



Humanitarian Action for Children

unicef 

West and Central Africa

West and Central Africa is home to only 11 per cent of the global population of children, but accounts for 30 per cent of global child deaths, 30 per cent of global child malnutrition, 42 per cent of global maternal deaths and 36 per cent of the world's out-of-school children.¹ Conflicts in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Lake Chad basin, northwest and southwest Cameroon and the triangle of northern Burkina Faso, central Mali and western Niger have led to mass displacement, both internally and across borders. More than 9.7 million people are displaced across the region, including more than 5.7 million children who have been uprooted from their homes.² The nutrition crisis in West and Central Africa has left more than 6.3 million children under 5 years at risk of severe acute malnutrition (SAM).³ In 2018, more than 14.8 million children needed protection from violence,⁴ and over 3,300 schools have closed down due to insecurity.⁵ The region is seeing a spike in disease outbreaks, including Ebola, cholera and measles. Other countries face regular risks of natural hazards such as flooding and landslides, which are exacerbated by changing population distributions, climate change and deforestation.

Humanitarian strategy

UNICEF's West and Central Africa Regional Office coordinates and supports humanitarian action in the region to achieve key results for children in immunization, protection from violence, civil registration, stunting prevention, access to education, improved learning outcomes, ending open defecation and prevention of child marriage. The regional programme focuses on emergency preparedness and response and strengthening the linkage between humanitarian action and development programming, so that humanitarian response feeds into the recovery process. Country offices receive multi-sectoral technical support in the areas of nutrition, health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), child protection, education, HIV and AIDS, communication for development and emergency coordination and operations. Support covers responses to epidemics, including Ebola, cholera, meningitis and measles. Faced with an ongoing nutrition crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and the Sahel, UNICEF is prioritizing the integrated management of acute malnutrition, and focusing on life-saving treatment of SAM and the prevention of malnutrition through counselling on infant and young child feeding and the promotion of essential family practices. SAM treatment and prevention is part of a combined approach that includes health, WASH, psychosocial support and education. Regionally, UNICEF prioritizes reaching children associated with armed groups and forces, children in detention, and/or children who are unaccompanied and separated from their families, while providing mental health and psychosocial support. Monitoring of grave violations is a priority for crisis-affected children. With education increasingly under attack, the regional programme supports the implementation of the Safe Schools Strategy and radio education for children who cannot access school, as well as protective learning environments, coordination (including through the humanitarian clusters) and information management. Rapid response capacity will be maintained in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, the Niger and Nigeria to help those in immediate need of life-saving assistance. The Regional Office will continue to support the Regional Cholera Platform and implement cholera prevention activities in high-risk areas. In one of the most dangerous regions for humanitarian workers, UNICEF will work to secure humanitarian access and ensure the security of UNICEF staff and partners to deliver programming and supplies for children. Capacities for monitoring and evaluation, including third-party monitoring in hard-to-reach areas, will be strengthened. Public and policy advocacy efforts will remain focused on countries in crisis so that the rights and well-being of children in emergencies are at the centre of political agendas and adequate resources are made available.

Results from 2018

As of 31 October 2018, UNICEF received US\$5 million for its US\$13.3 million appeal (38 per cent funded).⁶ Funding needs remain significant for emergencies and preparedness activities in countries such as Cape Verde, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, which are covered under the West and Central Africa Humanitarian Action for Children appeal. In 2018, the Regional Office provided multi-sectoral support to the responses in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Lake Chad basin and Mali. Twenty-four country offices rolled out the Emergency Preparedness Platform to become better equipped when an emergency strikes. In response to severe rainfall deficits, and deficits observed in agricultural production and pasture in 2017, UNICEF, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) conducted joint advocacy to raise the alarm on the Sahel nutrition crisis and coordinated with nine country offices to reach more than 1 million children under 5 years with SAM treatment. In response to the two Ebola outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the cholera outbreak in Nigeria, UNICEF mobilized partners for a multi-country response, which included deploying staff, delivering supplies and securing urgent funding. With support from the Regional Office, Cameroon activated cluster coordination for nutrition, WASH and child protection in the northwest and southwest to reach conflict-affected children. With the support of partners, UNICEF helped to facilitate the release of 6,000 children associated with armed groups in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria. More than 500,000 children who were victims or at risk of violence accessed psychosocial support in child-friendly spaces. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, all families affected by Ebola received psychosocial support and essential household items, while 300 unaccompanied and orphaned children received appropriate care.

Funding requirements

UNICEF is requesting US\$17.3 million to provide technical and coordination support for emergency preparedness and response in the West and Central Africa region in 2019. These funds may be used to respond to emergencies in countries without a separate humanitarian appeal and that may not benefit from inter-agency flash appeals. Support is also needed to scale up preparedness and response programming in countries at risk of civil unrest. The funds received in 2018 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 2019.

Sector	2019 requirements (US\$)
Technical assistance to country offices	6,950,000
Emergency preparedness	3,100,000
Emergency response	7,200,000
Total	17,250,000

¹ United Nations Children's Fund West and Central Africa Regional Office, Regional Office Annual Report 2017, UNICEF, 2018, <www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/WCARO_2017_AR.pdf>.

² Calculated based on data aggregated from reports of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix and Direction Régionale de l'État Civil Niger, as of September 2018.

³ Calculated based on the demographic health surveys, multiple indicator cluster surveys and national nutrition surveys of 24 countries. Note that these surveys are not all conducted in the same year in every country.

⁴ Calculated based on 2018 humanitarian needs overview documents, humanitarian response plans and UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children appeals.

⁵ Aggregated from reports of ministries of education (Cameroon, the Congo and Burkina Faso) and draft humanitarian needs overview documents for 2019 (the Central African Republic, the Niger and Nigeria).

⁶ In addition to the US\$5 million received in 2018, US\$12.2 million was carried forward from the previous year for ongoing humanitarian action in countries without a specific Humanitarian Action for Children appeal.

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