Key highlights

- Following the most devastating earthquake that hit Croatia in 140 years causing 8 human victims, the Government declared a state of disaster for Sisak-Moslavina County and parts of Zagreb and Karlovac Counties.
- UNICEF urgently delivered 13.5 tons of emergency supplies and approximately 29,000 packages of hygiene products delivered to 24 public and health institutions - schools, kindergartens, general hospital and health centres in the area of Petrinja, Sisak and Glina.
- The Government also opened a state treasury account for helping those affected by the earthquakes and appealed to citizens to be cautious given the resurgence of fake donation accounts.
- The Ministry responsible for families and social policy deployed an additional social workforce to the affected areas and allocated funding to provide one-off cash benefits. More than 10,000 requests have been submitted so far.
- The state-owned company Pleter took over food preparation for the victims of the earthquake which had so far been organised by private volunteer hospitality workers.
- The UNICEF Country Office in Croatia and the Slovenia National Committee for UNICEF launched emergency fundraising appeals and raised USD 291,000 funds within Slovenia and Croatia for both the immediate and the longer-term emergency response.

Situation overview & Humanitarian needs

Two strong earthquakes measuring 5.2 and 6.3 on the Richter scale hit the area of Petrinja town in Sisak-Moslavina Country on December 28 and 29 2020, causing numerous casualties and widespread material damage. The maximum felt intensity was estimated at VIII (Heavily damaging) to IX (Destructive) on the European macroseismic scale, and it is the worst earthquake in Croatia in the last 140 years. More than 30 people were saved from the rubble, 8 persons lost their life (including a 13-year-old girl) while 36 injured persons were hospitalized.

Since the initial strong earthquakes, the Petrinja area has been hit by more than 700 aftershocks, magnitudes ranging from 1.2 to 4.8 on the Richter scale, increasing fear and anxiety of citizens and contributing to further damage of houses and buildings. Earthquakes and aftershocks also affected the neighbouring counties, including the City of Zagreb, Zapresic and Karlovac.

Situation in numbers

8 (including 1 child)
# of human casualties

36
# of people injured

70,000
# of people directly affected

13,750
# of children directly affected

After the initial assessment made on 31 December in cooperation with national partners, UNICEF would need $1,230,000 for immediate assistance in the first 6 months of 2021.
There has been widespread damage to buildings and infrastructure. So far, authorities have received more than 46,000 reports of damaged buildings. The initial assessment confirmed that there are at least 1,500 families near Sisak, Petrinja and Glina who have lost their homes as a result of the earthquake. 9 school buildings are unusable due to the severe damage, 12 are temporarily unusable and could be reconstructed, 12 are usable with certain parts of buildings still posing a risk and 23 school buildings are usable without limitations. Healthcare facilities in Petrinja and Glina are unsalvageable. To date, 2,045 people have been internally displaced and registered temporary addresses outside Sisak-Moslavina County. According to the last available data 487 persons, including 29 children (aged 1-15), are housed in collective shelters at 6 locations; two sites are quarantined due to the COVID-19 outbreak. For families who could not leave destroyed or damaged homes due to livestock farming, so far, 507 housing containers have been secured by both Government and private donations, while the demand for such mobile homes is estimated at 1,500. Due to interrupted electricity and water supply, in the first 2 weeks, food was distributed through volunteers’ initiatives, and now the state-owned company Pleter took over food preparation for the victims of the earthquake.

There is a concern that the current turmoil may lead to a surge of COVID-19 cases, with thousands of displaced and hundreds sheltered in government-organized accommodation or with families in crowded conditions. The earthquake and constant aftershocks caused strong emotional and physiological reactions for both, children and adults directly affected as well as a large population of people living in the surrounding areas. There is an overwhelming feeling of exhaustion and acute stress reactions due to which most children and adults report insomnia, anxiety, and fear.

**Critical needs of children**

The Ministry of Education (MoE) presented the plan for the **continuation of the school year** with COVID-19 prevention measures, i.e., children in primary school (grades 1 to 4) and children in the last year of secondary school will be attending face-to-face lessons that started on 18 January. All other grades will attend school online. The start of the second school term has been postponed to 1 February for 17 schools in Sisak-Moslavnina County (in total 4,796 students) by at least two weeks, giving schools, teachers, and students more time to regroup in the aftermath of the disaster. 1,921 students and pupils and 211 employees in the school system left the earthquake-affected areas and are accommodated in other parts of the Republic of Croatia.

