

UN seeks \$80 million to support refugees in Ethiopia

Two United Nations humanitarian agencies are jointly [seeking \\$80 million](#) to provide food assistance to refugees in Ethiopia, which hosts the second largest number of those in Africa.

In a news release issued Wednesday, the World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) said that food ration was cut by 20 per cent last year to below the 2,100 kilocalories per day required to sustain an average person.

The agencies are warning of deeper cuts from April unless new funding is received in March.

“After fleeing conflict and deprivation in their home countries, refugees deserve to be protected and supported,” said Samir Wanmali, WFP’s Acting Country Director in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia hosts more than 900,000 refugees, including those from Eritrea, Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia.

Without new contributions, 650,000 refugees living in camps could soon become even more hungry and may eventually face severe hunger that could put lives at risk.

Particularly at risk are young children who risk becoming stunted if they do not receive the right nutrients during the first 1,000 days of life.

“The malnutrition rates in the camps are already high – further ration cuts could have a devastating effect,” said UNHCR Deputy Representative Matthew Crentsil.

Recent assessments show that malnutrition rates among children under the age of five are above the emergency threshold of 15 per cent in nearly half of the 26 refugee camps.

Conflict and drought in neighbouring countries continues to force people to seek refuge in Ethiopia, which has a long tradition of hosting refugees. In 2017, nearly 110,000 refugees arrived in Ethiopia.

International Women’s Day: The ‘time

is now' to transform global push for women's rights into action – UN

This year, International Women's Day comes at a pivotal moment, and with a wave women's activism – from the #MeToo movement to #TimesUp and beyond – exposing the structures that have allowed women's oppression to flourish, the United Nations is urging the world to stand with rural and urban women activists to topple the remaining barriers to gender equality and empowerment.

“The historical and structural inequalities that have allowed oppression and discrimination to flourish are [being exposed like never before](#),” [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) said in his message on the [Day](#), marked annually on 8 March and this year

From Latin America to Europe to Asia, on social media, on film sets, on the factory floor and in the streets, women are calling for lasting change and zero tolerance for sexual assault, harassment, and discrimination of all kinds, said the UN chief, declaring that achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls “is the unfinished business of our time, and the greatest human rights challenge in our world.”

“The activism and advocacy of generations of women has borne fruit,” he continued. “There are more girls in school than ever before; more women are doing paid work and in senior roles in the private sector, academia, politics and in international organizations, including the United Nations.”

However, some remaining serious obstacles include that more than a billion women lack legal protection against domestic sexual violence; over the next decade millions more girls will undergo genital mutilation; and women's representation in parliaments stands at less than one quarter – and even lower in boardrooms.

“Where laws exist, they are often ignored, and women who pursue legal redress are doubted, denigrated and dismissed,” he lamented.

Noting that the UN should “set an example for the world,” Mr. Guterres recognizes that this is not always the case.

He did, however, point out some changes to address it, saying “We have now reached gender parity for the first time in my senior management team, and I am determined to achieve this throughout the Organization.”

Totally committed to zero tolerance of sexual harassment, Mr. Guterres added the UN's plans to improve reporting and accountability, elaborating how the Organization is working globally to prevent and address sexual exploitation and abuse by staff in peacekeeping missions.

“We at the United Nations stand with women around the world as they fight to

overcome the injustices they face – whether they are rural women dealing with wage discrimination, urban women organizing for change, women refugees at risk of exploitation and abuse, or women who experience intersecting forms of discrimination,” maintained the Secretary-General.

Noting that women’s empowerment is at the heart of the [2030 Agenda](#), he affirmed that progress on the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) means “progress for all women, everywhere.”

“Gender inequality and discrimination against women harms us all,” he underscored, saying that that gender equality “is not a favour to women,” but a human rights issue in everyone’s interests.

He asserted that investing in women lifts up communities, companies and countries.

“Women’s participation makes peace agreements stronger, societies more resilient and economies more vigorous,” he detailed, adding that discrimination against them is “detrimental to all.”

The UN chief stressed the need for transparency and accountability if women are to reach their full potential to lift up communities, societies and economies.

“Stand with women, listen to them and learn from them,” Mr. Guterres urged.

Time is Now: Rural and Urban Activists Transforming Women’s Lives

In her message for the Day, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of [UN Women](#) explained that this year’s theme captures the life of the women activists whose passion and commitment have brought change over generations and won women’s rights.

“What we see today is a remarkable gathering of [strength among women](#) all over the world, demonstrating the power of speaking with one voice, as they call for opportunity and accountability, drawing momentum from grassroots networks and coalitions that stretch right up to government leadership,” she said.

She credited feminist leaders, spotlighting Asma Jahangir of Pakistan and UN Women’s Regional Goodwill Ambassador for Africa Jaha Dukureh of the Gambia for their powerful work.

She pointed out that healthy societies have a mix of voices that provide checks and balances – important for good decision-making – and saluted those who speak out for justice.

“We commend the women who spoke out in the International Criminal Court where their testimonies have held to account those who used rape as a weapon of war,” Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka asserted.

“We celebrate activists who campaigned for equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, and we recognize those who advocated for legal reform,” she added.

The feminist movement must continue to increase its diversity to support and shape the agenda – including young men and boys, who will learn to value and respect women and girls and change the way men behave.

Recognizing the power of stereotypes to influence how people are valued, she held sway that a movement of women that can address these issues is critical, “but we also need a movement of male feminists” as a means to alter the way women are heard and seen.

“Today’s activists must empower those most likely to be left behind, the majority of whom are women, as our latest report, [Turning Promises into Action](#) reveals,” she said.

