



# Humanitarian Action for Children

unicef 

## South Asia

South Asia is highly prone to human-caused disasters and natural hazards, including droughts and floods, which have become regular occurrences across the region. More than 750 million people in South Asia are currently at risk of multiple climate-related emergencies.<sup>1</sup> In 2018, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan faced large-scale disasters, with Afghanistan and Pakistan experiencing one of the worst droughts in decades. In Afghanistan alone, more than 3 million people are affected by drought, and that number is expected to rise to 10 million in 2019.<sup>2</sup> Drought conditions will exacerbate the already high levels of child malnutrition and spur the spread of water-borne diseases, while also threatening livelihoods, increasing displacements and forcing affected people to adopt negative coping strategies, such as withdrawal of children from school and forced early marriage. In 2018, Kerala, India, experienced one of the worst floods in decades, with more than 23 million people affected, including 7 million children, and over 200,000 people displaced. The floods have destroyed lives and livelihoods, damaging more than 100,000 homes, and will require over US\$4 billion for recovery and to build back better.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Cyclone Titli affected more than 7 million people around the Bay of Bengal, particularly Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and some parts of Bangladesh.<sup>4</sup> Conflict-induced internal and cross-border displacements into Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan have left over 11 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. Some 9.3 million people are affected by the protracted conflict in Afghanistan and 2 million internally displaced people in Pakistan require assistance.<sup>5</sup> In 2018, the number Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh grew to nearly 1 million, with many refugees continuing to live in overcrowded camps, and no concrete progress made to date on the voluntary and sustainable return of Rohingya to Myanmar.<sup>6</sup> A total of 1.3 million refugees and people living in host communities, including 703,000 children, are at risk due to disease outbreaks, flooding, abuse and exploitation, and require urgent humanitarian assistance.<sup>7</sup> While Nepal continued to recover from the aftermath of the devastating 2015 earthquake, the country experienced a number of localized floods and landslides in 2018, which displaced thousands of people, damaged schools and disrupted learning activities.<sup>8</sup>

### Regional humanitarian strategy

Given the high-risk context and the several ongoing humanitarian crises in the region, UNICEF's Regional Office for South Asia will continue to provide technical support to country offices and partners to fulfil the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, particularly in the areas of nutrition, health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), education and child protection. The regional humanitarian strategy focuses on strengthening humanitarian capacities to ensure timely, effective and quality responses to emergencies. This will be accomplished by enhancing inter-agency coordination and building skill-sets at the regional, national and sub-national levels to address the needs of women, children and adolescents during emergencies. UNICEF will continue to invest in regional and national capacities for emergency preparedness by facilitating regular regional risk analysis, supporting the development of robust country contingency plans and conducting simulations and training to strengthen national and sub-national partner capacities for child-centred disaster risk reduction, emergency preparedness and response, emergency cash transfers, humanitarian performance monitoring, community engagement and accountability to affected populations. In the context of repeated shocks and risks such as droughts and floods, UNICEF will support country offices to develop and improve social safety nets and shock-responsive social protection mechanisms to respond to these emergencies and build community resilience. UNICEF will also invest in evidence generation and knowledge management to better apply best practices and lessons learned throughout the region. In 2019, UNICEF will continue to strengthen the technical capacities of South Asia Regional Rapid Response Mechanism (RRRM) roster members and members of country-specific rosters to increase deployable capacities during the first phase of response. UNICEF will also monitor developing situations and roll out the Emergency Preparedness Platform, focusing on strengthening sub-national capacities for both short- and medium-term preparedness actions. Funding allocated to the region will be strategically utilized to enhance UNICEF's readiness for timely and quality response through preparedness interventions, immediate response to emergencies in countries without a humanitarian appeal and technical support. Given the trans-boundary effects of hazards such as floods, droughts, cyclones and conflict, the Regional Office will continue to monitor these risks and provide cross-border analysis and coordination in collaboration with regional partners. UNICEF will also continue to work with the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation Disaster Management Centre and other stakeholders to promote the participation of children and the application of the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action in national disaster risk reduction and response policies and strategies.

