

COLOMBIA

Immediate needs for children and women affected by the floods in Putumayo, Colombia



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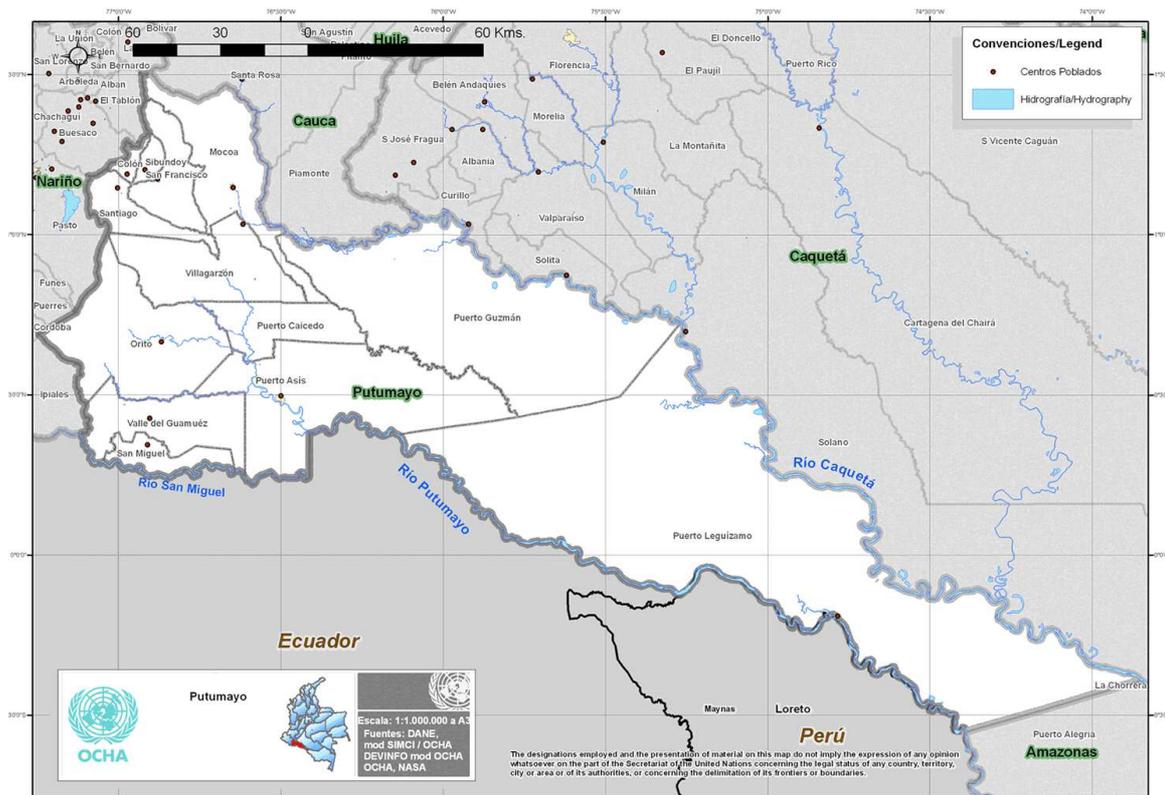
1. CRITICAL ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

Heavy rains and consequently flooding in the department of Putumayo have caused the overflow of the Putumayo, Guamez, Orito and Guineo Rivers, causing a humanitarian crisis affecting nearly 16,500 families (74,000 persons, of which 29,600 are children) in ten of the 13 municipalities.

Putumayo is a Colombian department located on the southwest of the country between the Caquetá and Putumayo rivers, bordering to the north the departments of Cauca and Caquetá and to the south the Republic of Ecuador. The security situation in the area is complex due to the presence of illegal armed groups. According to local authorities, there are several rural areas with restricted access due to a high level of landmine contamination and threats of illegal armed groups.

Authorities are providing assistance and humanitarian partners in the area have been carrying-out need assessments in various sectors to complement the national response with food security, nutrition, water, and sanitation and hygiene programs. The floods have aggravated previous vulnerabilities in the department. **The communities in these areas are frequently victims of landmine and unexploded ordnance accidents, and their children are vulnerable to child recruitment by armed groups, abuse and sexual exploitation and the occupation of schools by illegal armed groups.** Access to food and transportation was limited even before the emergency. These conditions are complicating the response by national or local authorities, who face restrictions in their operations in the affected area.

The Government and humanitarian coordination structures in place – including UNICEF, other UN organisations, NGOs, and local authorities with the support of the Colombian Red Cross, Red Unidos (United Network) – are assessing damages and needs, especially in the urban areas of Puerto Asis.



The names shown and the designations used on this map does not imply official endorsement or acceptance by UNICEF

Key concerns are the risk of disease outbreaks due to contaminated water sources and poor sanitation – there is urgent need to provide safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene messages. Due to flooding, which has the potential to move landmines to new unmarked or unknown locations (communities report 20,000 landmines in the areas affected), communities find themselves restricted in their movements and there is a need to

strengthen mine risk education in communities particularly targeting children through schools. To date schools that have not been damaged are being used as shelters for displaced families. UNICEF aims to ensure that educational services are restored and that teachers are trained to respond and adapt to the emergency appropriately so that children may continue their education and restore their well-being. Psychosocial support for children and families in the affected communities will also be provided.

UNICEF is submitting this Immediate Needs Document to request the sum of US\$2,450,000 to cover key interventions in the areas of protection, water, sanitation and hygiene, health and nutrition and education throughout the affected areas over the coming six months. The high estimated cost for intervention is due to the difficulties in access to affected populations both due to active conflict and geographical challenges: the department of Putumayo is remote with highly dispersed populations in jungle areas where access can only be achieved through costly and time consuming transport by river.

2. UNICEF'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE

In line with the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, UNICEF is already responding to the flooding in Colombia in the areas of health, nutrition and child protection. These emergency interventions will continue but additional action in the areas of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), basic education, and child protection are urgently needed. Internal resources are already being used to face the on-going crisis at this stage. UNICEF will ensure an integrated programme approach with linkages across key sectors by targeting priority areas and implementing interventions in a coordinated manner.

UNICEF aims to reach immediately 74,000 persons (out of which 29,600 children will be reached) with revised targets as further assessment findings come through. The interventions will focus on seven out of 13 municipalities in the department of Putumayo: Puerto Asis, Puerto Caicedo, San Miguel, Villa Garzon, Valle de Guamuez, Orito and Puerto Leguizamo. UNICEF will work jointly with the coordinating National System for the Prevention and Attention to Emergencies and respective line ministries, UN agencies (WFP, FAO, PAHO/WHO, UNFPA, UNHCR, OCHA), local authorities, key implementing partners (Diocese of Mocoa, Colombian Campaign to Prevent Landmines), as well as community leaders and indigenous authorities.

UNICEF's immediate actions are outlined below. As the emergency response continues in the coming weeks, additional funds will be needed to protect the lives of survivors and help children and women regain a sense of normalcy in the aftermath of the emergency.

Health and Nutrition

Issues

The provision of public health services in the affected areas is practically non-existent, or has been severely affected by the emergency and the armed conflict. The rural population has to walk long distances to reach health services in the town centre. Landmine and UXO victims and survivors face difficulties in terms of reaching a health centres with capacity to respond to their specific needs. Emergency evacuation to departmental capitals (by national military forces or through the ICRC) is often the only solution. Additionally, diarrhoea and respiratory infections are the most common cause of consultations and hospitalization of children, according to local health authorities. The area is endemic for malaria, of which 80 per cent of the cases is due to Plasmodium Vivax and 20 per cent due to Falciparum. UNICEF and local implementing partners, with some support from the National Institute for Family Welfare, have been providing community based health and nutrition services, focused especially on the indigenous population. The Government has allocated technical, logistic and financial resources to address the most urgent needs for food and shelter for the affected population, including children.

