Key highlights

- Following the most devastating earthquakes in the last 140 years resulting in eight casualties and widespread material damage, the Government declared a state of disaster for Sisak-Moslavina County and parts of Zagreb and Karlovac Counties.
- Over 3,200 inspected buildings have been assessed as unusable due to major damage, and more than 5,100 buildings were marked as temporarily unusable. It is estimated that about 15,000-20,000 people lived in those buildings.
- UNICEF urgently delivered 13.5 tons of emergency supplies and approximately 29,000 packages of hygiene products to 24 public and health institutions - schools, kindergartens, general hospitals and health centres in the area of Petrinja, Sisak and Glina.
- UNICEF in close partnership with the social welfare system and through an implementing partner deployed four mobile teams to affected areas to provide mental health and psychosocial support to foster care families and other families at heightened risk in Glina, Petrinja and Sisak.
- The UNICEF Country Office in Croatia and the Slovenia National Committee for UNICEF launched emergency fundraising appeals and raised USD 401,000 so far in 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 numerous aftershocks, magnitudes ranging from 1.2 to 4.8 on the Richter scale, increasing fear and anxiety of residents 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. During the past week, seismic activity was reduced, bringing some tranquillity to the affected population.

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 $1,361,000 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. Static engineers have inspected more than half of the facilities where damage was reported. Over 3,200 inspected buildings were assessed as unusable due to major damage, and more than 5,100 buildings were marked as temporarily unusable. It is estimated that about 15,000-20,000 thousand people lived in those buildings. Nine school buildings are unusable due to the severe damage, 12 are temporarily unusable and should 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. The Civil Protection Headquarters received a total of 2,230 requests for temporary accommodation of persons who lost their homes, of which 880 were priority requests. Approximately 60 families are currently temporarily provided with housing in state-owned apartments, approx. 130 people. So far, 928 housing containers have been secured by both Government and private donations at 6 locations, while the demand for such mobile homes is estimated at 1,500. According to the last available data 487 persons, including 29 children (aged 1-15), are currently housed in collective shelters at six locations; two sites are quarantined due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Due to the large number of residents who are accommodated in temporary shelters, accelerated vaccination against coronavirus began in the area affected by the quake. More than 2,500 people have been vaccinated so far.

The earthquake and the constant aftershocks caused strong emotional and physiological reactions in 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**

As of February 1, all elementary school pupils and high school seniors have returned to schools across Croatia. In the earthquake-stricken Sisak-Moslavina County after an initial delay, classes have begun for these students as well, thus 9,139 students have classes in school, and more than 5,000 attend classes online. 1,921 students and pupils and 211 employees in the school system left the earthquake-affected areas and are accommodated in other parts of Croatia. Approximately 20 teachers announced they would not return to the county, and that replacement staff would have to be found. The Ministry will take over the payment of accommodation costs in student dormitories for all students and pupils from the earthquake-affected areas. It also appealed to all higher education institutions in Croatia to abolish the obligation to pay tuition fees for these students.

Both adults (teachers and parents) and children are going through a crisis, many have survived traumatic experiences. The emotional response from children and adults is very strong and overwhelming. The fear of new earthquakes and buildings collapsing is still present. It is expected that the 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, 2,400 children age 0 – 18 have some disability, out of which there are 608 children enrolled in schools and only 8 in preschools. The County also had an underdeveloped network of social services for children with disabilities before the crisis.

Healthcare facilities have been damaged by the earthquake. Critical needs in the health sector include the procurement of Protective Personal Equipment (PPE), medical equipment, and other 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/social welfare diagnostic teams, which is not possible in current conditions. There is only one health provider (hospital in Sisak) that has some type of early interventions for children with developmental delays or disabilities 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 support the delivery of needed equipment and the continuation of health care for children and women in the affected areas.
Humanitarian strategy and response

The Government 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 Government also launched a website https://potresinfo.gov.hr as a starting reference point for the affected population and humanitarian actors.

Also, the Government 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 Government and the first relief arrived through the EU mechanism for 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). More than 10,000 requests have been submitted so far.

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 was 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. In cooperation with corporate partners, UNICEF also delivered some hygiene products to 24 public and health institutions - schools, kindergartens, general hospital and health centres.

Based on the consultations with partners and the findings from the rapid assessment, UNICEF focuses 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 focuses 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), and organized induction training for 28 experts who are organized in 4 mobile teams and deployed to affected areas in Petrinja, Glina, Sisak and surrounding villages to provide mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) 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, gender-based violence, 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. So far, 17 caregivers, including foster parents (13 F and 4 M) and 34 children (23 F and 11 M) benefitted from MHPSS support. Mobile teams also started to collect key information on the needs of children, through KoBo online tool, to inform further programmatic interventions.

