

One-third of Rohingya refugee families in Bangladesh vulnerable, UN agency finds

7 November 2017 – The innovative data collection technology employed by the United Nations refugee agency for the first stage of Rohingya family counting in Bangladesh has revealed a worrying statistic: one-third of the refugee population is vulnerable.

“In an innovative and revealing family counting exercise, UNHCR [the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees] teams found that one-third of the families are vulnerable,” Duniya Aslam Khan, UNHCR spokesperson told reporters at the regular press briefing in Geneva.

Ms. Khan said that “14 per cent are single mothers holding their families together with little support in harsh camp conditions. Others are struggling with serious health problems or disabilities.”

There is also a high proportion of elderly people at risk, unaccompanied and separated children – some of them taking care of younger siblings. Children and women have made up more than half of the total population.

The individual biometric registration exercise, conducted by UNHCR and Bangladesh’s Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission (RRRC), took place in the Kutupalong camp, makeshift and extension areas and Balukhali makeshift areas and is now extending to further south.

More than 100 UNHCR-hired enumerators have so far gathered data on 120,284 families comprising 517,643 refugees.

This emergency registration was made successful thanks to the new data collecting technology.

The geo-tagged data collection device was designed to use GPS even without network coverage, making data consolidation and analysis more efficient.

The barcoded RRRC Family Counting Card has also given a shape to Rohingya refugees living in Bangladesh in terms of demography and location.

“Because the refugees are still on the move and site zoning is still in progress, the enumerators visit their shelters individually, meaning that refugees do not have to queue to be counted,” Ms. Khan explained.

UN health agency recommends farmers stop using antibiotics in healthy animals

7 November 2017 – Farmers and the food industry should stop using antibiotics routinely to promote growth and prevent disease in healthy animals, the United Nations health agency said on Tuesday.

A lack of effective antibiotics is as serious a [security threat](#) as a sudden and deadly disease outbreak, said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) in a news release on the new guideline aimed at helping preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics for humans by reducing their unnecessary use in animals.

Strong, sustained action across all sectors is vital if we are to turn back the tide of antimicrobial resistance and keep the world safe, he added.

In some countries, some 80 per cent of the total consumption of medically important antibiotics is in the animal sector, largely for growth promotion in healthy animals.

Over-use and misuse of antibiotics in animals and humans is contributing to the rising threat of [antibiotic resistance](#). Some types of bacteria that cause serious infections in humans have already developed resistance to most or all of the available treatments, and there are very few promising options in the research pipeline.

WHO [strongly recommends](#) an overall reduction in the use of all classes of medically important antibiotics in food-producing animals, including complete restriction of these antibiotics for growth promotion and disease prevention without diagnosis.

Healthy animals should only receive antibiotics to prevent disease if it has been diagnosed in other animals in the same flock, herd, or fish population, according to the updated WHO [guidelines](#) on use of medically important antimicrobials in food-producing animals.

Many countries have already taken action to reduce the use of antibiotics in food-producing animals. For example, since 2006, the European Union has banned the use of antibiotics for growth promotion. Consumers are also driving the demand for meat raised without routine use of antibiotics, with some major food chains adopting “antibiotic-free” policies for their meat supplies.

Alternative options to using antibiotics for disease prevention in animals include improving hygiene, better use of vaccination, and changes in animal housing and husbandry practices.

‘Catastrophic’ humanitarian blockade in Yemen putting millions at risk, UN warns

7 November 2017 – A blockade on basic supplies to war-ravaged Yemen is threatening millions of people and should be lifted immediately, the United Nations said on Tuesday.

The call follows a reported decision on Saturday by Saudi Arabia, which is leading the coalition fighting Houthi separatists in the country, to close air and sea ports in Yemen.

The three-year conflict has claimed the lives of well over 5,000 civilians and contributed to one of the world’s biggest humanitarian disasters, according to the United Nations.

Yemen imports up to 90 per cent of its daily needs and seven million people are being kept alive by humanitarian aid.

“Humanitarian operations are being blocked as a result of the closure ordered by the Saudi-led coalition, Jens Laerke, a spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) told reporters at the regular press briefing in Geneva.

He said the UN has received reports that in some areas, the blockade is now impacting the daily life of Yemenis, with fuel prices jumping up to 60 per cent overnight and cooking gas jumping up to 100 per cent. “Long lines of cars are queuing at gas stations,” he added.

Mr. Laerke said humanitarian flights to and from Yemen were put on hold, and the coalition had asked UN personnel to tell all ships arriving at the sea ports of Hodeida and Saleef “to leave.”

He told reporters that the current situation in Yemen is “catastrophic.” Some seven million people are on the brink of famine and were only being kept alive thanks to humanitarian operations.

“That lifeline has to be kept open and it is absolutely essential that the operation of the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) be allowed to continue unhindered,” he stressed.

Echoing these concerns, the Office of the UN high Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)) also expressed alarm at a series of attacks on civilians in recent days that have killed dozens of people, including several children.

On 1 November, OHCHR said, two airstrikes Saudi-led coalition hit a market in

Saada governorate, killing 31 traders and guests at a hotel.

The following day in Taiz, a Houthi shelling left five children dead, according to OHCHR Spokesperson Rupert Colville.

He added that survivors said the children were playing in the street when a rocket from a Houthi-controlled area fell on them.

Mr. Colville added that UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein will soon be appointing an expert panel mandated by the Human Rights Council to investigate alleged violations and abuses of international human rights and international law committed by all parties to the conflict.

If possible, the Group of Eminent Experts will identify those responsible.

Bonn: Indigenous peoples' knowledge and wisdom valuable to climate adaptation, Peruvian activists say

7 November 2017 – Peruvian indigenous activists at the United Nations Climate Conference ([COP23](#)) in Bonn, Germany, made a strong call Tuesday for indigenous peoples to be part of the solution to tackling climate change, emphasizing their traditional wisdom and practical knowledge about adaptation methods.

"We don't want to speak only about climate change but about climate catastrophe [...] What can we do? There are alternatives, especially from the indigenous peoples, especially from the wisdom of indigenous women," said Roberto Espinoza, Advisor for the Interethnic Association for the development of the Peruvian Rainforest (Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana – AIDESEP), at a press conference.

Rosalía Yampis, Director of the Women's Program in AIDESEP, also highlighted the "very important role" indigenous women can have in climate adaptation.

"Women have this ancestral knowledge about seeds and what we have to sow," she told the press conference. She added that indigenous peoples are providing input to Peru's national contribution to the [Paris Agreement](#) in protecting the watershed.

There are about 13 million indigenous peoples in Peru. As a national indigenous rights organization, AIDESEP works to improve the health, education and housing of these peoples. It is a member organization of the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin (COICA).

We are sowing water – even if it sounds bizarre – with some special plants indigenous people know that can enhance the water cycle underground

Roberto Espinoza

According to AIDESEP, “it is amply demonstrated that indigenous territories are fundamental for the conservation of forests.” In them, generally, “deforestation is minimal, even less than in some protected natural areas. Therefore, today, one of the main strategies to counteract the loss and degradation of forests in the Peruvian Amazon is to ensure the safety and sustainable management of these territories,” explains the organization on its website.

“There are alternatives with the wisdom and knowledge of our peoples. We, as indigenous peoples, are working on these alternatives,” said Janio Sangama, from the region of San Martin, which is mostly located in the upper part of the Peruvian Amazon rainforest. “When we speak about sustainable development, we are looking after the management of our resources in a more orderly way. We worry about deforestation,” he added. “In San Martin, we had a big flood. We have a proposal called ‘hand in hand with Government’ to confront these natural catastrophes.”

He said that the indigenous peoples have begun sustainable production or orderly production with technologies from communities. “We have been managing alternative crops in our territories. We are not destroying our forest,” he underscored.

Roberto Espinoza said that “water is being reduced because of deforestation. So we are sowing water – even if it sounds bizarre – with some special plants indigenous people know that can enhance the water cycle underground,” he added.

Regarding reforestation, Jammek Manikusi, a member of AIDESEP, said indigenous people are concerned about the use of exotic plants, like pine and eucalyptus. “These plants have impacts on the soil. We want a natural reforestation with natural wisdom of the peoples, with more proper methodologies, more adapted to natural regeneration of soils in the Amazon.”

Building safe houses, UN agency helping Dominica recover from disaster

7 November 2017 – Seven weeks since hurricane Maria made landfall in Dominica and left widespread destruction in its wake, the United Nations migration agency has been supporting local tradespeople with safe construction skills to repair the damage and create conditions for a full recovery.

One of the first beneficiaries to have her house repaired by local construction workers trained by the UN International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) is 31-year-old Tessa Williams, a mother of three, whose eldest child is in a wheelchair and youngest still an infant.

“With this house, we have ensured that Tessa and her children have a safe home,” [said](#) Jan-Willem Wegdam, IOM’s team leader in Dominica.

“The community sees there is actually something happening and we have completed the training of our carpenters on safe construction skills,” he added.

Tessa was chosen by her own community to be one of the first recipients of the IOM support.

[According](#) to the UN agency, 20 teams of trained local workforce are repairing the roofs of some 400 vulnerable households which were moderately to heavily damaged in the storm. They are deployed in Wesley, Calibishi and Woodford Hill, three of the hardest-hit communities on the Caribbean island.

Furthermore, with funding from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund and the Government of the United Kingdom, IOM procured building materials in the Dominican Republic in record time and brought it to Dominica with the help of the Dutch Navy.

It’s not only about having a roof over their heads but about creating the conditions for a full recovery after a huge disaster

Rebuilding houses is also helping address some of the tensions in the community resulting from prolonged stay in makeshift dwellings or living in close coexistence with relatives or friends.

The work is also having another impact: it is keeping many people from migrating to neighbouring countries in search of better opportunities after losing their homes and means of livelihood in the aftermath of the hurricane.

“Housing projects are a great way to keep locals from leaving the island, but we need stronger funding to create as many employment opportunities as possible and to rebuild the lost dwellings,” [said](#) Mr. Wegdam, adding, “It’s not only about having a roof over their heads but about creating the conditions for a full recovery after a huge disaster.”

Dominica was hit on 18 September by the Category Five Hurricane Maria that devastated the island with winds of nearly 250 km per hour. It has been estimated that 23 per cent of buildings were destroyed, 39 per cent of the houses sustained severe damage, and further 28 per cent were affected to some degree.

However, sustained support is needed in the island as almost 2,000 persons [including](#) the elderly, single-female heads of households and persons

with chronic diseases – are still living in shelters due to destruction or severe damage to their homes.