Humanitarian Action: UNICEF’s Case for Support

This Case for Support highlights UNICEF’s global support for country-level humanitarian programme delivery. Resource mobilization for the country-specific humanitarian programming and response is done through UNICEF’s Humanitarian Action for Children appeal. Each sectoral Case for Support includes specific humanitarian components.

PART 1: Overview of strategies and results

1. Situational analysis/context

From deadly disasters triggered by natural hazards to brutal conflicts and fast-spreading epidemics, children across the world are facing a wide range of complex humanitarian crises. Emergencies sparked by social and political fracture, climate change and disease are affecting children in unprecedented ways.

Today, 40 per cent of the 1.4 billion people living in countries affected by crises are under the age of 15. There are an estimated 30 million children among the estimated 60 million refugees worldwide, and children make up nearly half of the world’s displaced population. More than 230 million children live in areas impacted by conflict, and millions more face risks from natural hazards and epidemics. In the coming decades, an estimated 200 million children will be affected by climate change-related disasters each year – three times the annual average in 1990.

In emergencies children face a unique set of threats. They are at increased risk of disease, malnutrition, gender-based violence and exploitation. Children are increasingly the targets of war – violently attacked at home, at school and in the street. Tens of thousands of boys and girls are associated with armed forces and groups in conflicts in over 20 countries around the world.

2. Problem statement

Multiplying and protracted conflicts, growing environmental disasters and failed states are trapping millions of people, especially children, in semi-permanent crises.

The caseload for humanitarian action is expected to grow over the coming decades, and the operational contexts for delivering assistance are becoming more complex and diverse. Rising global prices, migration, urbanization and the ‘youth bulge’ will also pose new challenges to the humanitarian system.
Due to the scale and complexity of today’s humanitarian crises, there is a growing gap between the increasing number of people in need and resources to assist them. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance has more than doubled since 2004 to over 100 million today. Humanitarian funding requirements have reached unprecedented levels. Overall, the global humanitarian appeal rose from US$3.4 billion in 2004 to US$19.1 billion in 2015. For UNICEF, appeal requirements have more than tripled since 2006, from about US$800 million to US$3.4 billion at the end of July 2015.

The humanitarian system is being stretched to its limits, and it is clear that the needs are outstripping UNICEF’s ability to pay for them. As an example, the global humanitarian appeal for 2015 was the least funded of any previous appeal at the half-year mark.

3. **Proposed solutions**

**Breaking down the silos between humanitarian and development programming and financing.** Short-term investments in response to humanitarian crises must be designed to have a long-term effect. Development and humanitarian programming must be more closely aligned in order to better manage the risks of humanitarian crises, address vulnerability and build resilience.

In the same instance, humanitarian financing is largely focused on delivering short-term responses and often does not have the necessary flexibility to meet the long-term needs. Therefore, multi-year financing with flexible funding will result in a more predictable humanitarian system that can help break the cycle for those caught up in semi-permanent crises.

**Investing in early preparedness.** Evaluations of responses to recent crises have also recommended increased investment in humanitarian preparedness at country levels. A recent study undertaken by the Department for International Development (United Kingdom), UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) to determine the financial ‘returns’ and time savings from specific preparedness efforts in three high-risk countries (Chad, Madagascar and Pakistan) – including emergency supply pre-positioning, infrastructure development, staff training and contingency arrangements for contracting externally – has shown that taking early action is efficient and cost-effective and that investment in preparedness activities has facilitated swifter, more efficient responses, implying more lives saved. A more balanced allocation of limited funds, between preparedness and response, in high-risk countries would increase effectiveness and yield greater benefits to affected populations.

4. **UNICEF’s role**

Humanitarian action is a core part of UNICEF’s work and encompasses interventions focused on effective preparedness, response and early recovery in order to save lives and protect child rights, as defined in the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs).
Support to country-level humanitarian action is provided by UNICEF’s seven regional offices and headquarters divisions. Together these offices provide the core infrastructure to support field preparedness and response, systematically reduce vulnerability to disasters and conflicts, facilitate sector and cluster coordination and humanitarian partnerships and contribute to the strategic response plans of humanitarian country teams.

Headquarters divisions provide overall strategic direction and guidance and are responsible for strategic planning, advocacy and oversight for the entire organization. Headquarters also leads the development of UNICEF’s global response strategy, based on experiences and contributions from all parts of the organization, to inform planning, policy and guidelines for effective humanitarian action. Global support is coordinated by a dedicated team in UNICEF’s Office of Emergency Programmes, including a global security team and a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week Operations Centre (OPSCEN).

Regional offices are the first port of call to provide support to a crisis situation. Dedicated technical and cross-sector advisers provide direct programme and operational support, with increased capacity in emergency-prone regions. This includes strengthening country-level capacity, providing quality assurance and facilitating surge deployment.

