UNICEF URGENTLY NEEDS US$ 4,186,000 TO PROTECT CHILD SOLDIERS AND PREVENT RECRUITMENT, TO PROVIDE LIFE-SAVING ASSISTANCE TO DISPLACED PERSONS, AND FOR MINE ACTION

- Estimates indicate approximately 3.5 million people are internally displaced, more than half of which are children
- Some 7,000 children remain enrolled in non-State armed groups; recruitment of minors continues
- Presence of landmines in 31 of the 32 Provinces, with an increasing number of victims
- Serious funding shortfalls for humanitarian interventions
In recent months, the number of displaced persons has increased in departments such as Chocó, Meta, Antioquia and Nariño, where more than 1,300 residents of the indigenous town of Awa were forced to leave their land. Likewise, the number of displaced persons and families moving to cities such as Bogotá, Cali, Neiva, Villavicencio, Cartagena y Popayán has increased.

Landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXOs) represent a grave and growing problem in Colombia. 31 of its 32 departments have been affected by the presence of landmines and UXOs. Over recent years, local production and use of antipersonnel mines by illegal armed groups has increased, placing children and women at highest risk. Landmines are found not only in combat zones, but with growing frequency are found in school yards, local water sources, and rural access roads. Official government statistics show a cumulative total of 4,636 victims from 1990 to February 2006. 36% percent of all reported victims are civilians, and 10.7% percent of these are children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL OF VICTIMS</th>
<th>4,636</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civil victims</td>
<td>1,675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military victims</td>
<td>2,961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women victims</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men victims</td>
<td>4,309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 18 years</td>
<td>4,135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 18 years</td>
<td>495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The recruitment of children into non-state armed entities remains a serious concern. While the National Army has complied with the law approved in 1998 that forbids forced and voluntary recruitment of people below 18 years of age, some 7,000 children remain enrolled in non-State armed entities in the country. An additional 7,000 children are estimated to be involved as collaborators and/or in urban militias (guerrillas and paramilitaries). In 2005, 526 children and adolescents were demobilized and entered the Programme of the ICBF for the attention to victims. Still, with recruitment continuing, it is unlikely that the total number of children associated with fighting forces is decreasing.

2. UNICEF RESPONSE: ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS

Humanitarian mine action
UNICEF began its humanitarian mine action programme in 1999, which has gradually been expanded to 120 municipalities with public information, education and training, and community liaison activities. This has been accomplished in conjunction with the Landmines Observatory at the office of the Vice-President and several partner NGOs. UNICEF is the United Nations System’s focal point for coordinating action against mines. In this capacity, UNICEF has led the design and implementation of a multi-year strategy for anti-mine action, which has included active and sustained participation of more than 14 actors.

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1 Source: UN Humanitarian Situation Room, June 2005.
2 Source: Observatorio de Minas Antipersonal, Programa Presidencial de Derechos Humanos y Derecho Internacional Humanitario
3 ICBF is the acronymus for Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (Colombian Institute for Family Welfare)
• As a result of joint advocacy by UNICEF, UNDP, the Office of the Governor of Antioquia and the Corporación Paz y Democracia, local governments in 63 (or 50.4%) of the 125 municipalities in the Department of Antioquia have included the issue of mines in their governmental plans for 2004-2007, and 10 departments of Cauca have developed a municipal plan on mines.

• Together with its counterparts in the departments of Antioquia and Cauca and Magdalena Medio, UNICEF has developed a training programme for local authorities and landmine survivors on the rights of victims of armed conflict. 4,700 local civil servants were trained as well as 753 children and adolescents. The programme also provides direct support to landmine survivors who are in the process of claiming the humanitarian aid established by law. A basis for supporting the physical and psychological rehabilitation of 63 survivors of mine accidents in Antioquia and Bolivar has been set up.

• 52 municipalities (departments of Antioquia, Cauca, Montes de Maria and Magdalena Medio) are part of the MRE programme developed by local counterparts and UNICEF. It includes: Municipal Needs Assessment; MRE relevant data collection (using a specifically designed methodology for this purpose); Municipal participatory action plans; and Participatory design of MRE activities at a community level, where 211 campaigns were implemented with the participation of 2,500 persons.

One of the major challenges for mine risk reduction in Colombia and a determinant factor in the risk of death and injury is the ongoing armed conflict. The continued use and presence of mines and UXOs by irregular armed forces causes at least two victims everyday. It is important to highlight that due to the present situation of conflict, no humanitarian de-mining programmes are being developed. For that reason, UNICEF and partners have given the highest priority to an accident prevention strategy based on risk reduction education methodologies in those municipalities and communities that are directly affected.