Both adults (as teachers and parents) and children are going through a crisis, many have survived traumatic experiences, with the dangers from earthquakes still not behind them. The emotional response from both, children and adults, is very strong and overwhelming. The fear of new earthquakes and buildings collapsing on them is constantly present. It is expected that these consequences on the mental health of children, their parents, and teachers will stay present for many months after this difficult period is over.

There is little attention to **children with disabilities** who are, together with their families, also affected by the earthquake. In Sisak-Moslavina County, there are 2,400 children, age 0 – 18 who have some disability, out of which there are 608 children enrolled in schools and only 8 in preschools.

Healthcare facilities throughout the affected region have been damaged by the earthquake. Critical needs in the health sector include the procurement of PPE, medical equipment, and supplies. Temporary structures (ship-in containers) have been installed to facilitate the continued delivery of healthcare services. There are seven paediatric primary health teams in Sisak, Petrinja and Glina, with 8,766 children age 0-18 (out of which 4,772 children age 0-7). Among the youngest group of children, there are about 10% of children with risk of developmental delays that should be timely screened by paediatricians and referred to get diagnosed to either health or/and social welfare diagnostic teams, which is not possible in current conditions. There is only one health provider (hospital in Sisak) of some types of early interventions for children with developmental delays or disabilities in the county, as well as only one NGO provider as a part of the social welfare network. Both providers have serious damages to their buildings and equipment and are currently not able to work.

The Ministry of Health has shared a list of critical needs including medical equipment and supplies for the damaged paediatric primary health care units, as well as the central hospital in Sisak. Until emergency funding is secured, the Country Office contacted corporate partners to assess their willingness to support the delivery of needed equipment and continuation of health care for children and women in the affected areas.
Humanitarian strategy and response

The GoC declared a disaster in the Sisak-Moslavina Country and parts of Zagreb Country and Karlovac Country. The overall emergency response and coordination are with the local authorities, which coordinate civil protection, relief organizations, etc. The Government of Croatia formed the Government Coordination Body, led by the Deputy Prime Minister, to coordinate the national response. The GoC launched a website [https://potresinfo.gov.hr](https://potresinfo.gov.hr) as starting reference starting point for the affected population and humanitarian actors.

The GoC released 19 million USD 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 arrived through the EU mechanism of civil protection. Significant support is provided by the Croatian Red Cross and numerous volunteers. In delivering humanitarian aid to the affected population, authorities mostly rely on the Red Cross and direct all donations either to the Red Cross or civil protection.

Besides, the Ministry responsible for families and social policy deployed an additional social workforce to affected areas and allocated funding to provide one-off cash benefits to the affected population (396 USD for single households and 555 USD for families), and more than 10,000 requests have been submitted.

UNICEF response

UNICEF’s work in Croatia is guided by the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action. On December 31, 2020, UNICEF deployed an emergency team to the affected areas to assess the situation of children and the most urgent needs in affected areas. Based on the initial assessment, the first batch of 13.5 tons of emergency supplies have been delivered to the country – 2.400 tarpaulins have been handed over to the Directorate for Civil Protection of the Ministry of the Interior on January 2, 2021. Tarpaulins (plastic sheet covers) are being used for the protection of damaged homes and institutions of service providers from the rain and snow.

Based on the consultations with partners and the findings from the rapid assessment, UNICEF Croatia will focus on addressing critical child protection, health, and education needs, and has identified key response sites and children’s core protection needs.

Child Protection

In close partnership with the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, social service providers in affected areas, and implementing partners, UNICEF will focus on addressing the urgent, life-sustaining needs of children and their families, with a special focus on the most vulnerable. UNICEF signed a partnership agreement with Society for Psychological Assistance (SPA), organized induction training for 28 experts who are organized in 3 mobile teams and deployed to affected areas in Petrinja, Glina, Sisak, and surrounding villages to provide mental health and psychosocial support to foster care families and other families at heightened risk that have been beneficiaries of the social welfare system (e.g., due to parental support services, GBV, poverty, etc.). Mobile teams are closely working with centres for social welfare (Glina, Petrinja and Sisak) and Sisak Family Center Branch in Sisak-Moslavina County to ensure outreach to isolated villages, early identification and timely referral to other protection services and interventions. Mobile teams also started to collect key information and data on the needs of children to inform further programmatic interventions through KoBo online tool. Since the earthquake affected the social workforce as well, psychological first aid was provided to 55 critical child protection professionals in centers for social welfare Glina and Petrinja. Above mentioned outreach teams will act as additional support to deployed mobile teams from the line ministry that oversee the administrative workload linked with processing approvals for cash benefits.