Urgent actions

- Distribute life-saving and critical relief supplies for primary health and nutrition of children and pregnant and lactating women (basic kit with essential medications especially oral rehydration salts, micronutrients and Ready to Use Therapeutic Food).
- Provide technical assistance to local authorities and community based organizations to ensure coordinated response to health and nutritional issues through health promoters and community leaders, responding to

the urgent needs of children, adolescents, pregnant and lactating women living in rural areas affected by floods, landmines and armed conflict.

- Community screening to monitor children, pregnant and lactating women's nutritional status and support to corrective actions as needed.
- Support the continuation of breastfeeding and ensure access to quality complementary food for children between 6-23 months.
- Operational and technical support for mobile units of health and nutrition in emergency (directed by the National Institute for Family Welfare).

In the coming days and weeks, UNICEF will support the establishment of community based centres for nutritional recovery and treatment of respiratory infections and diarrhoea of children, and will work with implementing partners to restore health and nutrition service delivery for children and women. UNICEF will support the training of local staff in primary health care and nutrition centres.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Issues

Water, sanitation and hygiene conditions have been seriously affected. Some water sources could be contaminated by crude oil spill on the Guaumez River. In Puerto Asis, the aqueduct in the urban area of Puerto Asis covers only the 30 per cent of the population, while the remaining 70 per cent uses cisterns. In the rural area the use of cisterns is also common and systems of rainwater collection are widely used. The municipality has 89 per cent of sewage coverage. A rapid assessment of educational institutions and houses detected a serious deterioration of sanitary units (toilets) and in the infrastructure of sewage collectors. Children drink cistern water and 10 per cent of families use untreated water. To avoid contamination it is necessary an in-depth evaluation of septic wells and cisterns. Water tanks and disposal of garbage cans are generating proliferation of insects, pollution and health threats to affected population, particularly children.

Urgent actions

- Provide supplies (filters and water storage tanks) to ensure safe water to affected families and children
- Provide equipment and technical assistance to ensure and monitor water quality.
- Rehabilitate community water supply and sanitation systems taking into account risk reduction standards
- Provide access to appropriate sanitation and hygiene facilities (focussed on schools and households with children under the age of five years and pregnant and lactating women).
- Promote good hygiene practices and hand washing with soap through community leaders, health workers, teachers and students.
- Distribute personal hygiene kits.

In collaboration with local authorities and implementing partners UNICEF will ensure access to clean water, sanitary facilities and hygiene environment in the prioritized rural areas. UNICEF will also work with communities to identify actions needed to restore and improve water and sanitation infrastructure in schools and communities.

Education

Issues

Most of the rural school infrastructure has been damaged by the flooding or is currently being used as shelters. In the urban area of Puerto Asis education has been interrupted for 1,600 students as a result of this. In Puerto Asis nine educational centers and ten boarding schools have been damaged, preventing 1,969 students to attend classes. 1,675 school children from urban areas and 1,969 from rural areas have been affected. Forty-two schools in ten municipalities of 13 are reported to be affected by the presence of landmines and unexploded ordnances. National authorities have helped communities who are sheltering in in order to continue with the education activities. However, it will be necessary to provide schools and students with adequate educational materials. To meet the physical, protection, psychosocial, developmental and cognitive needs of children affected by emergencies.

Urgent actions

- In partnership with the Departmental Office of the Secretary of Education and NGOs/Community organizations implement a Back-to-School campaign to ensure that all children return to learning in a safe environment as soon as possible.
- Support and build capacity in the Ministry of Education to carry out community mobilization to highlight the importance of children's right to education in protective learning environments and encourage communities/families to send their children back to school.
- Provide technical tools and methodologies for teachers working in humanitarian action, especially through increasing their capacities to teach on Mine Risk Education, knowledge on International Humanitarian Law in order to avoid schools being used and occupied by armed actors and provide psychosocial support.
- Provide school kits for children living in affected areas.
- Supplies for adequate temporary classrooms, including temporary WASH facilities at schools.
- Supplies for furnishing schools with school-in-a-box, including culturally-appropriate basic educational materials for students and teachers, sports kits, and library kits.
- Identifying schools as protected community infrastructures as indicated by International Humanitarian Law.

UNICEF will ensure that temporary classrooms are installed and will deliver supplies including school kits. In close collaboration with national and local authorities, UNICEF will facilitate the work with NGOs, community leaders and teachers to establish immediate priority educational interventions, with special focus on the protection of schools in the context of armed conflict. UNICEF's team has found that returning children to school is critical to supporting their psychosocial health and providing them with a sense of normalcy in the aftermath of emergencies.

Child Protection

Issues

The communities shattered by the emergency are also affected by the conflict and the conditions of vulnerability are compounded by the risk of recruitment by illegal armed group. In this context, assistance that is provided must be done with great care to ensure that those who are vulnerable (e.g. separated adolescent girls, child or women-headed households) are prioritized. The movement of landmines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) into new previously uncontaminated areas as a result of heavy rains and flooding are exacerbates the already high risk of accidents caused by antipersonnel landmines and ERW. In the last five days, there have been reported victims of landmines, one of them a 14-year old boy. In four of 13 municipalities, communities have reported the existence of at least 20,000 landmines, a significant amount of them in the areas affected by the flooding. Many children are not attending classes due to the fear of landmines. The presence and fear of explosive devices is causing confinement among the population living in the affected areas. Limited mobility and impact on socioeconomic activity is causing food shortages and difficulties for access for both international and national humanitarian assistance.

Urgent actions

- Raise communities' awareness on the importance of psychosocial support activities, and on availability and location of services.
- Mobilise pre-existing community-based protection mechanisms and support community-based safe environment for children, including adolescents, and women.
- Establish child-friendly spaces where children, including adolescents, can feel safe, play, age appropriate and develop positive coping mechanisms.
- Provide psycho-social support to affected children in order to recover from the long-term effects of post-disaster trauma.
- Distribute recreational kits and library kits.
- Prevent recruitment and use of children by non-state armed groups and strengthen monitoring and reporting mechanisms (MRM) on graves violation against children (SCR 1612).

- Identify and register unaccompanied/separated children through the use of common registration forms and provide family-based interim cares, and work with communities and parents to prevent additional family separation during forced displacement.
- Ensure access to birth registration facilities in disaster-affected areas, e.g. mobile birth registration services and birth registration at clinics, and provide timely channels for replacing lost or destroyed birth certificates and other identity documentation.
- Ensure community based and school-based Mine Risk Education interventions for children, families and communities, including through home visits.
Provide humanitarian assistance to landmine and UXO victims and survivors.

Through its implementing partners UNICEF is planning to provide psychosocial recovery activities for children in affected areas, internally displaced persons and populations confined due to the armed conflict, including those threatened by the presence of landmines. Establishing or strengthening community-based child protection networks and systems and social work services is urgent to safeguard children against the increased risk of exploitation and abuse, including sexual violence in the aftermath of the emergency.

3. ESTIMATED FUNDING REQUIREMENTS FOR PLANNED ACTION

In order to respond quickly and effectively, UNICEF is requesting US\$2,450,000 for the coming six months, to meet the most immediate needs of 74,000 persons (29,000 children), noting that these targets will be revised as further information comes through for the affected areas.

TOTAL FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

Sectors	Funds requested in US\$
Health and Nutrition	\$350,000
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	\$450,000
Education	\$500,000
Child Protection	\$1,000,000
Advocacy and programme communication	\$50,000
Programme Coordination	\$100,000
Total *	\$2,450,000

* The total includes a maximum recovery rate of 7%. The actual recovery rate on contributions will be calculated in accordance with UNICEF's Executive Board Decision 2006/7 dated 9 June 2006.

Further information on the UNICEF floods emergency programme in Colombia can be obtained from:

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