Also critical to UNICEF’s emergency response is its supply function, which is led from Copenhagen, with supply hubs located in Dubai, Panama and Shanghai for the rapid mobilization and shipment of essential life-saving supplies during the first 24–72 hours of a crisis. This complements locally pre-positioned supplies. A significant milestone for UNICEF’s supply operations took place during 2014 in response to the Ebola crisis among other, with the delivery of a record-setting 6,000 tons of life-saving supplies – enough to fill more than 75 cargo jumbo jets – to the world’s worst humanitarian crises.

5. Areas of focus and expected results

In 2014, UNICEF and partners responded to 294 humanitarian situations of varying scales in 98 countries. Emergencies where UNICEF declared a Level 3 to scale up its response (Ebola, the Central African Republic, Iraq, the Philippines, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic) mobilized 89 percent of UNICEF surge staff deployments for the year – a total of 934 such deployments.

By the end of 2014, 22 million children were vaccinated against measles; 2.3 million children were treated for severe acute malnutrition; over 3 million children were supported with psychosocial services; 8.6 million children were given access to some form of education; and 18 million children were provided with safe water.

In order for UNICEF to continue delivering humanitarian results for children over the 2014–2017 period, UNICEF has committed to achieving even more effective responses to crises and strengthening humanitarian preparedness through the achievement of the following results at the global level.
RESULT 1: Timely, effective and reliable support is provided to country and regional offices to save lives and protect rights in humanitarian situations and to strengthen resilience.

**Faster scaling up of the response in major emergencies.** UNICEF will continue to increase investment in strengthening its capacity to rapidly deploy staff with specialized skills in emergency coordination, programming and operations. This includes the expansion of the Emergency Response Team to fill existing gaps in both programmatic areas and operations, reinforcement of the Immediate Response Teams and other measures that support timely and predictable deployments.

**Addressing the growing needs and increasing the predictability of funding to allow for better preparedness, planning and response.** UNICEF will continue to explore new and flexible financing sources with both traditional and non-traditional partners. Global humanitarian finance must be put on more robust footing to meet the needs of people. This will mean engaging in wider dialogue within the international humanitarian community to push new ideas, explore alternative methods of financing and offer solutions to improve the effectiveness of existing financing mechanisms. Investments in strengthening UNICEF’s flexible financial modalities, such as its Emergency Programme Fund used by country offices in the first days of a response, have proven critical to UNICEF’s ability to rapidly respond. Additionally, UNICEF will further review its internal financing systems for opportunities to grow its humanitarian resources.

**A focus on preparedness at all levels of the organization.** In order to fulfill UNICEF’s commitments to children in emergencies, it must have in place emergency preparedness measures before a crisis begins. UNICEF is working to support investments in emergency preparedness at all levels of the organization, so that response can be quick and effective. At the country level, UNICEF is working on integrating preparedness into development planning and implementation.

**Better integration of humanitarian and development programming.** As a humanitarian and development agency, UNICEF is best placed to invest more systematically in risk-informed humanitarian and development programmes in order to forge stronger links between the two.

**Strengthened systems and tools to monitor and report on results that are better connected to overall organizational performance management.** In line with the Transformative Agenda and UNICEF’s Strengthening Humanitarian Action initiative and within a context of increased accountability to the affected populations, UNICEF continues to support the implementation of humanitarian performance monitoring systems. These monitoring systems support UNICEF country humanitarian programmes in strengthening performance-based management, identifying barriers and bottlenecks to meeting targets, supporting humanitarian advocacy and supporting resource mobilization. To date, this has resulted in clearer, more regular situation reports that include monthly updates on results achieved against targets as well as annual reporting that includes aggregate global figures.

**Targets:**
- Percentage and number of humanitarian situations in which country offices receive effective operational, programmatic, financial or policy support from regional office and headquarters (Baseline: 60%; Target: 80%).
- Percentage of major humanitarian situations in which UNICEF reported monthly on progress against a small number of CCC-aligned results indicators (Baseline: 81%; Target: 100%).

RESULT 2: The safety and security of UNICEF staff and safe delivery of UNICEF programmes to meet the CCCs and the Strategic Plan.

Ensuring the safety and security of UNICEF staff and their dependents and of organizational assets is critical to the achievement of UNICEF’s mandate, particularly during humanitarian crises. The Office of UNICEF Security Coordinator, in collaboration with other UNICEF sections, and through their inter-agency links and networks, ensures that issues pertaining to children and women in emergency situations are highlighted. They work to support a consistent UNICEF response in emergencies based on the commitments laid out in the CCCs. The team works closely with the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) -- and the United Nations Security Management System as a whole. The team also provides direct assistance to field offices from headquarters and through field assessments and missions.

