Middle East and North Africa

The Middle East and North Africa region is marked by long-term political instability in Iraq, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Sudan and Yemen. The number of internally displaced people in the region is estimated in the millions, and many women and children lack access to essential services and protection systems. Natural disasters are also a growing concern, as climate change combined with increases in rapid urbanization, resource depletion and the degradation of the environment is resulting in more frequent disasters. During the past 19 years, approximately 100 million people in the region have felt the impact of these hazards, resulting in damage of around $39 billion, further challenging the economic stability of millions of vulnerable people.

It is anticipated that economic recession will exacerbate poverty and rising youth unemployment in 2011. The acute crises in Iraq, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Sudan and Yemen, and the extremely fragile situation in Lebanon, are expected to further impact the lives of women and children.

UNICEF is requesting US$2,240,000 to continue its work pre-empting risks to the women and children of the Middle East and North Africa region. During 2011, UNICEF’s Middle East and North Africa Regional Office (MENARO) will work to strengthen both regional and in-country capacity to prevent, prepare for and respond to crises affecting children, with a focus on Djibouti, Iraq, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Sudan and Yemen, and on Tindouf, Algeria. Funding for Djibouti drought relief, which last year was included in the request for this region, is now covered in a separate Humanitarian Action for Children request.

Emergencies are becoming more complex and politicized, and require an increasingly widespread level of advocacy engagement. In 2011, the regional team will continue to strengthen ties to government partners by clarifying sensitive issues and advocating for awareness and an effective response. Standard security and coordination systems throughout the region will be ensured as well, with the goal of communicating the effects of emergencies on children and promoting UNICEF programmes designed to minimize those risks.

In anticipation of a potential humanitarian crisis in the Sudan, MENARO will continue to support country offices in preparedness planning and in building country and regional capacities for responding to the increased vulnerabilities of children and women in and outside the Sudan. If the humanitarian situation deteriorates, UNICEF will require additional funding to respond adequately.

An estimated 165,000 refugees of Sahrawi origin have been living in Algeria for the past 35 years in five camps, located in and around Tindouf (south-west Algeria). Living conditions are very difficult, and the quality of such essential social services as health and education remains insufficient, as does access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

CRITICAL ISSUES FOR CHILDREN AND WOMEN

In 2010, women and children in the Middle East and North Africa region continued to be negatively affected by the unstable political atmosphere in a number of countries and by a lack of access to essential services and protection systems. In such conflict-affected countries as Iraq, Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Sudan and Yemen, children run higher risks of displacement and disability, of use by armed forces or groups, and of life without parental care. In Tindouf, Algeria, women and children constitute nearly 80 per cent of the refugee population, and there are an estimated 6,500 children under age 1. The under-5 mortality rate is estimated at 62 per 1,000 live births. Dehydration caused by acute diarrhoeal disease remains the primary cause of illness and death, followed by respiratory infections and such vaccine-preventable diseases as measles, diphtheria and whooping cough. Acute and chronic malnutrition, the poor quality of drinking water, inadequate sanitation facilities and insufficient knowledge of basic hygiene and nutrition practices all contribute to high levels of morbidity and mortality in children and women.
UNICEF EMERGENCY FUNDING REQUIREMENTS FOR 2011

By sector | US$
---|---
Disaster prevention: Conflict monitoring | 240,000
Risk mitigation | 250,000
Capacity development to address residual risks | 500,000
Support to Sudan emergency preparedness | 400,000
Emergency response in Algeria | 850,000
Total | 2,240,000

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2010

In 2010, UNICEF estimated that US$5 million was required for humanitarian activities in the Middle East and North Africa, including US$4 million for drought relief in Djibouti. As of October 2010, a total of US$3,321,603, or 66 per cent of the goal, had been received. During the past year, the Middle East and North Africa regional office strengthened both regional and in-country capacity to prevent and prepare for deterioration of conflict-related crises in Iraq, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Sudan and Yemen as well as the increased food insecurity in Djibouti and Yemen. MENARO supported rapid and efficient response to these emergencies by bolstering emergency planning and oversight, mobilizing resources and deploying crucial technical staff. MENARO provided training on emergency response in the Sudan; supported development of early warning systems in Algeria, Lebanon and the Sudan; enhanced efforts towards disaster risk reduction by developing a regional strategy and documenting good practices in Algeria and Iran; and supported the country offices in Jordan and Lebanon with education programming for reducing risks. In addition, MENARO is in the process of developing a talent pool in disaster risk reduction for the region.

In 2010, country offices were provided with support to meet cluster lead commitments in the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), nutrition and education clusters, and the child protection sub-cluster through a cluster coordinator training held in Tunisia.

The regional office has supported the UNICEF country office in the Sudan on contingency planning, coordination and resource mobilization in view of potential humanitarian crisis following the referendum in January 2010.