The earthquake severely damaged the building of centre for social welfare in Glina, leaving the social workforce without the necessary work equipment. To ensure the continuation of their 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 provided to children and professionals working in kindergartens, as well as foster caregivers in affected areas.

Finally, to ensure that children accommodated in collective shelters have access to child-friendly spaces, UNICEF is collaborating with the Red Cross to strengthen their capacities for organizing child-friendly services bearing in mind the COVID-19 preventive measures. For this purpose, a Memorandum of Understanding with the Croatian Red Cross
is signed, and a valuable donation has been agreed with a corporative donor for equipping up to seven child-friendly spaces. Due to outbreaks of COVID-19, the decision on the establishment of child/adolescent-friendly spaces needs to be carefully reviewed with appropriate epidemiological and prevention measures in place to minimize the risk of further spread of the virus.

Education

In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, UNICEF will provide support to enable the continuation of education and full inclusion of children with disabilities and Roma children in the school system again, as well as the best solutions for providing psychosocial support to all students and teachers.

Sisak-Moslavina County has one of the Croatia largest Roma suburban settlement, also heavily affected by the earthquake, with many Roma children living in poverty. UNICEF will provide mentors to Roma primary-school-age children who are at risk of falling behind or not continuing/dropping out of school due to fear of earthquake in the combination of 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 their children. When needed, the learning materials for children will be provided as well.

ECD/Health

UNICEF is gathering information from various sources (health and social welfare system, service providers, and local partners) to support the re-establishment of early childhood intervention services for children with developmental delays and disabilities. In cooperation with the Ministry of Health, the most needed support for the improvement of the health services for children will be provided in the coming days.

UNICEF works on providing necessary support to the reestablishment of early intervention (EI) services for children with developmental delays and disabilities in earthquake most affected county. In cooperation with the only provider of support services for children with disabilities, the Union for children and adults with disabilities of Sisak-Moslavina County, occupational and sensory integration therapy are expected to be re-established for more than 100 youngest children. The establishment of speech therapy, as well as a mobile team (educational rehabilitators), is also planned for those children and families who are not able to attend the centre with the EI services due to fear or some health-related issues.

In cooperation with the MoH, UNICEF is providing necessary medical equipment for the functioning of the heavy damaged primary health care centres, working in temporary container facilities.

WASH

UNICEF in partnership with Paloma distributed 29,000 hygiene packages to support emergency assistance in the area of Glina, Sisak and Petrinja in the value of USD 86,300. Hygiene items were distributed to 24 public institutions such as schools, kindergartens, general hospital and primary health centres.

Media and communications

Communication activities in support of resource mobilization, advocacy and programme response priorities includes human-interest stories from the field, UNICEF response web page and fundraising appeal web page, press releases and social media posts with regular updates on UNICEF supplies delivery and programme response with CTAs for donations, advice on mental health, youth blogs and advice for families with children. First Newsletter for private and public sector partners, including a message from UNICEF Representative, was disseminated on 11 January,
Funding

UNICEF Croatia Country Office requires US 1,230,000 to provide relief and support for the first 6 months and address the critical needs of children and adolescents affected by the earthquake in Croatia.

In three weeks since the disaster, UNICEF Croatia has raised US 173,000 from individuals and corporations, and the UNICEF National Committee in Slovenia has raised and transferred USD 118,000. Combined with USD 100,000 received from the Global Humanitarian Thematic (GHT) fund and UNICEF Croatia’s US 50,000 funds set aside in the first few days of the emergency, a total of USD 441,000 has been secured for this initial emergency response. Additional contributions-in-kind (CiK) are being negotiated for needed medical equipment, mobile team transport, and other items.

Still, the total raised to date amounts to only 36% of required resources. Additional flexible funding would enable UNICEF to contribute meaningfully to the government-coordinated response efforts in ensuring that the rights of children are upheld and to address major humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable children.

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<th>Programme areas</th>
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The next Situation Report will be issued on Wednesday, February 3, 2021.