Prevention of child recruitment and protection of child soldiers
Since the second half of 2000, UNICEF has helped to establish and is actively participating in an inter-institutional committee devoted to child soldier demobilization. This committee includes governmental and non-governmental agencies and its function is to advocate for and accelerate the process of child soldier demobilization. Among the different interventions needed –beyond advocacy for the immediate release of children recruited– is preparedness in terms of sensitization, planning and organization of services to provide demobilized child soldiers with suitable opportunities for education and reintegration into society.

Prevention and protection
UNICEF supports and promotes actions aimed at preventing the recruitment of children and adolescents into armed groups (in more than 80% of cases, children join groups “voluntarily”), as well as supporting strategies for their demobilization, protection and social integration. UNICEF provides effective technical assistance in this regard to the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare, the Ombudspersons’ Office and the National Attorney’s Office, and has continued documenting and raising awareness about the situation of children in, or demobilized from, the armed groups. The initiative has reached 15 million Colombians through mass media campaigns. UNICEF also supports the Programme of Attention to Children, and Adolescents Demobilized from Armed Conflict. 526 children and adolescents joined the programme in 2005. UNICEF has also supported, in conjunction with the President’s Young Colombia programme, the innovative national project “El Golombiao: Playing for Peace”, which seeks to promote sports, education for peace and systems of social coexistence among vulnerable adolescents, while contributing to the prevention of voluntary recruitment of youths into illegal armed groups. By the end of the year the “El Golombiao” had directly benefited 19,000 youths. It is expected that by the end of 2006 the project will be functioning in 60 municipalities with the highest rate of recruitment of children and adolescents by illegal armed groups of 14 departments.

In the departments of Antioquia, Chocó, Eje Cafetero and Cundinamarca, the project “Sowers of Peace” has been implemented with the purpose of strengthening a children and youth organization that empowers children and young people and promotes their rights, beginning with building assistance networks composed of children, youth, and adult voluntary leaders. 18,000 children and adolescents have participated in this initiative, which gives a space to form a culture of solidarity and peace and encourages society to mobilize actions that recognize the rights of children and youth.

Additionally, UNICEF, with help from Diakonía de la Paz, executed the Project “Interactive City of the Rights of Children” with the objective of promoting respect for children’s rights through a formative process in which children, adolescents, adults, and state and civil institutions know and can protect the fundamental values of a culture of respect and the realization of children’s and adolescents’ rights. The project exists in 15 municipalities of the departments of Bolivar and Sucre, and has benefited so far 1,880 children and adolescents and 70 teachers.
**Assistance**

UNICEF supports the Programme of the ICBF\(^4\) for attention to victims, which has given assistance to almost 2,000 children in the past three years. Another 400 indigenous children have been assisted under the IOM Special Programme for Indigenous Children. These programmes offer demobilized children and adolescents integral assistance, which includes shelter, vocational training, formal education, preparation for social and family reintegration, healthcare, psycho-social care, and legal protection.

**Legal reforms and public policies**

Also important has been the Office’s contribution to public policy coordination and promotion as well as the incorporation of international standards into the domestic legal system. Moreover, UNICEF has been providing technical assistance for comprehensive legislative reform and the promotion of an organic law on children and adolescents. UNICEF and the Office of the Attorney General of the Nation have elaborated Guidelines for the attention of demobilized children and adolescents. These guidelines seek to help strengthen institutions so that resources can be optimally used and roles within the ICBF clarified, and to settle a child friendly procedure forbidding, for example, the military interview model to be applied to persons under 18 years of age.

**Humanitarian action for IDPs**

Since 1996, UNICEF has implemented innovative humanitarian interventions in areas severely affected by the armed conflict. The strategy is directed mainly at families that have been forcefully displaced or are at high risk of displacement, as well as at those communities that are severely affected by armed conflict. The programme includes an integral intervention that addresses crisis recovery and capacity building needs for dealing with and overcoming crises. The programme components are described below.

**Psychosocial support for children**

Children and adolescents are disproportionately affected by armed conflict and are thus the main targets for assistance. Recognizing that support for emotional and psychosocial well-being is crucial in the first phases of the response to any humanitarian crisis, in 2005 UNICEF trained 1,674 youths as recreational therapists, and provided training to 404 teachers and 45 support groups, who, under the guidance of psychologists, cared for a total of 15,768 children and 8,961 families affected by conflict in the areas of Chocó, Antioquia, and Cordoba through the methodology Return to Happiness.

**Basic health and education**

The right to health and education are among the most violated rights of children living amidst armed conflict. UNICEF’s main focus in this regard has been the revitalization of primary health care services and pre-primary and primary schools. With this integrated approach, UNICEF has supported the provision of health and education to about 33,242 children in communities in 28 municipalities seriously affected by the violence and destruction of the conflict. In 2005, activities were realized to increase education coverage, facilitate accessibility, and improve the quality of education with a rights perspective, transferring the Child Friendly Schools strategy to 21 municipalities in Chocó, Urabá, Antioquia y Córdoba. This involved 7,546 children in basic primary schools and 232 teachers and 3,773 parents who were trained to educate other parents on the strategy. Additionally, in the department of Córdoba, 3,000 education kits and 4,000 hygiene kits were distributed.

