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Humanitarian Action for Children

unicef 

West and Central Africa

West and Central Africa is home to 11 per cent of the world's children but accounts for 31 per cent of global under-five deaths, 20 per cent of global stunting cases and 33 per cent of the world's out-of-school children.¹ Conflicts in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, northwest and southwest Cameroon, the Lake Chad basin and the central Sahel, which includes northern Burkina Faso, central Mali and western Niger, have led to mass displacement, both internally and across borders. More than 7.5 million people are displaced, including over 4 million children who have been uprooted from their homes.² Across the region, 40 million people need humanitarian assistance, including 23 million children.³ As of 2019, the nutrition crisis has left more than 4.9 million children under 5 years at risk of severe acute malnutrition (SAM).⁴ Increasing insecurity and violence have led to a surge in grave violations against children and over 9,000 schools are now closed.⁵ The region is seeing recurrent disease outbreaks, including of Ebola, cholera and measles.⁶ Many countries face regular risks of natural hazards such as flooding and landslides, which are exacerbated by changing population distributions, climate change and deforestation.

Regional humanitarian strategy

The UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office humanitarian strategy focuses on three priorities: 1) improving the quality and coverage of UNICEF humanitarian response across the region by developing innovative multi-country partnerships with United Nations agencies and local, regional and international organizations to achieve results at scale; increasing the use of humanitarian cash transfers, data and new technologies; improving accountability to affected populations; and strengthening feedback mechanisms and third-party monitoring; 2) linking humanitarian action and development programming by strengthening national and local capacities and systems to build community resilience; and strengthening the preparedness of UNICEF country offices and partners; and 3) strengthening conflict prevention and social cohesion in at-risk communities through peacebuilding programmes and stronger engagement with adolescents. The Regional Office will support country offices to monitor risks, undertake conflict analysis and develop risk-informed and conflict-sensitive programmes. Country offices will receive strategic guidance, technical support and quality assurance for their programming in resilience, nutrition, health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), child protection, education, community engagement, advocacy, emergency preparedness and response. UNICEF will support integrated approaches to preventing and treating acute malnutrition by offering a continuum of nutritional care for children and mothers and emphasizing prevention, early detection and treatment of acute malnutrition through facility and community-based interventions. In child protection, UNICEF will prioritize reaching children who are associated with armed groups, victims of sexual violence, in detention and separated from their families, while monitoring grave violations and providing mental health and psychosocial support. UNICEF will coordinate the implementation of the resilient education approach by scaling up alternative learning platforms to provide quality basic education for vulnerable children and adolescents in public schools, as well as religious schools and community-based learning centres and through radio education. Teacher trainings on psychosocial support and conflict and disaster risk reduction will also be provided.

Results from 2019

As of 31 August 2019, UNICEF had US\$6.6 million available against the US\$17.25 million appeal (39 per cent funded).⁷ The funds available in 2019 supported humanitarian responses in Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. In Sierra Leone, UNICEF responded to seasonal floods by providing access to water to more than 41,000 people. The Regional Office also provided technical support for emergency responses in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Lake Chad basin. In the central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger), UNICEF supported the scale-up of the emergency response, including by establishing two new field offices in Burkina Faso. This support facilitated staff training and the establishment of sector coordination, information management systems and new partnerships. With increased capacity in the central Sahel, UNICEF reached more than 83,500 children with psychosocial support, treated 240,000 children for SAM and enabled 61,700 children to regain access to education. In anticipation of the risk that the crisis in the central Sahel could spill over into other countries, the Regional Office oversaw the scale-up of preparedness measures in at-risk countries, including Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. More than 150 UNICEF staff were trained and emergency response simulations were conducted, with Regional Office support. In response to the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Regional Office provided coordination support and technical guidance, and deployed staff focusing on WASH, social mobilization, community engagement, supplies and logistics. The Regional Office continued to coordinate the regional cholera platform, which has contributed to reducing cholera cases in recent years, and in 2019, 11 countries were declared cholera-free. UNICEF strengthened its partnership with the World Food Programme in the Sahel to improve joint targeting and programme convergence in nutrition, education, social protection and humanitarian cash transfers.

Funding requirements

UNICEF is requesting US\$18.25 million to provide technical support, emergency preparedness and response in the West and Central Africa region in 2020. This includes US\$4.35 million to support preparedness in at-risk countries and regional supply hubs. In addition, US\$8.5 million is required to support emergency response in countries without a separate humanitarian appeal and that may not benefit from inter-agency flash appeals. The funds received in 2019 were essential to UNICEF's response in the region, and continued support will be instrumental to the organization's ability to address the humanitarian needs of children and women in 2020.

Sector	2020 requirements (US\$)
Technical assistance to country offices	5,400,000
Emergency preparedness	4,350,000
Emergency response	8,500,000
Total	18,250,000

¹ United Nations Children's Fund West and Central Africa Regional Office, Regional Office Annual Report 2018, UNICEF, 2019, <www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/WCAR_2018_ROAR.pdf>, accessed 13 September 2019.

² Calculated based on data on internally displaced persons and refugees aggregated from reports of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

³ Calculated using the 2019 humanitarian response plans for Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, the Niger and Nigeria; and the 2019 Humanitarian Action for Children appeals for Mauritania and the Republic of Congo.

⁴ Calculated using the latest national nutrition surveys, 2019.

⁵ Data consolidated as of June 2019 from the ministries of education of Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria and the Republic of Congo.

⁶ Cholera Platform, 'Regional Updates (Cholera Bulletin)', <<http://plateformecholera.info/index.php/cholera-in-wca/regional-updates>>, accessed 13 September 2019; and World Health Organization (WHO) situation reports on the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, <www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/ebola/drc-2019/situation-reports>, accessed 13 September 2019.

⁷ Available funds include US\$3.57 million received against the 2019 appeal and US\$3.07 million carried forward from the previous year.

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