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Humanitarian Action for Children

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West and Central Africa

Women and children in the West and Central Africa region remain vulnerable to a range of humanitarian crises, including lack of access to basic social services, forced displacement, drought, flooding, epidemics and acute malnutrition. Conflicts in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Lake Chad Basin have led to mass displacement, both internally and across borders. More than 8 million people across the region—more than half of whom are children—are displaced.¹ The nutrition crisis in the Sahel continues to place the most marginalized children at risk. More than 5.4 million children under 5 are suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM) across the region.² In 2017, grave violations of children's rights were documented in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and the Lake Chad Basin. Conflicts across the region are further impacting education systems and depriving more than 8 million children of schooling.³ Cholera outbreaks continue to affect the Congo River, Lake Chad, Mano River and Niger River basins, with more than 48,700 cholera cases reported in 2017.⁴ In several countries, the elections planned for 2018 may lead to civil unrest.

Regional humanitarian strategy

In 2018, UNICEF's West and Central Africa Regional Office will continue to support humanitarian action for crisis-affected children and women. This includes supporting country-level preparedness actions by monitoring risks and providing technical support for the roll-out of the new Emergency Preparedness Platform, which will be linked to annual planning to strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus. The Regional Office will also work with country offices to strengthen early recovery in humanitarian response. Country offices will receive multi-sectoral technical support in the areas of nutrition, health, HIV and AIDS, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), Communication for Development, child protection, education and emergency coordination and operations. Support will also cover the responses to cholera, meningitis, measles and other epidemics. The Regional Office will continue to apply an integrated nutrition response, focusing on the crises in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel. The priority will be the integrated management of acute malnutrition, focusing on life-saving SAM treatment, as well as malnutrition prevention through support for infant and young child feeding and the promotion of essential family practices. SAM treatment and prevention will remain part of an integrated package of interventions that includes health, WASH, education, promotion of essential family practices and psychosocial support. The Regional Office will continue to support the Regional Cholera Platform and implement cholera prevention activities in high-risk areas. Key child protection activities will be strengthened, particularly in the context of cross-border and sub-regional emergency responses such as the Lake Chad Basin crisis. The Regional Office will prioritize 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 will also be prioritized for crisis-affected children. In addition, the Regional Office will support the implementation of the Safe Schools Strategy, provide technical guidance on protective learning environments and strengthen coordination and information management for country offices and clusters. Rapid response capacity will be maintained for mapping and rapid assessment, surge staff deployments and regional supply hub stock pre-positioning to enable timely and cost-effective response. Capacities for monitoring and evaluation, including third-party monitoring in hard-to-reach areas, will be strengthened. Public advocacy efforts will remain focused on countries in crisis to ensure that the rights and well-being of children in emergencies are at the centre of the global agenda and adequate resources are made available.

Results from 2017

As of 31 October 2017, UNICEF had US\$32 million available against the US\$39.5 million appeal (81 per cent funded).⁵ In 2017, The Regional Office provided multi-sectoral support to the responses in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Lake Chad basin, as well as the Congo, Mali and Sierra Leone. Information management and preparedness were also supported across the region. With the support of the Regional Office, the Congo established an emergency team and responded to the displacement crisis in the Pool region. Technical nutrition support was provided for the crises in the Sahel and the Lake Chad basin. Cross-border coordination and information sharing were strengthened to harmonize programme interventions. The Regional Office also continued to support the Regional Cholera Platform, including prevention activities carried out through the Platform to prevent outbreaks in high-risk areas. These activities have contributed to reducing cholera incidence in the region over the past three years.⁶ Grave violations against children were monitored and reported in seven conflict-affected countries, which served as a critical entry point for child protection programming in the context of armed conflict. Advocacy initiatives rolled out in 2017 highlighted the plight of children in humanitarian crises.

Funding requirements

For 2018, UNICEF is requesting US\$13,250,000 to provide technical support and coordination for emergency preparedness and response in the West and Central Africa region. 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 volatile countries at risk of civil unrest. The funds received in 2017 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 2018.

Sector	2018 requirements (US\$)
Technical assistance to country offices	6,950,000
Emergency preparedness	2,100,000
Emergency response	4,200,000
Total	13,250,000

¹ 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 the DREC Niger from August, September and October 2017.

² 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.

³ Calculated based on 2017 humanitarian needs overview documents, humanitarian response plans and UNICEF situation reports from January through September 2017.

⁴ Regional Cholera Platform, 'Cholera Outbreaks in Central and West Africa: 2017 Regional Update - Week 42', 10 November 2017, available at: <<http://plateformecholera.info/index.php/departments/wca-cholera-update/2017-bulletins/371-cholera-outbreaks-in-central-and-west-africa-2017-regional-update-week-42>>, accessed 27 November 2017.

⁵ Available funds include US\$22.2 million raised against the current appeal and US\$3.8 million carried forward from the previous year.

⁶ See Cholera Platform, available at: <www.plateformecholera.info>, accessed 7 December 2017.

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