Of equal importance to regular schooling are appropriate child rearing practices and opportunities for early childhood development. UNICEF is building capacity to promote child development and basic education in the emergency context. This includes widespread social mobilization, training exercises, supplies, and building renovation, all of which ensure child-friendly schools and the improvement of the quality of the education. In addition, as increased abuse and child neglect may be the result of stress adults experience after suffering violence themselves, parents and teachers are trained on the prevention of abuse and on appropriate tools for positive change in the treatment of children within the family.

The application of primary health care programmes, including a component of nutritional education and food supplementation, makes a positive difference to the well-being of children in forcefully displaced families. The appropriateness of food supplementation provided by UNICEF is always coordinated with other agencies, and considered in light of the availability of similar support from other sources. Special attention is given to pregnant women and children under the age of five, as their status needs to be monitored. Vaccination shifts benefited more than 3,000 children. Access to public services, especially for the most vulnerable populations, is a crucial element in this approach.

**Water and environmental sanitation**

Two kinds of support are crucial in fulfilling the right to safe water and sanitation in the context of the humanitarian crisis in Colombia. Firstly, support is vital for the prompt re-establishment and improved quality control of existing

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\(^4\) ICBF is the acronymus for Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (Colombian Institute for Family Welfare)
water systems which may be damaged or those that must satisfy an increased demand. Secondly, assistance is essential in the establishment of sanitation systems in areas where people are temporarily located. A successful initiative of this nature, promoted with the Ministry of Development, has benefited municipalities with at least 12,000 inhabitants.

**Planning, monitoring, evaluation and general logistics**

UNICEF’s support to planning activities focus on assisting departmental and municipal councils in preparing and revising their plans of action in humanitarian affairs. The provision of shelter and other logistical supplies by UNICEF will be co-ordinated with other agencies and will be considered in light of the availability of similar support from other sources.

3. **APPEAL REQUIREMENTS AND RECEIPTS**

In order to support its humanitarian interventions for children and women in Colombia for 2006, UNICEF outlined a requirement of US$ 3,676,000. The tables below provide detailed information on the current funding status.
Table 1 – Year 2006. Funds required and available to UNICEF for Humanitarian Action (allocation to 2006 - US$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Response</th>
<th>Total Funds required</th>
<th>Funds available</th>
<th>Unmet requirements</th>
<th>% Unfunded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Humanitarian mine action</td>
<td>1,100,000</td>
<td>179,205</td>
<td>920,794.94</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Demobilization, reintegration and prevention of child recruitment</td>
<td>3,038,000</td>
<td>538,000</td>
<td>2,500,000</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Humanitarian Action for IDP</td>
<td>662,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>662,000</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,800,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>717,205</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,082,795</strong></td>
<td><strong>85%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 – Contributions available to UNICEF for Humanitarian Action in 2006 by Donor (US$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donor</th>
<th>Area of Response</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government of Germany</td>
<td>Humanitarian mine action</td>
<td>179,205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Thematic Fund</td>
<td>Demobilization, reintegration and prevention of child recruitment</td>
<td>538,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>717,205</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. IMPACT OF UNDER-FUNDING AND CURRENT PRIORITIES

UNICEF’s financial requirements for the conflict zones remain unmet. At the moment, key projects are on hold and remain unimplemented due to the shortage of funds. Should additional contributions fail to materialize soon, UNICEF may be forced to revise the size and scope of its planned activities.

UNICEF expresses its gratitude to the donors who have thus far contributed to its emergency interventions and hopes that other donors will soon extend their support as well. The timely provision of resources will allow UNICEF to avoid any critical disruption in the provision of essential services and supplies across its three areas of response.

The table below outlines priority requirements for utilization in May to December 2006, within the total amount of US$ 4,082,795 unfunded –selected priorities- most urgent needs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Beneficiaries / coverage</th>
<th>Amount Required (US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Humanitarian mine action</td>
<td>MRE activities expanded to 20,000 children</td>
<td>920,794.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2. Protection of child soldiers and prevention of recruitment | Prevention: Up to 80,000 vulnerable children through IEC activities  
                                                                 Protection: focus on 250 of the 600 of children demobilized in specialized centres | 2,500,000             |
| 3. Humanitarian Action for children IDPs     | Up to 5,000 children IDPs ages 0 to 12 years, 500 adolescent volunteers, as well as 50 supporting adults | 662,000               |
| **Total**                                    |                                                                                        | **4,082,795**         |

Details of the Colombia Programme can be obtained from:

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