

Over 4,700 UN agency trained veterinarians new vanguard against deadly disease outbreaks

More than 4,700 veterinary health professionals who have just completed a United Nations training to tackle disease outbreaks are the new front line of defence protecting farm animals against deadly illnesses in 25 countries across Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

In addition to keeping fowl, cattle, pigs and other animals safe, the freshly trained veterinarians will also help keep at bay diseases that are deadly to humans.

“Some 75 per cent of new infectious diseases that have emerged in recent decades originated in animals before jumping to us Homo sapiens, a terrestrial mammal,” says Juan Lubroth, the Chief Veterinary Officer at the UN [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO), which has been organizing the trainings over the past year.

“This is why adequately discovering and tackling animal disease threats at-source represents a strategic high-ground in pre-empting future pandemics.”

According to the UN food security agency, beyond the risks posed to human health, animal diseases can cost billions of dollars and hamstringing economic growth.

For instance, outbreaks of high impact disease in recent decades all had an animal source, including H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza, H1N1 pandemic influenza, Ebola, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS).

The H5N1 outbreak of the mid-2000s alone caused an estimated \$30 billion in economic losses, globally. A few years later, H1N1 racked up as much as \$55 billion in damages.

As with any disaster, the worst affected are often the poorest and most vulnerable.

“Animals are their primary capital assets – ‘equity on four legs’. Losing them can push these families out of self-reliance and into destitution,” states FAO.

Backed by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) support, the FAO trainings covered critical areas related to animal health, including disease surveillance and forecasting, laboratory operations, biosafety and biosecurity, prevention and control methods and outbreak response strategies.

A proactive approach to animal health and disease is critical, highlights Mr.

Lubroth.

“For that [approach], the world needs well-trained, up-to-speed professionals – biologists, ecologists, microbiologists, modellers, physicians and veterinarians which is why the United States’ consistent support for building up that kind of capacity has been invaluable,” he stressed.

[Encouraged by proposed DPRK-US talks, Guterres reiterates support for peaceful denuclearization of Korean Peninsula](#)

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on Friday said he is “encouraged” by the announcement of an agreement between the United States and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) to hold a summit meeting by May.

“[Mr. Guterres] commends the leadership and vision of all concerned and reiterates his support for all efforts towards peaceful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions,” said UN Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric in a [statement](#).

The statement follows yesterday’s reported proposal by the DPRK to hold talks with the US and its southern neighbour, the Republic of Korea, and to put its weapons and missile testing programmes on hold while the discussions are being held.

[Seven years of war in Syria has left ‘colossal human tragedy’ in its wake – UN refugee chief](#)

After seven years of brutal conflict in Syria, there are no clear winners, “but the losers are plain to see,” the United Nations refugee agency chief said Friday, describing the “colossal human tragedy” that has cost hundreds of thousands of lives, driven 6.1 million people from their homes and forced 5.6 million others to seek safety in neighbouring countries.

"This [seven-year war](#) has left a colossal human tragedy in its wake. For the sake of the living, it is high [time to end this devastating conflict](#)," the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi underscored.

The conflict – which broke in the wake of massive anti- and pro-Government street protests across the country in 2011 – reaches "a depressing anniversary" this month.

The High Commissioner painted a grim picture of the relentless suffering of Syrian civilians and denounced the ongoing brutality as a shameful failure of political will and a new low in Syria's long-running conflict.

"There are no clear winners in this senseless pursuit of a military solution. But the losers are plain to see – they are the people of Syria," he added.

With 69 per cent of civilians inside the country languishing in extreme poverty, conditions are worse than ever. Ninety per cent of families now spend more than half their annual income on food as prices are, on average, eight times higher than pre-crisis levels.

Moreover, some 5.6 million people lack security or basic rights and require humanitarian assistance.

While UNHCR and other humanitarian actors are making every effort to bring relief to hundreds of thousands of people in dire need inside Eastern Ghouta and other besieged parts of the country, access to these populations remains woefully inadequate.

On 5 March, a humanitarian convoy delivering aid to besieged Eastern Ghouta was cut short amidst ongoing shelling and subsequent attempts have been thwarted.

