

Restive eastern DR Congo now home to one of world's worst displacement crises for children – UNICEF

25 January 2018 – More than 800,000 children have been forced from their homes by violence and armed clashes in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in what the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) calls "one of the world's worst displacement crises for children."

Inter-ethnic violence and clashes between the regular army, militia and armed groups in the provinces of Tanganyika and South Kivu have left some 1.3 million people displaced.

"Children in the eastern DRC continue to [suffer devastating consequences](#) as waves of violence destabilize the region," said Tajudeen Oyewale, the acting head of UNICEF in the vast African nation said on Thursday.

They are being sexually abused and recruited to fight.

UNICEF and its partners have identified more than 800 cases of sexual abuse, although the true scale of sexual violence being perpetrated against children is believed to be much larger.

Recent UNICEF data shows that more than 3,000 children have been recruited by militias and armed groups over the past year, raising concern over how the fighting has impacted children's health and nutritional wellbeing.

In 2017, the two provinces recorded 18,250 suspected cholera cases, twice as many as in 2016, and 18,000 suspected cases of measles. Today, numerous health centres are no longer functioning there.

"Hundreds of thousands of children in the region no longer have access to health care and education, while many have suffered atrocities at the hands of combatant," added Mr. Oyewale.

Violence has also prevented many people from working the fields to raise crops, fuelling a heightened risk of food insecurity and raising the possibility that thousands of children could suffer from malnutrition due to the lack of food.

As part of its emergency response programme in Tanganyika and South Kivu, UNICEF is providing multi-sectoral support to the displaced population, including immunizing children against measles; cholera prevention and treatment; assisting malnourished children; and offering protection, treatment and psychosocial support for children affected by violence, along with those who are injured or unaccompanied.

To assist the affected children both provinces, the UN agency has appealed for \$65 million in support of its response over the next six months.

UNICEF continues to call on all conflict parties to guarantee humanitarian access to people in urgent need of assistance.

“It is simply a brutal situation for children with no end in sight,” Mr. Oyewale stressed.

[Libya: UN relief wing and partners seek \\$313 million to assist hundreds of thousands of people](#)

25 January 2018 – With people across Libya suffering amid the fallout from a protracted political crisis, outbreaks of violence and displacement, the United Nations humanitarian wing and its partners launched on Thursday a \$313 million appeal to cover the basic needs of 940,000 who need assistance and protection.

“The difficulties people in Libya face in providing for their basic [needs are real](#), and we all need to be aware of the human cost of inaction,” said the Humanitarian Coordinator for Libya, Maria Ribeiro.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian ([OCHA](#)) noted that the 2018 Libya Humanitarian Response Plan ([HRP](#)) seeks \$313 million to assist 940,000 people this year.

“In my interactions with Libyan men, women and children, I see people who want to feel safe, have their rights respected and know that they do not have to live from day to day,” explained Ms. Ribeiro.

The current crisis in Libya – which has been in conflict since a disputed election in 2014 following the 2011 toppling of long-time leader Muammar Gaddafi – is the result of ongoing hostilities among rival factions, political instability and a vacuum of effective governance that has resulted in a further breakdown of functioning systems within the country.

The 2018 HRP – the third coordinated appeal in Libya – is being launched on behalf of the humanitarian community in partnership with the Libyan authorities. It will help to implement 71 projects by 22 organizations, including UN agencies as well as national and international non-governmental organizations.

The projects aim to assist with deteriorating living conditions by extending civilian protections, in accordance with international law, to ensure basic service access for internally the displaced, returnees and the most vulnerable non-displaced Libyans, including migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

The funds will also help to strengthen families' capacities to cope with the continued pressures of instability, fragmentation and economic decline.

The UN relief wing has more on the Libya crisis [here](#)

[Safety of children returning to Myanmar must be guaranteed, before repatriation – UNICEF](#)

25 January 2018 – Improved security and unimpeded humanitarian access in Myanmar are essential before Rohingya children can be returned from Bangladesh, a senior official of the United Nations children's agency has said.

“Some 58% of the refugees are children, many of whom are still [traumatized by their experiences](#) of violence,” said UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Justin Forsyth on Wednesday, speaking from the Kutupalong refugee camp in southern Bangladesh.

“It is critical that their rights and needs in terms of protection and aid are front and centre in any agreement to return families to Myanmar. Return of refugees to Myanmar must be voluntary, safe and dignified,” he added.

