

[Revamped UN strategy aims to address root causes of Sahel crisis](#)

The United Nations has reset its action plan to address the root causes of the complex crisis in Africa's Sahel, a region now home to one out of five people worldwide requiring humanitarian assistance, the UN deputy chief said Wednesday.

"The Sahel is a [priority](#) for the Secretary-General and the entire United Nations system," Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed told a conference being held in Nouakchott, Mauritania, to discuss strategies to tackle the Sahel crisis, which leaves 24 million people in need of humanitarian assistance this year.

A largely semi-arid region, the Sahel stretches from Senegal on Africa's Atlantic coast, through parts of Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Chad and Sudan to Eritrea on the Red Sea coast.

It is plagued by the increasing threat posed by terrorism and violent extremism and its spread in surrounding countries and regions. This is compounded – or caused – by weak development progress in the Sahel and the impacts of climate change on food supplies, migration flows and conflict over land and resources.

"The complexity and multi-dimensional nature of these challenges attest to the necessity to respond collectively to the Sahel crisis, and in a more coherent, comprehensive and integrated manner," Ms. Mohammed explained.

These challenges promoted changes to the [UN Integrated Strategy](#) for the Sahel to better meet the needs of the 10 countries in the region.

The Deputy Secretary-General said five key priorities on addressing the root causes of the crisis are: inclusive and equitable growth; public good services, including access to basic service, governance and rule of law; climate and energy; gender equality and women's empowerment; and security, including preventing violent extremism, transnational crime and human trafficking. Empowering youth is an overall priority, she added.

[UNICEF scales up psychosocial support for Papua New Guinea's children after](#)

devastating quakes

Children are suffering significant trauma and stress one month after a series of major earthquakes hit Papua New Guinea, the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) said on Wednesday, warning about the possible long-term negative consequences.

"Children are still being confronted by [fear, loss, confusion](#), family separation, deteriorated living conditions and disruption of social and school activities," said Karen Allen, UNICEF Representative for Papua New Guinea.

"Psychological damage among children should not be overlooked. It can have a negative impact on children's brain development, mental health and overall wellbeing in the long-run," she added.

Ms. Allen elaborated that children who have suffered from trauma have an increased risk of delayed development, mental health disorders, depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicide.

Before the earthquakes, available data indicated that children in Papua New Guinea experience some of the highest rates of violence in Asia-Pacific region.

About 80 per cent experience emotional abuse in their lifetime, with some 75 per cent having reported physical abuse.

A recent Médecins Sans Frontières report showed that 12,000 cases of family and sexual violence are treated each year in Tari Family Support Centre in Hela Province, where the worst earthquake damage occurred.

The Government estimates 270,000 people need urgent assistance, including 125,000 children, some 15-20 per cent of whom, according to the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), require psychological support.

Supported by UNICEF Australia, the UN Central Emergency Response Fund and the Government of Australia, UNICEF in Papua New Guinea is currently setting up 26 child-friendly spaces to provide psychosocial support services for more than 14,000 children in the severely-affected areas of Hela and Southern Highland provinces.

These spaces safe places where children can play, learn life skills and regain a sense of normalcy.

Outreach teams will also be dispatched to affected communities to organize recreation activities, such as music and sports, and identify those in need of psychosocial support.

To date, UNICEF has already delivered 23 metric tons of relief supplies to the country, including tents and tarpaulins, water purification tablets and

hygiene kits. Additionally, some 12,000 packets of therapeutic food and vaccines to protect 31,700 children against the increasing risk of disease outbreak and malnutrition have been delivered.

Over the next year, UNICEF needs \$14.6 million to help children and families affected by the earthquake.

[Unrealistic demands on UN peacekeeping costing lives and credibility – Guterres](#)

As the United Nations continues to send peacekeepers to difficult or war-torn environments like Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, those ‘blue helmets’ will need more and better coordinated support among the actors who authorize and deploy them, Secretary-General António Guterres said on Wednesday.

“UN peacekeepers are often under-equipped, under-prepared and unready [and] there are gaps in command and control, in culture, in equipment and in training,” Mr. Guterres told a Security Council [debate on improving UN peacekeeping operations](#).

“Our peacekeepers are vulnerable, and they are targeted for attack,” he added.

Last year, 59 peacekeepers [lost their lives](#) as a result of malicious act – highest number ever and a sharp increase over the year before when the figure was 34.

Calling UN [peacekeeping operations](#) “a remarkable enterprise of multilateralism and international solidarity,” the UN chief underscored that they nevertheless also suffer as a result of unrealistic demands, and as a result, both lives and credibility are being lost.

“A peacekeeping operation is not an army, or a counter-terrorist force, or a humanitarian agency. It is a tool to create the space for a nationally-owned political solution,” emphasized the Secretary-General.

Please put an end to mandates that look like Christmas trees.
Christmas is over, and [a UN mission] cannot possibly implement 209 mandated tasks – *Secretary-General Guterres*

“Put simply, peace operations cannot succeed if they are deployed instead of

a political solution, rather than in support of one.”

He cited the need to concentrate on three key areas: refocusing peacekeeping with realistic expectations; make missions stronger and safer; and mobilize greater support for political solutions and for well-structured, well-equipped, well-trained forces.

“These efforts are critical – but action by the Secretariat alone is not enough [...] our chances of success increase dramatically when we work together with Member States and share burdens, risks and responsibilities,” added Mr. Guterres.