Facilitating rapid security and/or humanitarian response through 24/7 emergency support to UNICEF staff globally. UNICEF’s Operations Centre (OPSCEN) provides 24/7 global information and communication services to support UNICEF staff around the world. The centre functions as a first point of contact for staff in the event of a humanitarian emergency or security incident providing immediate assistance, information, referral and follow-up. OPSCEN tracks and analyses emergency-related events and communicates them through daily briefs, emergency updates and e-mail/phone/SMS alerts to support rapid and effective decision making throughout the organization. In collaboration with global geographic information system partners, OPSCEN compiles and produces maps displaying humanitarian and security-related information. During large-scale emergencies, OPSCEN scales up as a crisis management hub to support information sharing, decision making and coordination across the organization. OPSCEN maintains close working relations across the United Nations system, in particular with United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNDSS, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, WFP, United Nations Operational Satellite Applications Programme and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Targets:
- Percentage of country offices meeting minimum operating security standards (Baseline: 91%; Target: 100%).
- Percentage of country offices meeting business continuity plan requirements (Baseline: 99%; Target: 100%).

RESULT 3: UNICEF effectively leads humanitarian clusters under its responsibility and contributes to sectoral coordination in humanitarian action.
Effective leadership of humanitarian clusters under UNICEF’s leadership and sectoral coordination in humanitarian action. UNICEF promotes effective action across the humanitarian system, leading humanitarian clusters and Areas of Responsibility (AoR) for which UNICEF is responsible—WASH, Education, Gender-based Violence AoR and Child Protection AoR—and it supports inclusive global coordination mechanisms. Each cluster or AoR is supported by a standing Rapid Response Team (RRT) managed out of Geneva. Mutually accountable cluster partnerships are in part achieved through active participation in global and national clusters at a strategic level by partners and are also encouraged by partners bringing resources to the table. RRTs are for the most part provided by cluster partners, and they also occupy key roles in the global clusters. UNICEF has invested in inter-cluster coordination and management to support efficiencies, synergies, good practices and innovation that will stem from and benefit all clusters and AoRs that UNICEF supports.

Support to country-level cluster coordination and capacity building of global and national actors is critical to an effective collective humanitarian response. UNICEF continues to ensure that effective support is provided to national humanitarian clusters and AoRs through appropriate guidance and tools to strengthen assessment, information management, and coordination capacity before, during and after emergencies. UNICEF also promotes the transition of humanitarian coordination mechanisms to nationally-led structures through capacity development and the strengthening of information management systems to enable effective planning, response and monitoring.

Targets:
- For globally-led or co-led clusters and AoRs, percentage of country-level clusters and AoRs that have a designated country coordinator (Baseline: 50%; Target: 100%).
- For newly activated clusters or AoRs, percentage of country coordinator positions filled within 30 days of cluster activation (Baseline: 90%; Target: 100%).

All of the above reforms will require sufficient investment in UNICEF’s humanitarian infrastructure (staff and systems): leadership, staff development, planning, programming, communications, resource mobilization and other processes that enhance the organization’s humanitarian action.

6. Key assumptions, risks and mitigation measures

Key assumptions:
- No significant pathogen emerges that rapidly spreads and threatens child health.
- Humanitarian crises do not overwhelm the organization’s capacity to respond. Human resources for emergency response are adequate to deliver on UNICEF’s CCCs.
- Commitment to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the Transformative Agenda remains strong by all partners and Member States and does not impact the organization’s capacity to support inter-agency initiatives such as the cluster approach.
- Governments and non-state entities remain open to dialogue, particularly with regard to measures to protect children from violence and those affected by armed conflict.
Risks:

- There is a risk that the number and scale of humanitarian emergencies may exceed the organization’s capacity to provide support.
- Lack of funding and insufficient core resources for UNICEF to undertake humanitarian action threaten the sustainability of the suggested actions and reforms.
- The response paradigm of UNICEF (as well as of the IASC and other humanitarian partners) is not always appropriate to emerging middle-income countries or in countries where there is reduced humanitarian space and/or challenging governance issues. This remains a risk.

**PART 2: Resource requirements 2015–2017**

**Funding gap - cost of UNICEF’s global support to humanitarian action (in US$)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results</th>
<th>1 year (based on 2014)</th>
<th>3 year projected (2015–2017)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Result 1: Timely, effective humanitarian response</td>
<td>$44,503,518</td>
<td>$133,510,554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result 2: Global security</td>
<td>$3,376,979</td>
<td>$10,130,937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result 3: Global cluster leadership</td>
<td>$11,310,870</td>
<td>$33,932,610</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$59,191,367</strong></td>
<td><strong>$177,574,101</strong></td>
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**PART 3: Background and additional information**


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1 Available at [www.unicef.org/appeals/](http://www.unicef.org/appeals/).