

'Time running out' for 1.4 million children in 'man-made' crises in Africa, Yemen – UNICEF

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“We can still save many lives. The severe malnutrition and looming famine are largely man-made,” said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake in a news release issued by the UN agency today.

“Our common humanity demands faster action,” he underscored.

According to UNICEF, as many as 462,000 children in Yemen – where a conflict has been raging for the past two years – are currently suffering from severe acute malnutrition. This figure has risen nearly 200 per cent since 2014.

Similarly, in conflict affected parts of northeast Nigeria, including Adamawa, Borno and Yobe, the number of children with severe acute malnutrition is expected to reach 450,000. According to a famine early warning system, the famine likely occurred in some previously inaccessible areas of Borno, and it is likely ongoing, and will continue, in other areas which remain beyond humanitarian reach.

Furthermore, in Somalia, droughts threaten an already fragile population battered by decades of conflict: almost half the population (6.2 million people) faces acute food insecurity and is in need of urgent relief, 185,000 among them children suffering from severe acute malnutrition. There are fears that the number could rise to 270,000 in the next few months.

In South Sudan, a famine was recently declared in parts of the country, adding to a humanitarian situation already complicated due to poverty and insecurity. Over 270,000 children are severely malnourished in the country and the total number of food insecure people across the country is expected to rise once the lean season sets in.

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In its response, UNICEF, working with partners, has been providing therapeutic treatment to 220,000 severely malnourished children in Nigeria, over 200,000 in both South Sudan and Somalia, and 320,000 children in Yemen.

However, more action is urgently needed.

“Time is running out,” said Mr. Lake. “We must not repeat the tragedy of the 2011 famine in the Horn of Africa.”

Yemen’s brutal two-year conflict forcing displaced to return home amid persisting risks – UN

21 February 2017 – The complex crisis in Yemen continues to deepen, with United Nations agencies reporting today that perhaps one million people who had fled for safety are returning to their homes mainly due to a lack of access to income and basic services in the areas of displacement, warning that returnees often find the situation just as bad.

“It’s testament to how catastrophic the situation in Yemen has become, that those displaced by the conflict are now returning home because life in the areas to which they had fled for safety is just as abysmal as in the areas from which they fled,” said Ayman Gharaibeh, the Representative for Yemen of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in a joint press release issued with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

“These returns cannot be viewed as sustainable,” Mr. Gharaibeh added, explaining that people often return to homes that have been damaged and to areas lacking essential services, and are often forced to flee again.

A multi-sectoral location assessment report released today, and a periodically updated population movement tracking report published last month, show that there are currently two million internally displaced people (IDPs) across Yemen and one million IDP returnees.

As conditions across the country further deteriorate, many more IDPs are contemplating a return home, where challenging security and socio-economic conditions persist. About 40 per cent of key informants indicate that IDPs now intend to return home within the next three months. The reports highlight a lack of access to income and basic services in areas of displacement as the main reasons for pushing IDPs to return to the areas of their origin.

All but one Yemen's governorates now affected by devastating conflict

Mr. Gharaibeh noted that all of Yemen's governorates, with the exception of the island of Socotra, have been affected by conflict.

“The overwhelming majority of Yemen's one million IDP returnees have returned to Aden, Amanat Al Asimah, Taizz, Lahj and Shabwah, which have been particularly impacted by hostilities and insecurity,” he explained.

Yemen's local communities are also under intense strain with alarming scarcities of food and insufficient access to water and sanitation services. Some 84 per cent of Yemen's two million IDPs have been displaced for more than a year and scarce resources are increasingly overstretched.

“IOM and all partners must scale up their response to support those newly displaced as well as those whose displacement is becoming increasingly protracted with shifting needs,” said IOM Yemen's Chief of Mission, Laurent De Boeck.

Weapons must fall silent to avert famine

In a separate statement, the Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen, Jamie McGoldrick, warned against the impact of increased fighting along Yemen's west coast on the food crisis.