She encouraged stronger support for women’s political activism and a broader space for their civil society voices as a combined effort will better target those who need change most.

“The culture of gender-based poverty, abuse and exploitation has to end with a new generation of equality that lasts,” Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka concluded.

[Women’s prospects at work still ‘a long way’ from being equal to men’s – UN report](#)

Despite notable progress on closing gender gaps over the past 20 years, women have less access to jobs, are more likely to take low-quality employment, and face barriers to management positions, a United Nations labor report has found.

The women’s labour force participation rate worldwide stands at 48.5 per cent in 2018, 26.5 percentage points below that of their male counterparts, according to the [World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends for Women 2018 – Global snapshot](#), released Wednesday on the eve of [International Women’s Day](#).

The report, authored by the UN International Labour Organization (ILO), also shows that the global unemployment rate for women is six per cent for 2018, about 0.8 percentage points higher than that for men.

Altogether, for every 10 men in a job, only six women are employed.

“Despite the progress achieved and the commitments made to further improvement, women’s prospects in the world of work are still a long way from being equal to men’s,” said Deborah Greenfield, ILO Deputy Director-General for Policies.

“Whether it is about access to employment, wage inequality or other forms of discrimination, we need to do more to reverse this persistent, unacceptable trend by putting in place policies tailored to women, also taking into account the unequal demands that they face in household and care responsibilities,” she added.

In regions such as the Arab States and Northern Africa, female unemployment rates are still twice as large as men’s, with prevailing social norms continuing to obstruct women’s participation in paid employment.

However, women in Eastern Europe and North America register lower unemployment rates than men.

Women also face significant gaps in the quality of the employment they are in. They are more than twice as likely to be contributing family workers. This means that they contribute to a market-oriented family business, but are often subject to vulnerable conditions of employment without written contracts, collective agreements and respect for labour legislation.

As a result, women are still overrepresented in informal employment in developing countries.

The report notes that globally, four times as many men are working as employers than women in 2018. Women continue to face barriers in accessing management positions.

“Closing gender gaps in the world of work thus should remain a top priority if we want to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030,” concluded Damian Grimshaw, Director of the ILO Research Department.

Stoking fear among followers is not clever politics but a recipe for self-destruction, warns UN rights chief

In a scathing address to the Human Rights Council, the top United Nations rights official on Wednesday warned political leaders who stoke fear and intolerance among their followers for the sake of their own ambitions are merely copying the behaviour of previous generations of once strong, but ultimately catastrophic, leaders and politicians.

[“Yours will in the end become a mouse-like global reputation, never the fine example of the leader you think you are,”](#) said Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussen, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

He underscored the universality and fundamental nature – common to everyone –

that ultimately they are all human beings, able to feel, love, think and hope; and that the characteristics like colour, race, ethnicity or gender are acquired by virtue of being humans and are secondary in nature.

“The present-day hatred, and its corresponding rising uncertainties, seem to come from humans who view the relationship between the core and the bolted – on characteristics in reverse,” added Mr. Zeid.

“In their view, the differences decide everything. But this approach, if each of us were to adopt it, and act upon it, would be an open invitation to human self-annihilation.”

Recalling the life of Nelson Mandela, the values of diversity and tolerance he worked for and the respect he earned, High Commissioner Zied urged political leaders to follow Mr. Mandela’s example.

“To deserve global respect, you must begin to follow his example – committing to the spirit and letter of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” he said.

The UN human rights chief also painted a bleak picture of situations in more than 50 countries, ranging from an “apocalypse” in Syria to “ethnic cleansing” in Myanmar and anti-migration policies in many European countries and in the United States.

Mr. Zeid also praised the “real courage” of all those who stand up for and defend women’s rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, as well as the civil society movements fighting for respect of decency and rights despite overwhelming challenges.

In particular, he noted the MeToo movement, which takes on the abuse and sexual exploitation of women, an expression of solidarity and a force for dignity that is much needed, including in the wealthiest societies.

“Wherever I have travelled I have been privileged to meet women who defy restrictions on their freedom. These resilient and powerful women teach us – have, indeed, taught me – that every individual can help to reshape society, and the world,” he said.

Latin America and Caribbean must ‘radically transform’ food habits to combat obesity – UN agency

A “radical transformation” of food systems and food habits is critical to combat the growing scourge of overweight and obesity in Latin America and the

Caribbean, the United Nations food security agency said on Wednesday.

[“Eradicating hunger must not be our only concern](#) [...] in a region where 7 percent of children under the age of five are overweight and 20 percent of adults in 24 countries are obese,” Jose Graziano da Silva, the Director-General of the UN [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO), highlighted at the opening of a [regional conference](#) being held in Montego Bay, Jamaica, where he called on governments to keep the fight against malnutrition at the top of their policy agendas.

Globally, almost 1.9 billion adults are overweight and some 650 million obese. The situation is most worrying in Latin America, where about 96 million adults are obese.

In addition to the growing threat of obesity and the ailments it often accompanies, the region has also seen the number of people suffering from undernutrition rising to 42.5 million, up 2.5 million, from the previous figure of 40 million.

To address these challenges, creation of “really sustainable food systems” in which production, trade, transport and consumption combine to guarantee a really nutritional food intake is vital, the head of FAO said.

“Eating fresh locally-grown produce in place of highly-processed foods is fundamental,” he stressed.

Doing so will also help advance the implementation of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), including the global development goals related to ending hunger, improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture.

At the same time, introduction of social protection measures to strengthen family farming can also play an important part in combatting various forms of malnutrition, as well as reduce rural poverty, noted Mr. Graziano da Silva, urging also Governments to promote adaptation of agriculture to the changing climate, and to do so in a way that protects poor rural communities.