The vast Kutupalong camp shelters many of the 688,000 Rohingya refugees who have fled across the border from Myanmar's Rakhine State following an outbreak of violence there in late August last year. More than half of the refugees are children.

Until the safety and wellbeing of any child returning to Myanmar can be guaranteed, talk of repatriation is premature

“In just the last few days we have heard reports of fires and shooting in villages across the border. Until the safety and wellbeing of any child returning to Myanmar can be guaranteed, talk of repatriation is premature,” he stressed, while praising the leadership of Bangladesh for supporting these desperate people and helping avoid “the worst potential consequences of this human calamity.”

However, Mr. Forsyth pointed out that with the rainy season approaching, there were still huge challenges ahead.

“Conditions in the camps here are undoubtedly harsh – the overcrowding, the shortages of clean water, sanitation, health care and

education all carry a particular risk for children.”

Working with partners, UNICEF has dug hundreds of water-bore wells, installed up to 16,000 toilets, helped immunize nearly a million children and adults against cholera, screened 335,000 children for malnutrition, and provided learning for nearly 80,000 children.

Even so, waterborne and other diseases are a constant threat in the overcrowded camps, which need to be urgently decongested to ensure basic facilities reach all inhabitants. Currently, up to 100 people must use a single latrine and water supplies often run short.

More must also be done to protect vulnerable children from traffickers and other dangers and to provide psychosocial care to those who are still traumatized by the experiences that drove them from their homes.

Learning and recreational spaces for children have been expanded rapidly, but still fall well short of the needs. Nearly 220,000 children are currently deprived of an education.

“The longer these children remain without the chance to learn, the greater the risk that they will miss out on the chance to build a future for themselves and their families,” Mr. Forsyth warned.

[UN chief condemns double bombing in Libyan city of Benghazi](#)

24 January 2018 – Condemning the double bombing in the Libyan city of Benghazi, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres underscored that there can be no military solution to the crisis plaguing the country.

According to reports, more than 20 people, including civilians and children were killed in the attack in the city's Al-Salmani district and many others wounded.

In a [statement](#) attributable to his spokesperson, Mr. Guterres also expressed concerns over reports of summary executions being carried out in Benghazi in retaliation for the attack.

“The perpetrators of the attack in Al-Salmani, and of any criminal acts carried out in retaliation, must be brought to justice,” added the statement.

In the statement, the Secretary-General also expressed his deepest condolences to the bereaved families and wished the injured swift recovery.

[Spike in attacks on 'blue helmets' means UN peace operations must adapt, says peacekeeping chief](#)

24 January 2018 – With United Nations 'blue helmets' facing increasingly grave threats, including armed groups with no interest in peace, the UN peacekeeping chief called on Wednesday for greater political engagement and leadership from the Security Council and the world body's Member countries to ensure UN troops – and the populations they serve – are better protected.

"We are being attacked by the armed groups who are looting, killing, raping and they have no interest in peaceful solution," Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, told reporters in New York at a briefing on a new report on reducing casualties among UN peacekeepers.

"So, it is because we have these very different dangerous environments that we have to change," he said, calling specifically for deployment of troops that are well-trained, well-equipped and with the right mindset.

Doing so, Mr. Lacroix underlined, will not only help reduce fatalities, but will also facilitate the implementation of mandates assigned to UN missions and protect civilian populations.

In November 2017, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres had appointed Lieutenant General (Retired) Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz of Brazil, who held senior positions at a number of UN peacekeeping missions, to lead a high-level review to identify why the UN has had so many casualties caused by acts of violence in recent years, and what should be done to reduce these casualties.

Made public on Tuesday, the report states that with the influx of armed groups, extremists, organized crime, and other criminal elements and threats, the 'blue helmet' and UN flag no longer offer "natural" protection to peacekeepers.

VIDEO: Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix talks about the 'Cruz report'.

Describing the overall report a "very, very candid assessment" of the problems and what should be done to address them, Mr. Lacroix said that an [action plan](#) has been developed to implement it.

"The 'Cruz report' and the action plan that we will implement, are about the reducing fatalities in peacekeeping but they touch most issues that are

relevant to performance. They address issues such as are we implementing our own rules even down to the basic levels – are we playing by our own book,” he added.

The plan focuses on three key areas- – operational behaviour and mindset; capacity building and readiness; and support issues – and includes immediate UN Headquarters and field-level actions.

Since 1948, more than 3,500 personnel have lost their lives serving in UN peace operations with 943 due to acts of violence. Since 2013, casualties have spiked, with 195 deaths in violent attacks, more than during any other five-year period in history.