As the earthquakes affected the social workforce too, psychological first aid was provided to 62 (55 F and 7 M) critical child protection professionals in centers for social welfare Sisak, Glina and Petrinja, as well as Children’s Home Vrbina. The outreach teams act as an additional support to deployed mobile teams from the line ministry that oversee the administrative workload linked with processing approvals for cash benefits. MHPSS support will be further expanded to other groups of children and adolescents through an integrated and community-based approach.

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 to the centres for social welfare in Glina and Petrinja.
Through UNICEF-supported parenting programmes and a phone-helpline for peer support to foster parents, 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 was signed, and a valuable donation has been agreed with a corporative donor for equipping several child-friendly spaces. Due to outbreaks of COVID-19, the decision on the establishment of child/adolescent-friendly spaces will 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 children with disabilities and Roma children and their inclusion into the school system, as well as offer solutions for providing psychosocial support to affected students and teachers.

Sisak-Moslavina County has one of Croatia’s largest Roma suburban settlements with many Roma girls and boys living in poverty. The settlement has been heavily affected by the earthquake. UNICEF is working to provide mentoring support 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 in combination with COVID-19. The mentors will also closely work with parents and teachers to create environments conducive to learning. Where necessary, learning materials for children will be provided as well. Primary schools with the largest number of children with disabilities have been identified. UNICEF is in a final stage of preparing a plan with partners to support teachers in these schools and to ensure the continued inclusion of children with disabilities into the educational process. UNICEF also plans to provide psychosocial and mental health support to affected teachers and primary and secondary school students.

**ECD/Health**

Based on information gathered from various sources (health and social welfare ministries, county service providers, and local partners), UNICEF has partnered with the Association for Persons with Disability in Sisak-Moslavina County to support the re-establishment of early childhood intervention services for children with developmental delays and disabilities. Occupational, physiotherapy and sensory integration therapies have started for the youngest children.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Health and partnership with UNICEF corporate donors, the first batch of the most needed equipment for primary paediatric health services has been ensured. Also, after meeting with the primary health centres, support was agreed for the improvement of services for pregnant and lactating women and their children. Since the regular courses for pregnancy and preparation for labour have been disrupted, UNICEF shared information on the ongoing online courses with doctors and home visiting nurses, which were prepared during the COVID-19 outbreak but are also critically important in the post-earthquake situation.

Since most of the primary health care centres were heavily damaged, UNICEF worked closely with the corporate sector to ensure temporary container facilities for the functioning of paediatric health services and home visiting nurses.

**WASH**

UNICEF in partnership with Paloma distributed 29,000 hygiene packages in the value of USD 86,300 to support emergency assistance in the area of Glina, Sisak and Petrinja. 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 include 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 for young people, youth blogs, leaflets for parents about the reaction to traumatic events and advice for families with children. CO regularly disseminates a Newsletter for private and public sector partners, with updated information regarding UNICEF’s intervention and latest stories from the field.

Press release – UNICEF’s response - Mobile teams started with psychological support to children and families
Press release – UNICEF and Paloma company provided hygienic supplies for public institutions
Web – Interview with psychologist Marina Ajdukovic - support for children and young people in crises
Web article - Human-interest story - family using UNICEF tarpaulins for temporary shelter
Social media – Human interest story – family placed in temporary shelter

Funding

UNICEF Croatia Country Office requires US 1,361,000 to provide relief and support in the first 6 months after the earthquake and to address the critical needs of children and adolescents.

In one month since the disaster, UNICEF Croatia has raised USD 230,000 from individuals and corporations, and the UNICEF National Committee in Slovenia has raised and transferred USD 171,000. Combined with USD 100,000 received from the Global Humanitarian Thematic (GHT) fund, a total of USD 501,000 has been secured for this initial emergency response.

The total raised to date amounts to 37% of required resources. Additional flexible funding would enable UNICEF to contribute meaningfully to the government-coordinated response in ensuring that the rights of girls and boys are upheld and to address major humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme areas</th>
<th>Funding needs</th>
<th>Funding identified</th>
<th>Funding gap</th>
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<td>Emergency supplies</td>
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<td><strong>Grand total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>$501.000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$860.000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several corporate partners have responded to the Emergency Appeal, mostly with Contributions-in Kind (CIK) such as hygienic products and medical equipment or services such as mobile team transport; UNICEF managed direct donations of two 12 m2 containers to the Association of Persons with Disabilities and the Petrinja City Library directly from corporate partners, and negotiated donations of 38 desktop computers to two schools (participating in our Schools for Africa programme) in Sisak-Moslavina County. More CIK donations are currently being negotiated and will support overall response in the field.

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The next Situation Report will be issued on Wednesday, February 17, 2021.