"Humanitarian access to those in need must be guaranteed. People must be allowed to leave to seek refuge and civilians and civilian infrastructure including hospitals and schools must be protected at all costs," Mr. Grandi maintained.

Meanwhile, the hopes of millions of Syrian refugees living in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq who dream of returning home when conditions are safe are being dashed.

"With fighting in parts of Syria as fierce as at any point during the conflict, refugees are understandably still too frightened to return," Mr. Grandi continued, noting that UNHCR is preparing to assist in returns for when the security situation improves.

As conditions for millions of Syrians in exile grow more desperate, the vast majority live below the poverty line and more than three-quarters sheltering in Jordan and Lebanon are unable to meet their basic food, shelter, health or education needs.

Although host countries lay on second shifts to accommodate the refugees, 43 per cent of 1.7 million school-aged Syrian are out of school.

“While the focus is on the devastation inside Syria, we should not forget the impact on the host communities in the neighbouring countries and the effect that so many years of exile has had on refugees,” Mr. Grandi reminded.

Turning to an upcoming international conference in Brussels on supporting the future of Syria and the region, he asserted that it must result in a boost of financial and development assistance.

“As long as there is no political solution to the conflict, the international community must step up its investment in the host countries,” the High Commissioner concluded.

Service and Sacrifice: Mongolia continues to strengthen its contribution to UN peacekeeping

Mongolia first joined United Nations peacekeeping in 2002 with the deployment of two unarmed military observers to the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara. Soon after that, it sent two more officers to the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since then, Mongolia has continued to expand its contributions to UN peace operations in hot spots around the world.

In 2006, Mongolia made its first sizeable contribution to [UN peacekeeping](#) when it deployed 250 military personnel to the UN Mission in Liberia, a West African country that was recovering from a violent civil war. Six years later, Mongolia undertook its largest deployment to date when it sent a full battalion of 850 troops to the UN Mission in South Sudan, where they continue to play an important role in protecting civilians.

Throughout its decade-and-a-half history in UN peacekeeping, Mongolian contributions to UN peacekeeping have been notable for their high standards of training and for the high number of women they deploy.

Mongolia has risen to become the 27th largest contributor to UN peacekeeping, with nearly 900 military and police personnel deployed in five operations. But they have not forgotten their first mission—they continue to send a handful of military observers to Western Sahara.

Mongolian Hospital Unit in Darfur treats UN personnel and reaches out to local community



UN Photo/Albert González Farran

A nurse from the Mongolian Hospital Unit in Darfur treats a mother and child (10 December 2012).

Peacekeeping is a dangerous business. UN personnel can sustain injuries in the line of duty, the workplace or in vehicular accidents, and harsh conditions and disease can also take its toll. Peacekeeping operations deploy medical contingents contributed by Member States to ensure that UN personnel – troops, police and civilians – receive the best medical care possible.

In Kabkabiya in the Darfur region of Sudan, Mongolia has for several years provided a Level Two Hospital to address this need. The unit consists of 68 personnel, 34 men and 34 women, and is responsible for providing UN personnel with health care, emergency resuscitation and stabilization, life and limb-saving surgical interventions, basic dental care and facilitation of casualty evacuation for more severe cases. It also administered vaccinations and other prophylaxis measures. In addition to serving UN staff, the Mongolian hospital unit treated more than 10,000 people from the local communities.

Mongolian troops serve as military observers in Western Sahara



UN Photo/Martine Perret

Peacekeepers with the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) consult a map as they drive through vast desert areas in Smara, Western Sahara.

Since 2003, more than 14,000 Mongolian peacekeepers have served in UN missions around the world. Today, Mongolia deploys nearly 900 peacekeepers to five UN peacekeeping operations – in South Sudan, Abyei, Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Western Sahara. The Mongolian contribution consists of troops, police and unarmed military observers.

A key task of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara ([MINURSO](#)) is monitoring the ceasefire observed by the parties since September 1991 – carried out by some 200 military observers. Seen here, a Mongolian military observer serving with MINURSO, together with colleagues from Ghana, France and Bangladesh, check a map while carrying out an observation patrol in the vast area in Smara.

Mongolian peacekeepers provide crucial security support for vital airdrop of food in South Sudan



UN Photo/Billy Isaac

A Mongolian peacekeeper provides security as the World Food Programme drops food in Bentiu, South Sudan (21 October 2015).

