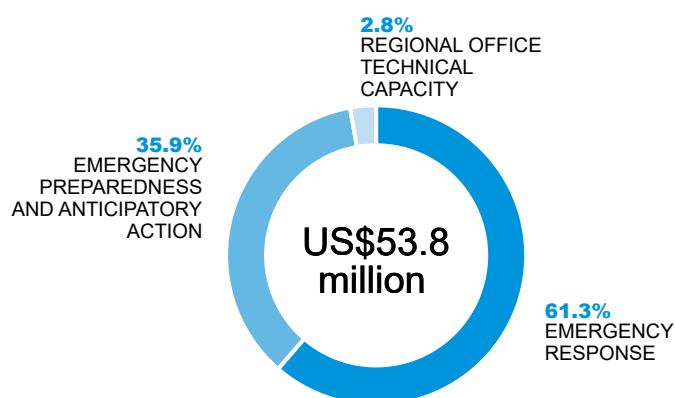
The increase in funding ask in 2026 compared with 2025 reflects the rising frequency and intensity of climate-related disasters and the scale of needs generated by Hurricane Melissa.

Emergency preparedness efforts will strengthen regional and country-level capacity to manage increasingly complex crises, with tailored support for the most vulnerable countries to develop robust preparedness plans, build staff and partner skills, secure contingency supplies and reinforce shock-responsive systems.

Emergency response funding will enable UNICEF to provide timely assistance in sudden-onset and protracted emergencies across the region, especially where no standalone appeals or inter-agency appeal exist.

Funding for Regional Office technical capacity will enhance technical capacity, oversight, supply and logistics, partnerships, sectoral coordination and knowledge management and learning.

Such funding is essential to implement priority preparedness, build sustained readiness and enable rapid action when hazards materialize. Without it, UNICEF's capacity to prepare for and swiftly respond to sudden-onset disasters will be severely constrained.



Sector	2026 requirements (US\$) <sup>16</sup>
Emergency Preparedness and Anticipatory Action	19,300,000 <sup>17</sup>
Emergency response	33,000,000 <sup>18</sup>
Regional Office Technical Capacity	1,500,000 <sup>19</sup>
<b>Total</b>	<b>53,800,000</b>

