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Humanitarian Action for Children

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Europe and Central Asia

Children in the Central Asia and South Caucasus sub-regions are vulnerable to poorly mitigated natural hazards, under-resourced social services, and weak governance and protection, despite the middle-income status of these countries. More than 80 per cent of children in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan live in areas of high or very high seismic risk,¹ and 87 per cent of schools in Kyrgyzstan assessed for seismic risk are unsafe.² The unfinished child health agenda includes tackling stunting rates as high as 30 per cent and related risks. Child, infant and neonatal mortality rates are two to three times higher in the Central Asia and South Caucasus sub-regions than in Eastern Europe. In some countries, declines in maternal mortality rates have stagnated. In Central Asia, migrant remittances have decreased by 50 per cent over the past three years.³ Youth marginalization and the risk of youth recruitment by extremist organizations represent key concerns.⁴ The absence of a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the regular exchange of fire in the Nagorno-Karabakh region continue to affect the South Caucasus sub-region.⁵ Accessible emergency supplies are needed to improve preparedness for small-scale emergencies in Central Asia, as are improved capacities and policies for cash-based transfers.

Regional humanitarian strategy

UNICEF's Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia will undertake programming to address the humanitarian-development nexus, with an emphasis on national ownership, system strengthening and partnerships for results. Emergency preparedness will be strengthened through emergency skills development for staff and national counterparts in programmatic and operational areas, as well as feasibility assessment and the identification of opportunities for cash-based responses in emergencies. With children facing heightened vulnerability, particularly in the Central Asia and South Caucasus sub-regions, the Regional Office will continue to engage with governments and inter-governmental and civil society partners on disaster risk reduction. The objectives will be to make schools safer, particularly in areas facing a higher-risk of natural disasters, to expand the evidence base on the impact of climate change on children, and to adopt corresponding risk-informed development standards. A regional pass-through funding mechanism will be applied for eight countries in the region towards this end. Health pandemic and outbreak prevention will be reinforced through cascade training to strengthen the skills of national health and nutrition partners in seven higher-risk countries, focusing on nutrition and infant and young child feeding, preventive health care and pediatric, neonatal, obstetric and gynecological care, in line with national and UNICEF standards. The Regional Office will complement this through the provision of technical assistance to governments and partners to develop and implement comprehensive health communications and behaviour change plans. Conflict-sensitive programming will include the development of child protection preparedness plans, drawing on experience and lessons learned during the current refugee and migration response. Dedicated regional technical support will be provided to strengthen peacebuilding and civic engagement initiatives for children and adolescents in multi-ethnic and politically sensitive contexts. Specific gender quality markers will be applied in all areas.

Results from 2017

As of 31 October 2017, UNICEF had US\$780,726 available against the US\$4.5 million appeal (17 per cent funded).⁶ The Regional Office established partnerships for child-centered disaster risk reduction and preparedness with the Kazakhstan-based regional centre, including an inventory of existing emergency pre-positioning in the Central Asia and South Caucasus sub-regions. Partner emergency stocks were replenished in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia and Uzbekistan. National partners received training on cluster standards in Armenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Regional Office provided facilitation support for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)-led multi-country emergency simulation in the South Caucasus sub-region and technical support to update the Inter-Agency Standing Committee contingency plan for the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Cash-in-emergencies feasibility assessments were conducted in Armenia and Tajikistan. The Regional Office conducted technical support missions for all 21 country offices to introduce the new emergency preparedness procedure; an emergency training event for all 21 country focal points; and three country-level workshops on UNICEF emergency standards. The first regional nutrition-in-emergencies workshop in five years was held in Tbilisi with key government, United Nations and non-governmental organization partners and emphasized high stunting rates and pockets of localized global acute malnutrition, especially in Central Asia.

Funding requirements

UNICEF is requesting US\$3.1 million in 2018 to strengthen the quality and reach of technical support for emergency preparedness, including pandemic and outbreak prevention and conflict-sensitive programming. The Regional Office will target children in conditions of higher risk, especially in the South Caucasus and Central Asia sub-regions, with emphasis on national and sub-national system strengthening. Regional funding may also be used to respond to situations elsewhere in the region that are not included in a separate chapter of *Humanitarian Action for Children 2018* and may not benefit from inter-agency flash appeals to respond to small- or medium-sized emergencies.

Sector	2018 requirements (US\$)
Emergency preparedness and response	2,300,400
Health pandemic and outbreak prevention	302,400
Conflict-sensitive programming	507,600
Total	3,110,400

¹ United Nations Development Programme, *Natural Disaster Risks in Central Asia: A Synthesis*, UNDP, 2011.

² United Nations Children's Fund/European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office, *Kyrgyzstan School Safety Assessment Report*, 2015.

³ Centre for Eastern Studies, 'Central Asia: The crisis of the migration model and its potential impact on the EU', 25 April 2017.

⁴ Norwegian Institute for International Affairs and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2016.

⁵ International Crisis Group, *Nagorno-Karabakh's Gathering War Clouds*, Report No. 244, 1 June 2017.

⁶ Available funds include US\$465,000 raised against the current appeal and US\$315,726 carried forward from the previous year.

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