In recent years, the people of South Sudan have simultaneously endured civil war and high levels of food insecurity. Among their tasks, Mongolian peacekeepers provide security as the UN World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) drops much-needed food in Bentiu, South Sudan. Their responsibilities also include protecting civilians, securing UN bases, carrying out patrols, escorting convoys, supporting search operations carried out by UN Police, as well as protecting fellow peacekeepers as they carry out road maintenance and demining operations.

Mongolian peacekeepers awarded UN Medal in South Sudan



UN Photo/Amanda Voisard

The head of the UN Mission in South Sudan, David Shearer, awards the UN Medal to Mongolian peacekeepers (8 May 2017).

In May 2017, more than 850 Mongolian peacekeepers were awarded the United Nations Medal for their commitment and service to the UN and the people of South Sudan during a ceremony in Bentiu. In awarding the medals, the Head of the UN Mission in South Sudan ([UNMISS](#)), David Shearer, praised the Mongolian troops for their “robust, calm and appropriate” approach to peacekeeping. He said the courage and determination they had shown set a high standard for all peacekeeping forces to emulate.

“The Mongolian peacekeepers have led the way in terms of robustness which is an approach that we would like to see more of in our peacekeeping efforts in South Sudan,” Mr. Shearer added.

Mongolian peacekeepers provide security at Special Court in Sierra Leone



UN Photo/Christopher Herwig

Mongolian peacekeepers serving in a guard unit assigned to protect the Special Court for Sierra Leone perform a tactical exercise (26 November 2008).

Ensuring justice is a key element of the work of the United Nations, including its peacekeeping operations. The Special Court for Sierra Leone was set up by the Government and the UN to “prosecute persons who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of [international humanitarian law](#) and Sierra Leonean law” during the country’s civil war (1991-2002).

When the UN peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone closed, the Security Council mandated the UN mission in neighbouring Liberia ([UNMIL](#)) to provide security to the detainees and the Court. Mongolia accepted the responsibility and deployed its personnel in early 2006. The well-trained and equipped

Mongolian Guard Unit performed to the highest standards and completed its mission years ago.

[DR Congo: UN warns of spike in displaced population amid funding shortfall](#)

The United Nations migration agency is hoping that the upcoming donor pledging conference for the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) will generate more financial support to cope with a spike in the number of people displaced by violence.

“Some funding has come in but not nearly enough to meet the [critical needs of millions](#) in the DRC,” said Jean-Philippe Chauzy, Chief of Mission of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in the African country, noting that the 13 April conference is an opportunity to generate more financial pledges to “avert unnecessary deaths and suffering.”

Since the last quarter of 2017, violence carried out by armed groups in the DRC has caused a spike in the number of the displaced, to more than 4.5 million. Due to lack of funding and access, a majority have yet to be reached with aid.

In the Beni Territory of North-Kivu, attacks by armed groups displaced more than 2,200 people from their homes in the first week of February alone. This is in addition to the 1,500 people who were displaced at the end of January. As of mid-February, more than 12,000 displaced people were sheltering in that locality.

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IOM says their most basic needs like food and shelter are not being met because no humanitarian actors have yet to reach the areas where displaced people are arriving.

In the Djugu Territory, just south of North-Kivu, inter-ethnic violence between Hema and Lendu groups is flaring up, with 28,634 people fleeing burning villages and for fear of their lives to Bunia, Ituri’s provincial capital, in the last couple of weeks.

In the greater Kasai region, previously considered calm, intercommunal and land-related conflicts have been escalating since 2016. During the worst days

of 2017, the region had a population of about 1.3 million internally displaced people. Today, the region hosts 896,000 internally displaced people.

The security situation has improved in some areas over the past months, prompting some internally displaced people to return to their places of origin. But those returning to burned down villages are in urgent need of humanitarian support.

Since its release, only \$4.7 million has been given towards IOM's \$75 million appeal for 2018, the agency said.

The pledging conference will be held in Geneva, hosted by the UN, the European Commission and the Netherlands.

Read [IOM's appeal here, which is part of the wider UN humanitarian response plan.](#)