UNICEF’s interventions in Tindouf, Algeria, have been focusing on immunization for several years, reaching out to 35,000 children, and education programmes have been provided for the benefit of 30,000 primary and mid-level school-age children.
HUMANITARIAN ACTION: BUILDING RESILIENCE

Within the context of disaster risk reduction, MENARO is supporting the Jordan Country Office to create and maintain safe learning environments, teach and learn disaster prevention, and build a culture of safety and resilience around school communities. UNICEF is working with the ministry of education as well as the United Nations country team and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction to increase resilience among Jordan’s most vulnerable populations against natural and human-made hazards by improving policies, coordination, planning, information and capacities. The project supports UNICEF’s commitment to sustainable disaster risk reduction, making Jordan’s social, economic and environmental development sustainable by avoiding shocks from disasters.

Specifically, this project will increase the awareness of children, teachers and parents in Jordan’s most vulnerable schools about self-preparedness and mitigation of disasters, with a particular focus on earthquakes.

UNICEF Jordan’s approach will be to partner with the Government in order to enable maximum coverage, ultimately intending to reach all public schools in the country and to help build awareness and develop capacity within the Government. Project coordination, monitoring and liaison will be undertaken with the ministry of education to advance these goals.

PLANNED HUMANITARIAN ACTION FOR 2011

In 2011, a primary goal for UNICEF in the Middle East and North Africa region is to strengthen disaster preparedness by providing country offices with technical assistance and resource mobilization. UNICEF’s Middle East and North Africa Regional Office will work to coordinate response and minimize the impact of conflict and natural disasters on women and children across the region. The regional office will continue to offer technical assistance to countries, using the inter-agency cluster coordination mechanism to meet UNICEF’s commitments as cluster lead in WASH, nutrition, education and child protection.

Another focus for 2011 is to strengthen both regional and in-country capacity to prevent, prepare for and respond to crises affecting the region’s children – particularly in Djibouti, Iraq, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Sudan and Yemen. Also critical is pre-empting and communicating highest risks to the most vulnerable children, for example, by supporting targeted interventions on increasing children’s awareness of their environment and the risks to which they are exposed by ensuring disaster risk reduction is integrated into school curricula. Where prevention is not possible or appropriate, approaches will focus on mitigating risks, including sharing best practices on school safety, such as regular drills. MENARO will adopt actions based on specific ‘Disaster Risk Reduction’ and ‘Humanitarian Training Centre’ initiatives. Its Humanitarian Support Unit will also work to increase national capacity to respond to residual risks, such as earthquakes and water scarcity.

At least two countries in the Middle East and North Africa region will benefit from an improved monitoring mechanism that tracks a series of standard indicators on the health, well-being and development of children living in a protracted conflict.

MENARO will play a key role in strengthening the capacity of both staff and partners to implement the Inter-Agency Standing Committee cluster coordination system by organizing another cluster coordinator training in the Sudan.

UNICEF will reaffirm global commitments to the Hyogo Framework to provide a cohesive and consistent approach to disaster risk reduction (DRR) in the education sector. For instance, efforts will include integrating DRR into school curricula and providing a regional vision for increased capacity for the region’s nations to anticipate and, where possible, mitigate the impact of an emergency on the citizens of their respective countries by developing DRR education programming based on hazard exposure.

**RISK MITIGATION (US$250,000)**

A priority for 2011 is to strengthen preventive planning in order to lessen the effects of such natural disasters as drought, flooding and earthquakes and the devastating consequences for communities and natural resources. MENARO will work to strengthen ties with regional governments and non-government partners by ensuring a more effective and collaborative strategy to respond quickly and effectively at the onset of crises.

**DISASTER PREVENTION: CONFLICT MONITORING (US$240,000)**

MENARO will expand its research to support advocacy, planning and decision-making for the Sudan, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Yemen.
• DRR practices will be integrated into national and regional education policies and plans. Strategies to achieve greater safety and resilience at the local level will be taught in schools and through public awareness campaigns by December 2011.

• MENARO will work with UNICEF country offices to train staff in use of the Early Warning, Early Action systems in order to comply with global requirements.

**CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT TO ADDRESS RESIDUAL RISKS (US$500,000)**

UNICEF will focus on developing the capacity of the region to absorb loss and recover from emergency situations.

- A regional training centre for humanitarian preparedness and response will be established in the region with the goal of building capacity of governmental officials in emergency preparedness and response.

- A subregional standby capacity to cover the immediate emergency supply needs of 50,000 people in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Syrian Arab Republic will be established in Jordan at a site easily accessible by road.

- MENARO will work to ensure that at least 80 per cent of UNICEF country offices in the region have active and operational emergency preparedness and response plans, in line with humanitarian reform and the revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action.

- MENARO will bolster surge support by developing an emergency roster from which to draw experienced personnel to rapidly deploy at the onset of crises.

**SUPPORT TO SUDAN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS (US$400,000)**

MENARO will continue to closely monitor the situation in the Sudan and provide technical assistance and oversight by supporting the contingency planning preparation and coordination of efforts, and by deploying technical advisers to the country.

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE IN ALGERIA (US$850,000)**

In Tindouf, Algeria, UNICEF plans for 2011 are to implement programmes in the areas of health, early childhood development and education.

- UNICEF will support mother and child health through the procurement of equipment, developing early childhood development material and providing life-skills training.

- In the area of education, UNICEF will work to ensure that younger children benefit from early childhood development opportunities, including life skills, while reinforcing primary and mid-level school attendance through provision of basic school supplies and recreational equipment.

---

2. According to local authorities.