### Results from 2018

As of 31 October 2018, UNICEF received US\$4.6 million for its US\$7.7 million appeal (60 per cent funded).<sup>9</sup> The Regional Office for South Asia supported country offices and government partners with regional capacity development, preparedness initiatives and emergency response interventions. The Regional Office also supported country offices during rapid-onset emergencies, such as the initial response to flooding in Kerala, helping to reach 868,000 children with psychosocial support, 500,000 people with access to safe water and 580,000 people with access to WASH facilities. As part of that response, UNICEF rolled out the community engagement platform for building back better and promoting accountability to affected populations during the recovery process. The new global Emergency Preparedness Platform was launched in all eight countries in the

region, including in 13 states in India, and more than 100 UNICEF staff were trained on the platform and the new emergency preparedness procedures. The roll out of the Emergency Preparedness Platform helped UNICEF India quickly mobilize its staff and partners to respond to the flooding in Kerala. In Afghanistan, the platform helped the Country Office to prioritize and prepare for the drought before it became a full-blown crisis. The South Asia RRRM was established to enhance regional response capacity and ensure that UNICEF country offices are able to deliver timely and quality emergency responses. During the initial roll-out of the RRRM, 35 UNICEF staff members from all eight country offices and representing various disciplines (out of the 65 recruited) were trained. The RRRM has enhanced country and regional office standby capacities, with some members already having been deployed to the drought response in Afghanistan and the flood response in Kerala. In addition, multi-sectoral regional emergency surge support covering overall coordination was extended to Bangladesh for the Rohingya crisis response in Cox's Bazar. Emergency preparedness and response training was provided to staff and partners in Bhutan and Nepal, including through an inter-agency contingency planning initiative in Bhutan. The simulation exercise in Bhutan increased awareness on earthquakes and helped the Government review its standard operating procedures. The Regional Office also provided technical support on security risk mitigation and management to UNICEF staff and assets across the region in an effort to better prepare country offices to respond to political crises.

## Funding requirements

The Regional Office for South Asia requires US\$7.5 million for regional- and country-level humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction. US\$6.2 million is needed to support country offices to respond to localized but sudden-onset emergencies, such as earthquakes, displacements and disease epidemics. Based on the Emergency Preparedness Platform risk analysis, the likelihood of such emergencies is very high in the region, but the needs have not been captured in country-specific international appeals. The requested funds include a provision for immediate assistance in any of these countries and will be used to strengthen regional and country emergency preparedness systems. This includes rolling out the second phase of the Emergency Preparedness Platform at sub-national levels, rolling out rapid response mechanisms at the country level, conducting emergency preparedness and response training and developing long-term agreements and memoranda of understanding with partners. Funds will also be used for regional technical support and to develop regional partnerships focused on scaling up child-centred disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response, risk analysis and knowledge management in South Asia.

Sector	2019 requirements (US\$)
Emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction	500,000
Emergency response support	6,250,000
Regional technical support	750,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,500,000</b>

<sup>1</sup> Amarnath, G., et al., 'Mapping Multiple Climate-Related Hazards in South Asia', IWMI Research Report 170, IWMI, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Afghanistan: Drought response situation report no. 2', OCHA, September 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Sphere India, 'Kerala Floods Joint Detailed Needs Assessment Report', Sphere India, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, 'India Andhra Pradesh and Odisha Cyclone Titli Internal Situation Report' (internal document), 22 October 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Afghanistan: 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan', OCHA, 2017; and Inter Sector Coordination Group, 'JRP for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis: March-December 2018', December 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Inter Sector Coordination Group, 'Situation Report Rohingya Refugee Crisis', ISCG, Cox's Bazar, 15 November 2018.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, 'Bangladesh Humanitarian Situation Report No. 43 (Rohingya influx)', UNICEF, 15 November 2018.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Children's Fund Nepal, 'Bajura Landslide and Saptari Flood Situation Report' (internal document), 31 August 2018.

<sup>9</sup> In addition to the US\$4.6 million received in 2018, US\$2.1 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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