

UN migration agency expands HIV/AIDS services in South Sudan displacement sites

8 November 2017 – Thanks to the recent expansion of HIV/AIDS services conducted by the United Nations migration agency, some 171,000 civilians and their host communities have gained benefit from these health facilities in South Sudan.

“The [expansion of services](#) is a crucial development in South Sudan, where internally displaced persons, such as those living in the PoC [Protection of Civilian] sites, are among key populations that are considered to be at higher-risk of contracting HIV/AIDS,” Salma Taher, Global Fund Project Officer of the UN International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)), explained the significance of this roll out.

Last year, along with tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS was one of the leading causes of mortality in the PoC sites, where people are often unable to access to health facilities outside the sites due to safety or weak infrastructure.

Since the roll out began, at protection sites in Bentiu, Malakal and Wau, in July, IOM has tested 213 people, with 16 testing positive and enrolling in antiretroviral treatment.

With timely diagnosis and antiretroviral treatment, the life expectancy of HIV-positive patients has been proven to improve substantially, for about an additional 10 years, according to a recent study.

The new comprehensive services are made possible for the broader public visiting the sites, rather than previously just services for pregnant mothers.

Moreover, HIV/AIDS awareness-raising campaigns are carried out, and hundreds of peer counselors are being trained across the country.

Mental health and psychosocial support are also provided to people living with HIV/AIDS and those affected by gender-based violence.

This expansion of health services is a joint effort of IOM, the UN Development Fund, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

ICC prosecutor urges handover of Al-Saiqa brigade commander, others wanted for alleged crimes in Libya

8 November 2017 – The International Criminal Court has issued an arrest warrant for Major Mahmoud Mustafa Busayf al-Werfalli, a commander in the Al-Saiqa Brigade accused of murdering 33 people in the context of the ongoing conflict in Libya, ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda told the United Nations Security Council.

Addressing the Council in New York, the Prosecutor also urged the international community to turn over Al-Tuhamy Mohamed Khaled, former head of the Libyan Internal Security Agency, and Saif Al-Islam Gaddafi.

Mr. Busayf Al-Werfalli, is a commander in the Benghazi-based Al-Saiqa Brigade, who, according to Ms. Bensouda, has been – and possibly still is – active in the Libyan National Army's (LNA) 'Operation National Dignity.'

In her remarks to the Council, the ICC Prosecutor appealed directly to General Khalifa Haftar, head of the Libyan National Army, "to demonstrate, by concrete actions, respect for international justice by ensuring Mr al-Werfalli's immediate transfer to the Libyan authorities so that he may be surrendered to the court without delay."

"My Office continues to request States Parties, non-States Parties and organizations to assist in securing the arrest of persons subject to an ICC warrant," Ms. Bensouda told the Council.

The call for accountability comes amidst continued concern over the security situation in Libya, which has been in conflict since a disputed election in 2014 following the 2011 toppling of long-time leader Muammar Gaddafi.

In recent months, Ms. Bensouda said she noted "with grave concern" reports of unlawful killings, including the execution of detained persons; kidnappings and forced disappearances; torture; prolonged detentions without trial or other legal process; and arbitrary detention, torture, rape, and other ill-treatment of migrants in official and unofficial detention centres.

Reports have also emerged that 36 male corpses were found in the totem of al-Abyar, outside of Benghazi.

"This is also of grave concern," she said. "The bodies were reportedly handcuffed, showed signs of torture, and displayed bullet wounds to the head."

The prosecutor also echoed Ghassan Salamé in condemning recent airstrikes in a residential neighbourhood in Derna that appear to have resulted in the tragic deaths of civilians, including at least 12 children and women.

[UN agriculture agency launches handbook to improve safety in banana farming sector](#)

8 November 2017 – The United Nations agriculture agency and the Government of Ecuador launched Wednesday a practical guide for workers in the banana sector – the most exported fresh fruit in the world, both by volume and by economic value – to promote healthier and safer work conditions.

“The banana sector serves as an [essential source of employment and income](#) for thousands of rural households in developing countries and the manual, while initially aimed at workers in Ecuador, can be adapted >for use around the world,” said the Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)) in a news statement.

Presented on Wednesday, at the [Third Conference of the World Banana Forum](#) in Geneva, the [publication](#) outlines a series of recommendations for [trainers](#) and [workers](#) on how to manage banana farm risks and more safely carry out work.

It includes a wide range of guidelines covering topics, including proper handling, storage and use of agrochemicals/pesticides; measures for adequate personal protection, including first aid in emergency situations; ergonomic risk information; and ways to stop gender-related violence and other human rights abuses.

The conference brought together over 300 representatives from the banana sector along with other stakeholders, including UN agencies, governments, importers, exporters, retailers, producers, consumer associations, trade unions and civil society organizations.

Banana production

After cereals, sugar, coffee and cocoa, bananas are the most traded agricultural product in the world. Attempts to lower production costs often lead to disastrous consequences on the rights of workers and on the environment, according to FAO.

“For example, banana plantations use 10 times more pesticides than conventional plantations in developed countries. Elevated exposure to these agrochemicals can cause serious health problems for workers and neighbouring communities – one of the topics addressed in the manual,” FAO said in the news statement.

The manual also serves as a guide to identify risks and also as a source of information regarding current legislation to report on work-related accidents.

Of the almost 100 million tons of bananas consumed each year globally, around 20 million are exported. Of those, almost 6 million come from Ecuador, the world's largest exporter and the country chosen by the Banana Initiative for Occupational Health and Safety – coordinated by the FAO-led [World Banana Forum](#) and the non-governmental organizations Solidaridad and Bananalink – as a priority country for the manual's development.

The guide is the result of an unprecedented consensus between the public and private sectors and civil society, and includes all current legislation applicable to the sector in Ecuador. It is expected to be useful for some 250,000 direct workers and from two to 2.5 million workers related to banana exports in the country.

Given that banana farming is carried out similarly around the world, the initiative can be adapted and replicated in banana producing countries from Latin America to Asia and the Pacific, incorporating their own legislation.

[Bonn: Participants at UN conference examine human mobility in an era of climate change](#)

8 November 2017 – As the number of people displaced worldwide due to climate change-related events continues to grow, the United Nations and its partners are focusing on regional approaches, framed by existing international practice, to respond to the issue of 'climate refugees.'

The number of disaster displacements on annual average between 2008 and 2016 amounted to 25.3 million, according to figures released by the Norwegian Refugee Council. The five countries globally that have the highest proportion of their population affected by displacements are all island States: Cuba, Fiji, Philippines, Tonga and Sri Lanka.

"During this hurricane season alone for example, we saw the displacement of 1.7 million people in Cuba – that's the equivalent of 15 per cent of its population," said Camila Minerva, Humanitarian Programme Manager with Oxfam in the Dominican Republic, during a press conference on 'human mobility and climate change' at the UN Climate Conference ([COP23](#)), in Bonn, Germany.

"The poorest and the most marginalized are five times more likely to be displaced and to remain so for longer time than people in higher income countries and it is increasing with climate change," she added.

Mariam Traore, Migration, environment and climate change specialist with the UN Migration Agency ([IOM](#)) said that it is also important to remember that the slow onset effect of climate change makes people move and migrate, sometimes

in a forced way.

“In a country like Bangladesh, we did a survey last year and 40 per cent of the households we interviewed told us that climate change contributed directly to their decision to migrate,” she added.

In this context, some have suggested to create a climate refugee status, protecting those forced to leave their country because of the impacts of climate change.

“The refugee legal status is provided by the [1951 Refugee Convention](#), which is very clear on what [basis refugee status is conferred], which is basically persecution,” said Marine Franck, Programme Officer (climate change), Division of International Protection, in the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)).

“In the context of climate change displacement, there might be cases where there is persecution involved where this refugee status could apply but in most cases, it doesn’t,” she added.

She recalled that in 2011, States had suggested that UNHCR create a new status of refugee for people displaced because of climate change. “But some States were not ready at all for that,” she stated.

Ms. Franck stressed that this issue of broadening the scope of refugee protection “is not necessarily desirable, because there is a risk of undermining the refugees fleeing persecution and violent conflict.” Moreover, she explained: “We would need also to renegotiate the Convention and there is no appetite for that from States and it might not be the most effective protection tool.”

UNHCR thinks it is better to look at what exists at the regional level and try to have a bottom-up approach with broadening at the regional level using practices that are effective. She mentioned humanitarian protection visas, temporary protection and stay arrangements, as well as migration laws that can provide real protection.

“It is much more effective because States are going to look at what their neighbours are doing and may adopt the same kind of procedures, rather than if we adopt a global convention or a new category [...] it might not be easy to negotiate and it is not also sure that States will then implement it properly,” Ms. Franck said.

[Agreement boosts cooperation between](#)

UN space affairs office and UAE

8 November 2017 – The United Nations and the United Arab Emirates have underscored their commitment to work together in the peaceful uses of outer space.

This follows the signing of an agreement between the heads of the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs ([UNOOSA](#)) and the UAE Space Agency on Wednesday.

The ceremony was held during the High-Level Forum on [Space as a Driver for Socio-Economic Sustainable Development](#), jointly organized by the two agencies and taking place this week in Dubai.

Through the agreement, known as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), UNOOSA and the UAE Space Agency will work on capacity-building initiatives in both the technical and legal aspects of the peaceful uses of outer space.

They also will undertake joint research projects on the use of space technology and applications for economic and social benefits, in addition to promoting and coordinating regional cooperation on these topics.

“Together we will work on a number of initiatives to promote and facilitate the peaceful uses of outer space and the use of space as a tool for the achievement of the [2030 Agenda](#) [...] and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)),” said UNOOSA Director Simonetta Di Pippo, pointing to, among others, a particular focus on the Middle East region, as well as science, technology, engineering and mathematics education (STEM), especially for women and girls.

The five-year MOU also addresses the UAE Space Agency’s support for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the first UN conference on space.

That event, known as [UNISPACE+50](#), will take place in June of next year and will provide an opportunity for the international community to consider the future course of global space cooperation.

Wednesday’s session of the High-Level Forum also saw the announcement of a proposal by Thailand to host a regional office for UNOOSA.

Representatives from around 50 countries are attending the High-Level Forum in Dubai, which concludes on Thursday.