UN Photo/Loey Felipe

Mark Rutte (centre), Prime Minister of the Netherlands, and President of the Security Council for the month of March, chairs the Council’s meeting on UN peacekeeping operations. Secretary-General António Guterres (left), and Jeffrey Feltman (right), Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, attended the meeting.

“We urgently need a quantum leap in collective engagement,” he said, announcing the launch of a the Action for Peacekeeping initiative which will mobilize all partners and stakeholders to support peacekeeping efforts.

“As peacekeeping marks its 70th anniversary, I hope we can develop a set of mutually-agreed principles and commitments to create peacekeeping operations fit for the future,” he said.

The high-level open debate was convened by the Netherlands in its capacity as the President of the Security Council for the month of March. The meeting was chaired by the country’s Prime Minister, Mark Rutte.

[Alongside](#) the Secretary-General, the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, and Fatimata Touré, Director of the Groupe de Recherche d’Etude de Formation Femme Action (GREFFA), a Malian non-governmental organization,

also briefed the Council.

[UNICEF envoy David Beckham sets sights on new goal: ending bullying in Indonesia's schools](#)

To help the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) tackle bullying in Indonesia – where one in three children have been physically attacked in school – David Beckham has visited the country to meet youth who have faced peer violence.

“I spent time with an amazing young girl, Sripun, who was voted by her peers to take part in an anti-bullying programme to help [stop violence in schools](#),” said Mr. Beckham who is a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, after his trip to see how the [7: The David Beckham UNICEF Fund](#) is supporting Indonesian schools.

The 15-year-old told Mr. Beckham how she has become a leader in her school to prevent bullying, and shared her story on the football legend's Instagram.

“She's a change-maker and is now helping to create positive learning environments for other students to feel safe,” he said. “This has increased her confidence and she's hopeful that other students won't have to go through the same bullying experience she did.”

The '7 Fund' is supporting UNICEF programmes in Indonesia, El Salvador, Nepal and Uganda to help children break down barriers and unlock their incredible potential. It is tackling bullying, violence, child marriage and missed education – making sure children, especially girls, get the opportunity to realize their true potential.

Peer violence and bullying are among the top challenges facing young people in Indonesia, where more than one-in-five children aged 13-15 have been bullied – some 18 million in all.

Moreover, another one-in-three have been physically attacked in school. This violence increases the risk of poor mental health among children and leads to early school drop-out.



UNICEF/UN0188665/Modola

UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador David Beckham plays soccer with students and teachers at the SMPN 17 school in Semarang, Indonesia.

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The '7 Fund' is supporting programmes that empower youth to speak out when they experience or witness violence.

Mr. Beckham saw first-hand how schools in Indonesia are taking a student-focused approach by involving not only those who have been bullied, but children who have previously bullied others.

Under this approach, a peer nominated group is trained on issues of bullying and taught how to create positive environments. At the same time, teachers learn how to use positive discipline so classrooms remain violence-free.

Mr. Beckham learned that 7,000 children have already benefited from bullying prevention programmes in Indonesia, with early pilot programmes indicating nearly a 30 per cent reduction in bullying.

"I feel very proud to see how my 7 Fund is helping UNICEF tackle bullying and

violence in schools in Indonesia, and is ultimately keeping children, especially girls, safe in their schools so they can continue their education and hope for a better future,” concluded the Goodwill Ambassador.

[UN receives nearly \\$1 billion from Saudi Arabia and UAE for humanitarian response to Yemen crisis](#)

Ahead of the upcoming international fundraising conference for Yemen, the United Nations has received nearly \$1 billion contributions from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), urging other donors to follow suit and help tackle the world’s worst humanitarian crisis there.

UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) expressed his deep gratitude for the \$930 million provided on Tuesday evening by the two donor countries to the Yemen Humanitarian Fund.

“I would like to take this occasion to appeal to all the other donors who will be meeting in Geneva next week... to [follow the same generosity](#)” shown by the two countries, the UN chief told reporters at the world body’s New York Headquarters, after meeting with Prince Mohamad Bin Salman Al Saud, Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince.

“[These funds](#) cover almost one-third of the \$2.96 billion required to implement the 2018 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan, which will enable the United Nations and its partners to help alleviate the suffering of millions of vulnerable people across Yemen,” read a statement issued by Mr. Guterres’ office, following the signing of the memorandum on the voluntary contributions.

More than 22 million people in Yemen require humanitarian aid or protection assistance, including 2 million who are internally displaced due to the ongoing conflict between the Government and rebel forces.

On 3 April, donors will meet in the [humanitarian pledging conference](#) in Geneva, Switzerland.

In his meeting with the Crown Prince, who is also First Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister, Mr. Guterres said “to give to those in need is a central pillar of Islam,” noting that two-thirds of the refugees are Muslims and are received by Muslim countries.

The Secretary-General and the Crown Prince discussed the obligations of all parties to the conflict under international humanitarian law to protect

civilians and civilian infrastructure, and the critical need for humanitarian access across the country and for all of Yemen's ports to remain open to both humanitarian and commercial movement.

They also discussed the need for the parties to the conflict to work towards a negotiated political settlement through inclusive intra-Yemeni dialogue.

Mr. Guterres expressed the UN's readiness to work together with Saudi Arabia for these objectives.

The UN, through its [envoy](#), has been engaged in helping Yemenis to find a peaceful solution. UN agencies and partners are also on the ground to deliver life-saving aid.