

UNICEF expands relief efforts in Latin America and Caribbean after month of 'relentless' natural disasters

27 September 2017 – To help children and families affected by the series of natural disasters that have devastated countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) today said it has scaled up its humanitarian response the region.

"Children in Latin America and the Caribbean have faced several [natural disasters of epic proportions](#) in September," said Grant Leaty, UNICEF Deputy Director of Emergency Programmes.

"With four successive hurricanes – including Hurricane Irma, the largest ever recorded over the Atlantic – and two major earthquakes in Mexico, the past few weeks have been relentless," he added.

In the past month, four major hurricanes – Category 3 or higher – have churned through the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean. Hurricanes Irma, Jose, Katia and Maria caused major damage to island nations in the Caribbean, as well as continental North and Central America, devastating the lives of millions of people and leaving hundreds of thousands homeless and displaced.

Since two earthquakes – 12 days apart – caused widespread damage and destruction in central Mexico, the region has experienced over 4,000 aftershocks, including a 6.1 magnitude quake as recently as 23 September. Up to seven million children live in the affected areas and thousands have been left homeless, with no access to basic services.

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Across the region, UNICEF has urgently scaled up its emergency response to reach vulnerable children with protection services, water, sanitation and hygiene, health and education initiatives.

"It's absolutely vital that children who have lived through these traumatic events get the psychosocial support they need," said UNICEF Mexico Ambassador Thalia, who visited UNICEF operations centre this week to learn more about UNICEF's response.

In Mexico, UNICEF is working with its partners in earthquake-affected areas to establish temporary schools, promote school safety guidelines, train teachers in psychosocial support, and distribute education supplies and early childhood development kits to teachers and caregivers.

“Through child-friendly spaces UNICEF is able to provide children with a safe place, to play, learn and begin to heal their psychological wounds,” Ambassador Thalia underscored.

For children and families affected by the hurricanes, UNICEF is working with partners and local governments to provide immediate relief including access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene supplies, provision of psycho social support for children and working to ensure children and able to get back into education as soon as possible.

To support its humanitarian response in Mexico, Cuba, the Eastern Caribbean and Haiti, UNICEF is appealing for \$18.1 million.