“I urgently call on all parties to the conflict and on those that have influence over the parties to facilitate the rapid entry of critical life-saving food staples into all Yemeni ports,” he said, noting that over 17 million people are frequently forced to skip meals and seven million Yemenis do not know where their next meal will come from and are ever closer to starvation.

Moreover, the availability of food in markets and the food pipeline are at imminent risk. Food shortages are widespread, food and fuel prices are rising, there are disruptions to agricultural production, and purchasing power is plummeting, especially brought about by the lack of salary payments in the public sector for over six months.

And given that the country is 80-90 per cent dependent on imported food staples, he said he is “compelled to raise the alarm,” as such factors, if left unabated, could combine to accelerate the onset of famine.

“The best means to prevent famine in Yemen is for weapons to fall silent across the country and for the parties to the conflict to return to the negotiating table,” he said.



Source: OCHA 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan for Yemen

UN agencies support nationwide polio immunization campaign

Meanwhile, a nationwide polio immunization campaign was launched yesterday in

Yemen by national health authorities with support from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), aiming to immunize about five million children under the age of five.

More than 40,000 health workers are taking part in the three-day campaign.

WHO is working closely with UNICEF and health authorities to keep Yemen polio-free. The threat of virus importation is serious and this campaign aims to curb any possible return of the virus to Yemen," said WHO Acting Representative in Yemen, Nevio Zagaria.

This is the first polio immunization campaign since April 2016. The security situation in Yemen has limited accessibility of many parts of the country, leaving many children at risk of vaccine-preventable diseases.

[‘We cannot give up the fight’ to end child recruitment, says UNICEF chief](#)

21 February 2017 – Even though over the past 10 years, more than 65,000 children have been released from armed forces and armed groups, tens of thousands of boys and girls under the age of 18 continue to be used in conflicts around the world, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) said today.

"[It] is not only about looking back at what has been accomplished but looking forward to the work that remains to be done to support the children of war," said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake as global leaders gather in the French capital on the anniversary of the Paris commitments to end the use of children in conflict.

Adopted 10 years ago, the Paris commitments, together with the Paris principles and guidelines, lay out guidance for protecting children from recruitment and use by armed forces or armed groups, and assisting their release and reintegration, with other vulnerable children affected by armed conflict in their communities.

According to UNICEF, exact data on the number of children used and recruited in armed conflict is difficult to ascertain because of the unlawful nature of child recruitment. But estimates indicate that tens of thousands under the age of 18 are used in conflicts worldwide.

For instance, since 2013 an estimated 17,000 children have been recruited in South Sudan and up to 10,000 have been recruited in the Central African Republic (CAR). Similarly, nearly 2,000 children were recruited by Boko Haram, in Nigeria and neighbouring countries, last year alone, and there have been nearly 1,500 cases of child recruitment in Yemen since the conflict

escalated in March 2015.

There has also been progress: since it was adopted, the number of countries endorsing the Paris commitments has nearly doubled from 58 countries in 2007 to 105 at present, signalling an increasing global commitment to end the use of children in conflict.

Globally, more than 65,000 children have been released from armed forces and armed groups, including 20,000 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo); nearly 9,000 in the Central African Republic; and over 1,600 children in Chad.

But more needs to be done.

Seeking to build on the current momentum, the Paris International Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Children in Armed Conflicts is urging for unconditional release of all children – without exception – and putting an end to child recruitment.

It is also calling increased resources to help reintegrate and educate children who have been released, and urgent action to protect internally displaced children, child refugees and migrants.

“As long as children are still affected by the fighting, we cannot give up the fight for the children,” Mr. Lake added.

[At Security Council, UN chief Guterres highlights global significance of a peaceful Europe](#)

21 February 2017 – Noting that recent crises in Europe show that the continent remains at risk from new outbreaks of conflict, United Nations Secretary-General called for reinforcing mutual trust and respect to strengthen stability and cooperation both within Europe and beyond.

