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Humanitarian Action for Children

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Europe and Central Asia

Children in the Europe and Central Asia region are exposed to natural hazards, such as earthquakes, landslides, floods and, increasingly, vaccine-preventable disease. There are also ongoing risks of civil unrest, new, renewed or expanded armed conflict, and mixed migration. Much of the region is located in active seismic zones with frequent earthquakes of moderate intensity. The five main cities of Central Asia—Ashgabat, Almaty, Bishkek, Dushanbe and Tashkent—are each at risk of between 175,000 and 500,000 casualties in the event of a magnitude 9.0 earthquake.¹ In southeastern Europe, the Danube River Basin is vulnerable to severe flooding, and the frequency of flooding is expected to increase in the future.² Between January and June 2018, more than 41,000 children and adults were infected with measles across Europe.³ The absence of a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan and regular exchanges of fire in the Nagorno-Karabakh area continue to affect the South Caucasus sub-region.⁴ Youth marginalization and the recruitment of young people by extremist organizations pose continuing concerns.⁵ Children living in the numerous unrecognized political territories in the region face greater hardship due to lack of United Nations membership, which restricts access to multilateral treaties and seriously limits international cooperation.⁶

Regional humanitarian strategy

Working closely with United Nations partners, non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental actors, UNICEF's Europe and Central Asia Regional Office will continue to serve as a regional catalyst for child-centred humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction. In 2019, the new partnership with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies will strengthen country capacities for rapid emergency response. UNICEF will prioritize areas of Central Asia facing high earthquake risk, where the Regional Office will establish a standing capacity to provide early action response for up to 6,000 children in four countries. Governments will receive technical support to develop and implement pro-child humanitarian policies and practices and scale up rapid response capacities for new emergencies. The principle of schools and communities as 'zones of peace' will be promoted across the region. Some 290,000 children will benefit from technical support and advocacy for targeted disaster risk reduction for schools that addresses the negative impacts of climate change on children. UNICEF will strengthen humanitarian and development programming in nine priority countries by supporting preparedness and strengthening capacities for trend analysis and risk monitoring. New country programmes will be designed using risk-informed approaches. Sector-level training and skills building for child-focused emergency response will focus on developing child protection skills to respond to different types of emergencies (e.g., displacement, refugees, mixed migrations, etc.) and strengthening competencies for sector/cluster coordination, needs-based assessments and accountability to affected populations. Localization and ownership transfer will be advanced through targeted capacity building in the areas of emergency child protection, education, health and nutrition. UNICEF will strengthen capacities to expand vaccination coverage and prevent disease outbreaks by training frontline staff and improving monitoring of immunization rates, vaccine availability and vaccination campaigns. Where possible, capacity building will be facilitated by multi-agency cooperation for optimal impact and efficiency. UNICEF will strengthen the case for cash-based response, undertaking feasibility assessments in two new countries (Georgia and Kosovo),⁷ building on the work accomplished in four countries in 2018. These interventions will complement existing national social protection systems, where possible. With five country offices in Europe and Central Asia already working or set to expand programming on peacebuilding and social cohesion, UNICEF will scale up regional programming on adolescent skills and competencies to build resilience. Countries will also be supported to strengthen capacities for community engagement and accountability to affected populations. All programming will be gender- and disability-informed and promote youth participation. The prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and gender-based violence will be central to UNICEF's regional support strategy.

Results from 2018

As of 31 October 2018, UNICEF received US\$250,000 for its US\$3.1 million appeal (8 per cent funded).⁸ Due to lack of funding, technical support, capacity building and advocacy for closing the gap in earthquake-resilient schools in Central Asia and the South Caucasus, were not undertaken as planned. With existing funding, all 21 country offices were supported to complete emergency preparedness and response plans, the regional staff surge mechanism was updated and key staff from the Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey country offices benefited from global emergency supply and logistics training. Despite limited funding, UNICEF was able to restock some emergency pre-positioned supplies in Kyrgyzstan. Cash-in-emergencies feasibility assessments were undertaken in Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. National disaster management counterparts from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan were oriented on child-risk-informed emergency response. A regional partnership was developed with National Red Crescent Societies for preparedness and early action in new emergencies. However, lack of funds constrained UNICEF's ability to adequately scale up these programmes.

Funding requirements

UNICEF is requesting US\$2.7 million to protect children in the Europe and Central Asia region from the immediate impact of emergencies; strengthen resilience; promote child-centred disaster preparedness and response with national authorities; and foster social cohesion and peacebuilding at community levels. Regional funding may also be used to respond to situations in the region not included in a separate chapter of *Humanitarian Action for Children 2019* and that may not benefit from inter-agency flash appeals for small- or medium-scale emergencies.

Sector	2019 requirements (US\$)
Emergency preparedness	1,171,000
Early action for new emergencies	198,000
Support to safe schools in Central Asia and the South Caucasus	874,000
National capacity strengthening for child-focused, risk-informed disaster response	146,000
Peacebuilding and social cohesion	324,000
Total	2,713,000

¹ Thurman, Michael, 'Natural Disaster Risks in Central Asia: A synthesis', UNDP, 11 April 2011; Applied Technology Council, Geohazards International, Government of Kazakhstan Ministry of Emergency Situations and United States Geological Survey, 'Lessons for Central Asia from Armenia and Sakhalin: Strategies for urban earthquake risk management for the Central Asian republics', ATC, GHI, EMER and USGS, 1997; and the INFORM risk classification (2019) in which Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan score above 9.0 (out of 10) for earthquake risk.

² More than 137,000 people were displaced in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia during the 2014 flood emergency. ReliefWeb, 2014 and Commission for the Protection of the Danube River Secretariat, 2018.

³ Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) on the WHO European Region, August 2018.

⁴ Carnegie Moscow Centre, February 2018.

⁵ Norwegian Institute for International Affairs and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2016.

⁶ Choi, Jieun, 'The Costs of Not Being Recognized as a Country: The case of Kosovo', Brookings, 16 November 2017.

⁷ All references to Kosovo in this appeal should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

⁸ In addition to the US\$250,000 received in 2018, US\$148,215 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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