



Humanitarian Action for Children

unicef 

East Asia and the Pacific

East Asia and the Pacific, which is home to 70 per cent of people affected by disasters globally, is one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world.¹ Apart from the current risks associated with the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the region is exposed to risks related to climate change, rapid urbanization, migration and population growth, which are aggravating existing vulnerabilities. Between January and August 2019, 44 major emergency events² were recorded in the region, 80 per cent of which were the result of extreme weather events that developed into floods/landslides, storms, epidemics, outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases (e.g., measles, polio, etc.), vector-borne diseases, drought and snowstorms. Indonesia, the Pacific Islands, the Philippines and Timor-Leste are situated on the Pacific Ring of Fire, which is at high risk of earthquakes and tsunamis. In addition, protracted crises due to unresolved conflict and ethnic strife in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines continue to affect the lives of children and their families. In 2018, over 9.3 million people were internally displaced in East Asia, including 236,000 people internally displaced due to conflict in Myanmar and the Philippines.³ This accounts for one third of new displacements globally.⁴ Crises in the region also generate the highest number of internally displaced persons associated with natural hazards, and this trend is increasing with the adverse impacts of climate change. There are also growing climate risks, including floods, drought and extreme weather (e.g., hurricanes and cyclones, torrential rains, storm surges, sand or dust storms, heatwaves, wildfires and cold spells). The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific reports that these climate-induced events are having "threat multiplying" impacts, not just on economies and populations, but also on national security concerns, conflict, political tensions, the displacement of people across borders and internally, and the transboundary sharing of scarce natural resources.⁵

On 6 April 2020, the severe Tropical Cyclone Harold slashed through Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu, leaving destruction in its wake. The cyclone compounded the burden on these countries, which were already struggling to cope with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The cyclone was most destructive in Vanuatu, where it made landfall as a Category 5 cyclone. In the island of Pentecost, 90 per cent of houses, public infrastructure and gardens were destroyed, including food crops, clean water sources and health facilities. In the three most affected provinces of Vanuatu, 61 per cent of health facilities suffered moderate or severe structural damage, 39 per cent had damaged medical equipment and 35 per cent lost some or all of their medical supplies. Across all four countries, more than 433,000 people were affected by the cyclone. Some 110,300 of them, including 47,500 children⁶ are in the worst affected areas and require immediate humanitarian assistance, particularly access to clean drinking water, health and nutrition services, protection and continuity of education for children. Preventive measures taken by Pacific governments against the COVID-19 pandemic, including travel restrictions and limited freight and transport opportunities, have added an additional layer of complexity to the response.

Regional humanitarian strategy

The UNICEF humanitarian strategy in East Asia and the Pacific focuses on seven priorities: 1) strengthening capacities at the country and regional levels to effectively respond to emergencies, including through country office preparedness and response planning, training and simulations, and the expansion of the regional standby emergency deployment roster; 2) providing technical expertise to national actors to provide child-sensitive and inclusive humanitarian action; 3) strengthening risk-informed programming for shocks and stresses by bridging humanitarian action and development programmes, including expanding inclusive shock-responsive social protection activities, promoting the use of cash transfers and safe school initiatives, integrating risk reduction strategies into development plans, and tackling the underlying threat of climate change; 4) strengthening the integration of cross-sectoral programmes to address the needs of children with disabilities, adolescents, women and girls, including preventing gender-based violence in humanitarian settings and upholding UNICEF's commitments on accountability to affected populations and the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in emergencies; 5) fostering regional partnerships with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Children in a Changing Climate Coalition to ensure effective disaster risk reduction in humanitarian action for children; 6) working towards securing humanitarian access for children in hard-to-reach and/or remote areas; and 7) strengthening knowledge management to support greater predictability and accountability in humanitarian settings and expand humanitarian innovations. Given that regional and national capacities for disaster risk management are improving, albeit at very different paces among countries, UNICEF is increasingly shifting its emphasis from direct response to building national and local government capacities for prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. In most cases, however, UNICEF still plans to maintain its internal readiness to respond to emergencies where and when needed.

In response to Tropical Cyclone Harold, UNICEF, in coordination with the Pacific Humanitarian Country Team, is providing immediate life-saving response and early recovery and rehabilitation assistance to affected children and women. The response interventions focus on six areas: 1) routine health services and immunization; 2) nutrition services, including screening and treatment of children with severe acute malnutrition, infant and young child feeding counselling and building the capacities of service providers; 3) water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services, including the repair and rehabilitation of WASH facilities (e.g., at schools), sanitation campaigns and technical support to governments to develop sustainable WASH systems; 4) the establishment of temporary learning centres, the repair of damaged schools and the provision of teaching and learning materials and training for teachers on providing psychosocial support to children; 5) child protection services, including increasing child protection capacities within government systems, providing psychosocial support for children and mobilizing and training youth volunteers on psychosocial support; and 6) humanitarian cash grant support for affected families. UNICEF aims to reach over 80,000 people with these interventions in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

Results from 2020

As of 30 April 2020, UNICEF had US\$2.2 million⁷ available against the initial US\$8.7 million appeal. UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO) supported the emergency responses to the Marawi earthquake in the Philippines, the drought and saltwater intrusion in Viet Nam and the measles outbreak in the Pacific through regional surge deployment, technical assistance and the provision of financial support. UNICEF response interventions reached more than 10,000 children with community-based child-friendly spaces. Nearly 6,300 children received teaching and learning materials and approximately 5,500 families were provided with WASH supplies and access to clean drinking water in the Philippines and Viet Nam. Contextualized operational guidelines on disability and mental health and psychosocial support have been developed for country offices in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific and capacity building of country offices was enhanced through in-country trainings and webinars. In-country missions were organized in Indonesia, Mongolia and the Philippines to support and strengthen emergency preparedness capacities. In addition, EAPRO provided initial financial support to the Pacific for the response to Cyclone Harold to meet immediate life-saving needs during the critical first weeks.

In response to Tropical Cyclone Harold, UNICEF Pacific mobilized staff on the ground to conduct rapid assessments in the affected islands and immediately delivered life-saving supplies, including tents to set up temporary clinics, essential medicines, medical devices, water bladders, water containers, dignity kits and tarpaulins that had been pre-positioned in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, as well as in Brisbane. These supplies reached at least 20,200 people in affected areas in the first two weeks. Technical support was provided to help the governments in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu develop response plans on WASH, education, health, nutrition and child protection. UNICEF is providing leadership in the coordination of Pacific regional clusters in WASH, education, protection and nutrition. Additionally, UNICEF supported the repair of damaged water systems and cold chain equipment in the most affected areas. UNICEF is working with partners to promote infant and young child feeding and breastfeeding and implement community-based nutrition interventions. UNICEF is also supporting the Ministry of Education in Vanuatu. Together with partners, UNICEF is establishing child-friendly spaces and providing psychosocial support to children and families affected by the cyclone.

Funding requirements

The regional funding requirement has increased to US\$16.48 million to meet the humanitarian needs of children affected by emergencies in East Asia and the Pacific, including the additional needs resulting from Tropical Cyclone Harold. This funding will allow UNICEF to support responses to small- and medium-scale emergencies in the region, including Tropical Cyclone Harold; build strategic partnerships for humanitarian action; respond to anticipated humanitarian needs generated by slow- and sudden-onset disasters, including public health emergencies; strengthen national and sub-national emergency preparedness and response capacities; build the emergency preparedness and response capacities of UNICEF staff; advance risk-informed programming; and strengthen the linkages between humanitarian and longer-term programme interventions.

Sector	Original 2020 requirement (US\$)	Revised 2020 requirement (US\$)	Funds available (US\$)	Funding gap (US\$)	Funding gap (%)
Emergency response support (exclude Tropical Cyclone Harold response)	7,776,000	7,776,000	1,747,682	6,028,318	78
Emergency response for Tropical Cyclone Harold in the Pacific		7,730,000	1,439,930	6,290,070	81
Emergency preparedness/disaster reduction	635,600	635,600	374,647	260,953	41
Regional Office technical capacity	340,200	340,200	100,000	240,200	71
Total	8,751,800	16,481,800	3,662,259	12,819,541	78

¹ Australian Red Cross, '2 Billion People Affected by Natural Disasters in Past 10 Years', Australian Red Cross, 2018, <www.redcross.org.au/news-and-media/news/world-disasters-report-2018>, accessed 11 September 2019.

² Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, International Disaster Database, 2019.

³ Consolidated figures from UNICEF humanitarian situation reports, 2019.

⁴ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 'Global Report on Internal Displacement', IDMC, May 2019, <www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2019/>, accessed 19 September 2019.

⁵ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 'Asia-Pacific Climate Week', Bangkok, Thailand, 2-6 September 2019, <www.regionalclimateweeks.org>, accessed 19 September 2019. Final report forthcoming.

⁶ United Nations Children's Fund, 'Pacific Islands Tropical Cyclone Harold Humanitarian Situation Report No. 3', UNICEF, 7 May 2020.

⁷ Out of the US\$ 2.2 million received against the 2020 humanitarian appeal for East Asia and the Pacific, US\$816,330 was carried forward from the 2019 humanitarian appeal.

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