The Security Council meeting at which the UN chief delivered this message started with a moment of silence in memory of the Permanent Representative of Russia to the United Nations, Vitaly Churkin, who passed away yesterday.

“I think [the Ambassador’s] passing represents a deep loss for all of us in the UN, including in this Council, where his distinctive voice was ever-present for the past decade, and where, I think, we will all miss that voice in the sessions to come,” said Mr. Guterres in his tribute.

Turning to the subject at hand, the Secretary-General, who briefed the

Council alongside Lamberto Zannier, the Secretary-General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and Helga Schmid, Secretary-General, European External Action Service of the European Union (EU), said crises in Europe could also adversely impact economic progress and sustainable development.

Conflict in Europe is not only a tragedy for those directly involved: those killed, injured, displaced, who have lost loved ones, who may be unable to access healthcare and are missing vital years of their education,” Mr. Guterres said, adding: “It is also reversing development gains and preventing communities and societies from achieving their full potential and contributing to regional and global prosperity.”

Noting that no single factor is responsible for the emergence and continuation of conflicts, he said that in many cases, peace agreements were “simply not being implemented.”

Other factors included challenges to democratic governance and the rule of law, and the manipulation of ethnic, economic, religious and communal tensions for personal or political gain.

Whatever the causes may be, the inability of regional and international institutions, including our own, to prevent and resolve conflicts is seriously undermining their credibility and making it more difficult for them to succeed in future,” added the UN chief.

Speaking specifically on the conflict in Ukraine, Mr. Guterres said the UN remains committed to supporting a peaceful resolution, in a manner that fully upholds the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine, and in accordance with relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

AUDIO: António Guterres was speaking in the Security Council during an open debate which looked at cooperation between the UN and regional bodies in responding resolving existing conflicts in Europe

He also noted that the UN fully supported the efforts within the Normandy Four, the Trilateral Contact Group, and the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, and that it has repeatedly called for the full implementation by all sides of all of their commitments under the Minsk Process, both in letter and in spirit.

I urge all stakeholders to avoid unilateral steps or attempts to create facts on the ground, which further complicate and endanger efforts to find negotiated settlements. This is especially relevant in view of the latest actions taken in relation to the conflicts in eastern Ukraine and the South Caucasus,” he highlighted, urging all sides to give the highest priority to protecting civilians.

In his remarks, Mr. Guterres also spoke of challenges to peace in other parts of Europe, such as in the Balkans, Cyprus, Georgia, Moldova and South

Caucasus, as well as on the long-standing name issue between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

He also noted new challenges and threats such as the phenomenon of populism, nationalism, xenophobia and violent extremism were both causes and effects of conflict.

"I encourage Member States, this Council, regional mechanisms and all stakeholders to intensify their efforts to define a peace and security agenda to address today's complex challenges," urged Secretary-General Guterres.

"The status quo is not sustainable."

Multilingual education is 'absolutely essential,' UNESCO chief says on Mother Language Day

21 February 2017 – Learning languages is a promise of peace, innovation and creativity, and will contribute to the achievement of global development goals, the head of the United Nations agency for culture and education has said, marking International Mother Language Day.

"There can be no authentic dialogue or effective international cooperation without respect for linguistic diversity, which opens up true understanding of every culture," said UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Director-General Irina Bokova in her message on the Day.

"Access to the diversity of languages can awaken the curiosity and mutual understanding of peoples. That is why learning languages is at one and the same time a promise of peace, of innovation and of creativity," she stated.

This year, the International Day, observed annually on 21 February, is devoted to multilingual education.

Ms. Bokova said the Day is an opportunity to mobilize for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in particular Goal 4, to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.

"Education and information in the mother language is absolutely essential to improving learning and developing confidence and self-esteem, which are among the most powerful engines of development," she said.

As such, she appealed for the potential of multilingual education to be acknowledged everywhere, in education and administrative systems, in cultural expressions and the media, cyberspace and trade.

International Mother Language Day was proclaimed by UNESCO's General Conference in November 1999, and it has been observed every year since February 2000 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism.