

[UN-backed campaign to protect nearly a billion people in Africa from yellow fever by 2026](#)

Amid a resurgence of yellow fever outbreaks, the United Nations together with partners, has begun an ambitious campaign to vaccinate close to one billion people against the deadly disease across 27 high-risk African countries.

“With one injection we can protect a person for life against this dangerous pathogen,” said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director-General of the [UN World Health Organization](#) (WHO), launching the [Eliminate Yellow Fever Epidemics \(EYE\) in Africa strategy](#) in Nigeria’s capital Abuja alongside the country’s Health Minister, Isaac Folorunso Adewole.

The goal is to rid the continent of [yellow fever](#) – a viral disease with potentially fatal consequences – by 2026.

“This unprecedented commitment by countries will ensure that by 2026 Africa is free of yellow fever epidemics,” added Mr. Tedros.

The three pronged strategy focuses on protecting at-risk populations through preventive mass vaccination campaigns and routine immunization programmes; preventing international spread; and containing outbreaks rapidly.

The campaign is also critical to protect Africa’s children – the group in which success is critical to stamp out the disease

“Almost half of the people to be vaccinated are children under 15 years of age [and] this campaign is critical to saving [their] lives,” said Stefan Peterson, the Chief of Health at [UN Children’s Fund](#) (UNICEF).

With one injection we can protect a person for life against this dangerous pathogen – *WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus*

As an EYE strategy partner, UNICEF will make vaccines available, advocate for greater political commitment, and provide support in vaccinating children through routine immunization as well as during outbreaks of the disease.

A strategy that works – UN health agency

According to WHO, experience in West Africa demonstrates that the EYE strategy “can work.”

When yellow fever re-emerged as a public health issue in the early 2000s, countries in the region controlled the epidemics through preventive mass campaigns combined with routine immunization.

“No yellow fever epidemics have been recorded since in countries which successfully implemented this approach,” the UN health agency added.

Sustaining the vaccine supply chain

Ensuring sufficient supply of vaccine and sustaining the levels in the mammoth undertaking is critical to the overall campaign’s success.

This is where Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, comes in.

Composed of UN agencies and the World Bank, as well as public and private health entities, Gavi has been working to improve global vaccine supply and to ensure there is enough to respond to outbreaks, allow preventive campaigns and that routine immunization functions at full capacity.

“This comprehensive, global strategy offers an unprecedented opportunity to end the devastating yellow fever epidemics that periodically impact Africa,” said Dr. Seth Berkley, CEO of Gavi.

“Ensuring that the most vulnerable communities have access to the vaccine through routine systems plays a central role in making this happen.”

At Asian forum, UN chief calls for more equitable globalization, urgent action on climate change

The world must act to spread the benefits of globalization more fairly while avoiding the perils of protectionism, the United Nations chief said on Tuesday.

“I am deeply convinced that [globalization is irreversible](#),” UN Secretary-General [António Guterres](#) told an Asian forum that brought political, business and civil society leaders together in the southern Chinese town of Boao.

“It has brought many benefits – the integration of the world’s economies, the expansion of trade, stunning advances in communications and technology,” he said. But “vast numbers of people are being left behind,” he added, and “inequality is systemic and growing.”

“Our destination must be a fair globalization that leaves no one behind as a pathway to peace and sustainable development,” Mr. Guterres told the annual Boao Forum for Asia.

“But one thing must be very clear: we won’t make globalization fair by isolationism, protectionism or exclusion,” he said. “Global problems need

global multilateral solutions.”

Mr. Guterres issued his plea as the specter looms of new trade disputes, with the United States planning to impose new tariffs on certain goods from China and other countries.

The Secretary-General also made an urgent call for the world to address the escalating threat of climate change, which he said is going to intensify other global problems such as poverty, humanitarian crises and conflict.

The [Paris Agreement](#), adopted by world leaders in 2015, set a goal of keeping the global temperature rise to below 2 degrees.

“But, let’s be clear: climate change is still moving faster than we are,” Mr. Guterres said, calling on world leaders to act to “bend the emissions curve.” He commended China’s global leadership on the issue, citing its ambitious targets on renewable energy.

The United Nations, Mr. Guterres told the forum, has laid out a path to a more prosperous, equitable and environmentally sustainable world with its [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development.

“With its 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#), the 2030 Agenda is our blueprint for peace, prosperity and partnership for people and the planet,” he said.

[UN migration agency rolls out regional response to ongoing Venezuelans exodus](#)

The United Nations migration agency on Tuesday launched a regional action plan to bolster its response to massive population outflows from Venezuela, amid the worsening political and socio-economic situation in the South American country.

As the exodus has considerably increased over the last two years, an estimated 1.6 million Venezuelans were abroad in 2017, up from 700,000 in 2015, with 1.3 million in the Americas, according to the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)).

“The plan is tailored to specific national contexts across 17 countries including eight South American countries, six Caribbean countries, two Central American countries and Mexico,” explained Marcelo Pisani, IOM Regional Director for Central America, North America and the Caribbean.

The exodus is not letting up. For instance, more than 800 Venezuelans are estimated to be entering Brazil each day, bringing the total arrivals to more

than 52,000 since the beginning of 2017, according to the host Government.

IOM's regional plan seeks to strengthen the response to the needs and priorities expressed by concerned governments and focuses on such activities as data collection and dissemination, capacity building and coordination, direct support and socio-economic integration.

Diego Beltrand, IOM Regional Director for South America, encourages host countries to consider adopting measures, such as regularizing the stay of Venezuelans, and called for the international community to contribute to the regional plan, which requires \$32.3 million to implement.

Disease outbreaks threaten Papua New Guinea's quake-hit communities – UN

In earthquake-hit Papua New Guinea, United Nations agencies on the ground are warning of a new looming threat: water-borne disease outbreaks, such as that of diarrhoea and measles.

According to the [UN Children's Fund](#) (UNICEF) and the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), there is a "high potential" of such outbreaks amid water contamination due to landslides, poor sanitation and personal hygiene management, and generally low vaccination coverage.

"At this stage of the emergency response, it is critical to restore the delivery of basic health services to the affected communities, such as the immunization of children," said Dr. Luo Dapeng, the head of WHO operations in Papua New Guinea.

"We will continue to work closely with [national and provincial authorities] and partners to respond to these risks and to prevent a secondary emergency arising from disease outbreaks," he added.

UNICEF and WHO are also stepping up the effort to improve water and sanitation systems and hygiene practices in affected areas. Specific projects include distribution of hygiene kits and water purification tablets, and setting up emergency pit latrines and rain water collection tanks.

The agencies have also created child-friendly spaces at temporary shelters so children can learn about good hygiene practices and ways to protect themselves from diseases.

Supporting the Government to conduct a measles and rubella immunization campaign in the earthquake-hit areas for children under the age of five is also a part of the multi-agency effort to curb the risk of potential

outbreaks.

However, with children living in crowded shelters, ensuring their overall health is a major concern.

“We are really worried because a majority of children in the affected areas already have low immunity,” said Karen Allen, the head of UNICEF programmes in the country.

“Now, as they are living in the crowded shelters with poor-hygiene conditions, inadequate clean water and little knowledge to protect themselves, children are becoming much more vulnerable to diseases, including vaccine-preventable and water-borne diseases.”

More than 270,000 people – of them 125,000 children – remain dependent on humanitarian assistance across the Pacific island nation after it was hit by a devastating 7.5 magnitude earthquake in February.

The temblor was followed by a series of severe aftershocks throughout March, causing widespread damage to infrastructure and health services.

[Guterres renews call for Security Council unity over Syria; UN agencies warn ‘desperate’ situation becoming worse for civilians](#)

Reports of new alleged chemical weapons attack in Syria’s Eastern Ghouta over the weekend have been condemned by United Nations [Secretary-General António Guterres](#), who on Tuesday repeated his call for the Security Council to “find unity” on the issue and ensure accountability.

In a statement, the UN chief [expressed his outrage](#) at reports that civilians in the last opposition-held area of Rural Damascus have continued to be targeted by toxic agents.

The Secretary-General’s call comes after UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, told the Security Council late Monday that at least 49 people had been killed, and hundreds were injured in an alleged chemical attack in Douma on Saturday evening.

Mr. Guterres condemned the incident as “abhorrent” – echoing a statement issued in March – amid what he called “persistent allegations” of the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

In both statements, the UN chief underlined his support for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons ([OPCW](#)) – the body which investigates allegations of such attacks.

His latest statement also underlined his call for the Council to “redouble its efforts” to uphold norms against chemical weapons and agree on a mechanism that would ensure accountability.

UN agencies sound alarm over rising civilian casualties, new displacement

Meanwhile, in Geneva on Tuesday, UN humanitarian agencies expressed alarm at ongoing violence in several areas of Syria which has caused the mass displacement of civilians to spiral.

Asked by journalists about the alleged chemical attacks, both the [World Health Organization](#) ([WHO](#)) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) said they were not in a position to confirm anything.

OCHA spokesperson Jens Laerke confirmed that aid workers were in place in eight shelters for the displaced, but not in Douma, site of the alleged attack:

“I’m not sure everyone understands that, we are not in Douma, Eastern Ghouta is still under siege. Occasionally we are able to go in with a convoy and we leave again immediately. We are in place outside of Eastern Ghouta in those eight centres where we can provide some aid. We are not in Eastern Ghouta. And for these, as you say, extremely serious allegations with very severe ramifications; political, military and otherwise, we need to be absolutely sure that what we say is correct.”

According to UN refugee agency, tens of thousands of people remain trapped in Douma and nearly a quarter of a million people need aid urgently in the wider Eastern Ghouta area.

More than 133,000 people have fled Eastern Ghouta in the past month and one-third of that number have been given shelter in eight centres in Rural Damascus.

But these are “overcrowded and pose a serious health risk,” Andrej Mahecic from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) said, adding that there and elsewhere in the war-torn country the situation is “desperate.”

UNHCR’s response involves providing essential aid, shelter support and protection services, including to 137,000 Syrians displaced from the Afrin region in the north.