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Revised supplementary support budget proposal to ensure operations preparedness and business continuity in a protracted crisis such as a human influenza pandemic during the 2006-2007 biennium

Summary

In March 2006, the Secretary-General issued a directive to all United Nations offices and agencies on crisis planning and preparedness in response to the emergence of H5N1, the highly pathogenic strain of avian influenza that could trigger a human influenza pandemic in the near to medium term. The UNICEF response to this directive, together with a request for a supplementary support budget, was submitted to the Executive Board in September 2006 (E/ICEF/2006/AB/L.9 and Corr.1). In its decision 2006/17, the Executive Board prioritized the aspects of the preparedness plan related to staff health and safety and approved \$1 million of the proposed \$13.4 million budget for medicines and the other critical supplies that staff and their families would need in the event of an influenza pandemic. The Board postponed a decision on the balance needed for business continuity and requested the secretariat to resubmit its remaining budget for crisis and business continuity capacity, including for an influenza pandemic or other disasters, to the Executive Board, through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budget Questions, at its first regular session of 2007, and to ensure that every effort is made to coordinate and share resources with other United Nations entities.

* E/ICEF/2007/1.



The present document presents an updated budget of \$9.6 million that is required during the biennium 2006-2007 to ensure compliance with the Secretary-General's pandemic planning and preparedness guidelines and reports on related areas of interest to the Executive Board, in particular coordination with other parts of the United Nations system.

Introduction

1. The emergence of the virulent strain of avian influenza known as H5N1 has put the world on alert for a new human influenza pandemic. The United Nations has responded with a coordinated effort to meet the needs of Member States by establishing a United Nations System Influenza Coordinator (UNSIC). The United Nations system has also given renewed attention to its own organizational capacity to sustain operations and protect staff in the event of a major and protracted crisis, by ensuring that agencies have in place viable business continuity and staff protection plans. In this context, the Secretary-General issued a directive applicable to the entire United Nations system in March 2006, requesting all offices and agencies to update and test their crisis preparedness and contingency plans by June 2006. This crisis planning and preparedness exercise is designed to ensure that the agencies and offices of the United Nations system will be able to respond to programme countries' needs by maintaining their capacities to conduct critical business, keep operating systems running and protect the health and well-being of their staff. Within UNICEF, this means ensuring that the organization has the capacity to fulfil its commitments to children.

The UNICEF crisis management plan

2. In responding to the Secretary-General's directive, UNICEF undertook a major review of its existing crisis management plan. The previous headquarters crisis management plan was based on the assumption that a crisis affecting UNICEF headquarters operations would be brief and localized and would not directly affect significant numbers of staff. However, the threat of a global pandemic has changed these planning assumptions and a far more robust business continuity plan is required. In particular, significant gaps have been identified in the existing crisis management plan, the most pressing being the inadequacy of information technology (IT) redundancy, which would expose the organization to unacceptable risk if a crisis of the scale and duration expected in a human influenza pandemic were to occur.

3. The need for a more robust system for internal crisis management coordination capacity has been addressed through the creation of a unified command structure, supported by the Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS), with a global remit to support all emergencies irrespective of their location. This coordination mechanism is built around the framework of the existing crisis management team. It operates under the leadership of the Office of the Executive Director, linked to the United Nations chain of command in New York, and includes three hubs to support operations and business continuity at headquarters and at field locations; support programme responses and continuity of essential programmes; and ensure staff health and safety. This unified command structure provides the organization the flexibility to respond to localized emergencies in programme countries as well as large-scale threats, either man-made or natural, that may affect the ability of the organization to ensure business continuity.

4. In order for EMOPS to fulfil its role in operationalizing and coordinating the headquarters crisis management plan, significant emergency preparedness work must be carried out. EMOPS will establish a crisis preparedness and management team, to be known as the Operations Preparedness and Business Continuity Unit and

based in New York, which will be responsible for operationalizing, testing and continually updating the UNICEF corporate crisis management plan. In carrying out this task, the unit will ensure that the required staff training for crisis response and business continuity is implemented at all headquarters locations to complement the preparedness capacities already in place for country offices. The unit will also conduct periodic simulation exercises; update guidelines and procedures for crisis operations and business continuity; act as the secretariat for the UNICEF crisis management team; and manage the inter-agency aspects of crisis planning and preparedness, in particular collaboration and joint planning with offices and focal points for coordination of United Nations preparedness planning.

UNICEF business continuity

5. The scenarios used in the updated crisis planning exercise included the possibility that offices could be rendered inaccessible due to security threats, in the event of a human influenza pandemic where the offices are closed for several weeks to prevent transmission of disease, or as a result of other large-scale emergencies. This would make it necessary for staff and senior managers to communicate with each other and conduct business by remote access to the organization's operating systems. Although a minimal number of staff would work on-site to ensure functioning of the IT operating systems for remote access, in the event of a human influenza pandemic that would restrict access by staff to UNICEF New York headquarters, operating systems would fail within a few days. This scenario would not be limited to a human influenza pandemic, and could also include risks that already are a reality for New York City, including power outages and terrorist threats. These circumstances would have dire implications for the running of corporate systems, including financial and programme management tools and vital communications systems, and potentially have a devastating impact on UNICEF business continuity and operations globally.

6. To address this critical vulnerability in the UNICEF crisis management plan, an investment of approximately \$6.5 million is required to equip UNICEF with the capacity for full data redundancy through an alternate data centre away from New York. At present, UNICEF has data redundancy through a back-up centre for UNICEF House located at 633 Third Avenue. However, given the potential risk and threats in New York City, it is considered necessary to establish remote IT redundancy. In line with the earlier recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (E/ICEF/2006/AB/L.10), UNICEF is exploring several options for locating an alternate data centre within existing facilities alongside those of other United Nations agencies. Such a facility would aim to achieve a much higher level of data redundancy and timeliness than currently exists within UNICEF, thus minimizing the need to repair data when recovering from disasters. In addition to full redundancy capacity of UNICEF headquarters, the facility would include a scaled-down infrastructure for servicing up to 150 field office users in 30 field locations as a back-up in the event that field locations have limited access to their operating systems.

7. In October 2006, the United Nations inter-agency working group on information technology and telecommunications issues, in which UNICEF participates, decided that data centre sharing and common alternate data centres should be the foundation of business continuity plans for all participating agencies.

The specific options being assessed include partnering with the United Nations Secretariat as it embarks on a project to consolidate its data-centres into two large sites in Brindisi, Italy and Valencia, Spain, with the support of the Spanish Government and in partnership with the International Computing Centre (ICC) in Geneva. Other options include partnering with the centres established by the International Civil Aviation Centre in Montreal and by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Arizona and Colorado. Dialogue is underway with the United Nations Secretariat on co-locating with the planned data-centres in Brindisi or Valencia and with the ICC and UNDP on possible co-location. Should the Executive Board approve the request outlined in this paper, a decision on co-location will be made based on a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis.

8. In addition to IT redundancy capacity, additional investments are required to enhance capacities for remote access to operating systems to enable mission-critical staff to continue to work from home or other off-site locations and to ensure, as a last resort, that the crisis management team and other critical staff are able to maintain contact using limited voice and data connectivity via satellite phone connections. If these critical gaps in business continuity are addressed through this supplementary appropriation, the crisis management plan will be fully operational, thus ensuring that business services will continue to be available to all headquarters locations and back-up connectivity will be provided to enable country and regional offices to continue to operate.

UNICEF coordination with the United Nations system

9. In developing all aspects of the updated crisis preparedness plan, UNICEF has worked very closely with UNSIC and with the Pandemic Preparedness Coordinator for New York Headquarters. UNICEF maintains regular dialogue with business continuity counterparts in other agencies, participates in all the pandemic preparedness working groups at the United Nations and currently co-chairs the working group on communication. UNICEF has also collaborated with the United Nations Medical Director in New York and the Human Resources Network in developing an information handbook for all staff that is available on-line in English, French and Spanish. This information resource for staff is available to the entire United Nations system through UNSIC and the Preparedness Coordinator's Office in New York. UNICEF is also working with other agencies to design a peer-support training module and train teams of peer-support volunteers who would be available to help staff and families cope in a crisis. Through the UNICEF Internet site, communication resources are available to anyone who is interested in using these materials to promote public awareness. At the request of a number of United Nations country teams, UNICEF has also supplied recommended medicines and personal protection kits and procured supplies for the staff of UNDP and the World Bank on a reimbursable basis.

10. In addition to taking an active role in all aspects of crisis planning and preparedness within the United Nations system with specific reference to avian influenza and the related threat of a human influenza pandemic, UNICEF is playing its agreed role in programme response at country level through United Nations country teams and as laid out in the 'Consolidated action plan for contributions of the United Nations System' issued by UNSIC in July 2006. Under the leadership of UNSIC, there is close collaboration at all levels of the United Nations system,

especially the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations and the World Health Organization (WHO), which are the technical lead agencies, and with other United Nations agencies and the World Bank. Within the agreed framework for the United Nations programme response to avian influenza and pandemic preparedness, UNICEF is helping countries to develop and implement communication strategies to support prevention and containment of avian influenza and prepare for a pandemic. With a generous contribution from the Government of Japan, UNICEF has been able to support communication activities in several countries of Asia and Africa affected by avian influenza, and to strengthen collaboration with WHO in preparing for a possible influenza pandemic.

Conclusion

11. This document presents the supplementary support budget that is still required to enable UNICEF to comply fully with the Secretary-General's directive. The requested supplementary appropriation of \$9.6 million will enable UNICEF to move forward in identifying and equipping an alternate data centre outside New York; acquire the additional hardware, software and communication equipment needed to enable staff to maintain critical functions from off-site locations; and ensure that necessary preparedness tasks are completed to fully realize the crisis management plan. Given that only one year remains in the biennium to implement the tasks outlined in this document, the supplementary appropriation request for the 2006-2007 biennial support budget is for \$9.6 million. The balance of recurring costs included in the original estimate submitted to the Executive Board at the second regular session of 2006 (E/ICEF/2006/AB/L.9 and Corr.1) will be incorporated into the 2008-2009 biennial support budget proposal, with a focus on ensuring continuity of funds for critical staff costs.

Additional budget requirements for 2006-2007

Supplementary biennial support budget for 2006-2007

<i>(In millions of United States dollars)</i>	
Maintaining business continuity — hardware, software, communication supplies, alternate data centre for disaster recovery	8.0
Medical intervention — vaccines, antibiotics and related supplies: \$1.0 million: already approved in Executive Board decision 2006/17	—
Preparatory activities — capacity-building and training	1.6
Total	9.6

12. The secretariat recommends that the Executive Board adopt the following draft decision:

The Executive Board

Approves the supplementary budget in gross and net appropriations for the management and administration of \$9.6 million to cover the additional costs in the 2006-2007 biennial support budget associated with the need to strengthen capacities for crisis management, business and operations continuity in the event of a pandemic crisis, and to protect staff health, safety and security.