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## ENDNOTES

1. Hurricane Melissa also impacted Haiti, causing significant damage. However, Haiti is not covered under this appeal. The impact of Hurricane Melissa in Haiti is addressed through Haiti's standalone Humanitarian Action for Children appeal, which also covers other concurrent crises in that country. This regional appeal focuses on disaster preparedness in the 36 countries and territories in Latin America and the Caribbean where UNICEF operates, excluding Colombia, Haiti and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which have separate standalone appeals. The countries and territories included in this appeal are: Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Suriname, Belize, Jamaica, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Montserrat and the Turks and Caicos Islands.
2. The total funding requirement includes projected funding needs for responding to emerging situations not covered by other country-specific appeals (Colombia, Haiti and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) or multi-country appeals (Children on the move and those affected by armed violence).
3. The estimate of people affected by disasters is based on the average annual number of people affected by emergencies in Latin America and the Caribbean between 2014 and 2025, using EM-DAT (the International Disaster Database). It covers the 36 countries and territories where UNICEF operates, excluding Colombia, Haiti and Venezuela, which have standalone Humanitarian Action for Children appeals.
4. According to Public EM-DAT platform from 2000 to 2025 (May to May), 211 million people have been affected by natural hazards in Latin America and the Caribbean, which makes an average of some 8.4 million people affected every year for the last 25 years, including around 2.3 million children affected per year.
5. Seventy-four per cent of Latin American and Caribbean countries are highly exposed to extreme weather events, affecting food security. Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), UNICEF and World Food Programme, Latin America and the Caribbean: Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2024 – Building resilience to climate variability and extremes for food security and nutrition, FAO, IFAD, PAHO, UNICEF and WFP, Santiago, 2025, available at <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd3877en>.
6. Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023: Unstacking global poverty – Data for high impact action, UNDP and OPHI, 2023.
7. ACAPS, Humanitarian Access Overview: Spotlight on bureaucratic and administrative impediments – July 2025, Jul 2025, available at [www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data\\_Product/Main\\_media/20250120\\_ACAPS\\_Humanitarian\\_Access\\_Overview\\_July\\_2025.pdf](http://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20250120_ACAPS_Humanitarian_Access_Overview_July_2025.pdf); and OCHA, Humanitarian access, web information, undated, accessed 15 Nov 2025, available at [www.unocha.org/humanitarian-access](http://www.unocha.org/humanitarian-access).
8. OCHA, Mexico: Floods – Flash Update no. 2, as of 21 October 2025, 21 October 2025, available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/mexico/mexico-floods-flash-update-no-2-21-october-2025>.
9. Reuters, "Drought fuels 'catastrophic' wildfire in rural Argentina", video news report, 20 Feb 2025, available at [www.reuters.com/video/watch/idOVFZMH5J5](http://www.reuters.com/video/watch/idOVFZMH5J5).
10. Associated Press and Reuters coverage of Chile wildfires (evacuations and infrastructure damage), February 2025. See, for example: Ecurra, Marta, "Chile issues evacuation alerts as wildfires rage in the country's south," Associated Press, 9 Feb 2025, available at <https://apnews.com/article/68155d884f1d706a4e2e1501f6e687b9>.
11. Scientific monitoring of Amazon basin river-levels and drought (2024–2025): AGU / Geophysical Research Letters article and NASA Earth Observatory imagery and analysis on low river levels and drought stress, 2025. Example sources: D. Moreira et al., "Widespread and Exceptional Reduction in River Water Levels Across the Amazon Basin During the 2023 Extreme Drought Revealed by Satellite Altimetry and SWOT", Geophysical Research Letters, vol. 52, no. 11, 16 June 2025, available at <https://doi.org/10.1029/2025GL116180>.
12. Please refer to endnote 1.
13. The UNICEF's Today and Tomorrow Initiative is the world's first integrated climate and disaster risk finance mechanism specifically targeted and designed to be effective for children and young people. See: Plichta, Michèle and Lydia Poole, The State of Pre-arranged Financing for Disasters 2024, Centre for Disaster Protection. London, 2024, available at [//static1.squarespace.com/static/61542ee0a87a3947bc17b3a/t/67371edca337e76cf65a06c6/1731665636457/PAF\\_flagship\\_2\\_10-11-24\\_M.pdf](http://static1.squarespace.com/static/61542ee0a87a3947bc17b3a/t/67371edca337e76cf65a06c6/1731665636457/PAF_flagship_2_10-11-24_M.pdf).
14. Plichta, Michèle and Lydia Poole, The State of Pre-Arranged Financing for Disasters 2024, 2024.
15. The total funding ask includes projected funding needs for responding to emerging situations not covered by other country or multi-country Humanitarian Action for Children appeals, including emergency funds required to respond to the residual humanitarian needs due to Hurricane Melissa, which made landfall in the Caribbean in October 2025. The Regional Office requirement is focused on strengthening the Regional Office capacity in guidance, supervision and oversight, including through critical staff and resources, supply and logistic capacities, building regional and subregional partnerships, knowledge management as well as learning and development capacity related to emergency preparedness and response.
16. Includes projected funding needs for responding to emerging situations not covered by other country or multi-country Humanitarian Action for Children appeals. The projected funding requirement for 2026 has increased compared to 2025, because at the time of the preparation of this appeal there were mid-scale emergency response plans ongoing in the region for situations outside of UNICEF's other Humanitarian Action for Children appeals. This regional appeal will be revisited if new crises emerge during 2026 that would surpass the projected funding levels.
17. Emergency preparedness funding will focus on regional-level support and support to country office preparedness for the whole Latin America and Caribbean region. This includes risk analysis, scenario building, anticipatory action, standing capacity and early response, including boosting UNICEF country offices in the region in areas such as human resources staff and surge, supply and logistics and implementing partners capacities.
18. The total 2026 funding requirement for emergency response includes projected needs for emerging situations not covered by other country or multi-country Humanitarian Action for Children appeals. The total funding need for the response to Hurricane Melissa (excluding Haiti, which is covered under a separate appeal) is \$46,127,420. Half of this (\$23,063,710) was required before the end of 2025 and the remaining \$23,063,710 is sought for 2026. It is also composed of country-level residual needs amounting to \$17,709,243.58, broken down as follows: Honduras (\$6,709,243.58), Cuba (\$4,000,000), Guatemala (\$5,300,000), Brazil (\$500,000), Ecuador (\$50,000), El Salvador (\$650,000), and Mexico (\$500,000). Adding that to the \$23,063,710 that is required to support Hurricane Melissa response activities in Cuba, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic, brings the total to \$40,772,953. While the total projected requirement amounts to approximately \$40 million, the 2026 funding ask is \$33 million. This difference reflects an anticipated carry-forward of about \$7 million linked to the Hurricane Melissa response, which began in late 2025. As a result, part of the funds received in 2025 will be implemented during early 2026, reducing the amount of new resources required for the year. This regional appeal will be revised if new crises emerge in 2026 that exceed projected funding levels.
19. The Regional Office capacity funding ask focuses on strengthening the Regional Office capacity in guidance, supervision and oversight, including through critical staff and resources, supply and logistic capacities, building regional and subregional partnerships, sectoral coordination, knowledge management as well as learning and development capacity related to emergency preparedness and response.