

[Rohingya crisis: UNICEF issues 'Child Alert'; outlines urgent action to save lives](#)

20 October 2017 – Issuing a dire warning on the desperate situation of Rohingya refugee children, who now number more than 320,000 in Bangladesh, the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) has called for an end to the atrocities targeting civilians in Myanmar's Rakhine state, and immediate and unfettered access to all children affected by the violence there.

At present, UNICEF has no access to Rohingya children in northern Rakhine state, where horrific violence since late August has driven over half a million members of the minority Muslim community to seek refuge across the border in Bangladesh.

“Many [Rohingya refugee children in Bangladesh have witnessed atrocities in Myanmar no child should ever see](#), and all have suffered tremendous loss,” said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake, releasing a new report *Outcast and Desperate: Rohingya refugee children face a perilous future*.

“This crisis is stealing their childhoods. We must not let it steal their futures at the same time.”

In the report, UNICEF has called for urgent action in four key areas:

1. International support and funding for the Bangladesh Humanitarian Response Plan and humanitarian response plan for Myanmar;
2. Protection of Rohingya children and families, and immediate unfettered humanitarian access to all children affected by the violence in Rakhine State;
3. Support for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar; and
4. A long-term solution to the crisis, including implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.

The most pressing need for thousands of refugees and refugee children is food, safe water, sanitation and vaccinations. Psychosocial support, education and counselling is also urgently needed.

Meanwhile, the influx of refugees continues unabated – between 1,200 and 1,800 children are arriving per day (about 60 per cent the total number) and thousands more are said to be on way.

VIDEO: Thousands of new Rohingya refugees arrive in Bangladesh. UNHCR Video

To cope with the crisis, UN relief agencies are working at full tilt, but

funding and resources are in short supply.

Ahead of an [international pledging conference](#) on 23 October in Geneva, UNICEF has urged donors to respond promptly to the requirements of the updated Bangladesh Humanitarian Response Plan released jointly by the UN and humanitarian agencies.

The Plan calls for \$434 million, including some \$76.1 million to address the immediate needs of newly-arrived Rohingya children, as well as those who arrived before the recent influx, and children from vulnerable host communities.

The ministerial-level conference, organized by the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) and co-hosted by the European Union and Kuwait, will provide Governments an opportunity to show their solidarity and share the burden and responsibility.

More than 700,000 over-one-year-olds vaccinated in massive campaign

In the midst of a crisis which appears to overwhelm any response, UN agencies successfully concluded the first phase of a massive oral cholera vaccine (OCV) campaign, reaching over 700,000 children and people over the age of one with protection against the deadly diarrheal disease.

“The coverage is commendable as the oral cholera vaccination campaign was planned and rolled out against very tight timelines,” said Dr. N. Paranietharan, the head of the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) presence in Bangladesh.

Among the 700,487 people inoculated since the campaign was launched on 10 October, 179,848 are children aged between one and five.

“[The campaign] demonstrates the commitment of the Government of Bangladesh, partners on the ground, as well as partners such as GAVI (a public-private global health partnership) and the International Coordinating Group on vaccine provision, to help secure the health and wellbeing of these immensely vulnerable people,” added the WHO official.

The second phase is scheduled for early November to give an additional OCV dose to children aged between one and five years, for added protection.

The vaccination campaign supplements other preventive measures, such as increased access to safe water, adequate sanitation and good hygiene. To help improve hygiene, a bar of soap was also handed out to each individual administered the vaccine.

Cities and local policies key to overcome hunger, stresses head of UN agency

20 October 2017 – Highlighting the potential of cities to address malnutrition, the head of the United Nations food security agency has called for innovative partnerships between urban centres and wide range of stakeholders to overcome the challenge of food waste and to ensure a healthy and nutritious diet for all.

Multiple forms of malnutrition – overweight, obesity or micronutrient deficiencies – threaten the health of millions of people around the world, José Graziano da Silva, the Director General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), told a global meeting of mayors and representatives from more than 150 cities.

Fortunately cities are taking action and rising up to the challenge [...] high levels of creativity can be achieved if partnerships are forged with local actors, civil society, private sector and academic and producer organizations, he added.

Citing his own experience with the Zero Hunger Program in Brazil, which lifted 40 million people from poverty and hunger, the FAO Director-General stressed that a key component in the success was the participation of cities, where local governments launched popular restaurants that served balanced and nutritious food at low prices as well as prioritizing the purchase of locally produced food.

In his address to the third mayor's meeting of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact – a commitment to combat hunger and food waste and improve nutrition – Mr. Graziano da Silva also spoke of the UN agency's support to implementing the Pact.

In particular, he highlighted FAO work to promote dialogue between parliamentarians, mutual learning programs among farmers as well as South-South and Triangular Cooperation, as important means to accelerate the pace of change and the transformation of food systems.

FAO supports local governments in their food systems assessments, in the development of urban food strategies and plans, and in the definition of their investment priorities to strengthen linkages with rural areas, said the FAO Director-General.

Also in his remarks, Mr. Graziano da Silva also highlighted the need for aligning efforts with the New Urban Agenda, adopted last October, by world leaders as the new global standard for sustainable urban development.

The New Agenda makes a concrete call for better urban and territorial

planning with a view to ending hunger and malnutrition,” said Graziano da Silva, adding that it also urges for greater coordination between food and energy policies, and those regarding water, health, transport and waste.

[UN delivering coordinated humanitarian response in wake of Mogadishu bombings](#)

The United Nations has mobilized its staff and resources to aid Somalis affected by last Saturday's bomb blasts in the capital Mogadishu.

"We have called upon our colleagues in the UN family to [donate blood](#). At the same time, the entire UN family is also mobilizing in support for the response by the Federal Government and the local administration," said the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, Raisedon Zenenga.

Since last Sunday, the UN Mine Action Service ([UNMAS](#)) has deployed technical advisors, medics and explosives-detecting dog teams at the main bomb blast site near the Safari Hotel. Fire unit personnel from the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and the UN Support Office in Somalia have been using specialized life-detection equipment to search for survivors.

On Monday, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) delivered 3.8 metric tonnes of medical supplies – donated by the United Kingdom – to Mogadishu's Medina Hospital and a newly established National Emergency Operations Centre. UNICEF also erected three large tents for personnel tracing patients' relatives.

Earlier this week, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also delivered tents, a generator and 1,000 non-food item kits to Medina Hospital and the operations centre.

The UN World Health Organization(WHO) contributed three tons of medicines and other emergency relief supplies on Tuesday to treat those wounded in the explosions.

In addition, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) has delivered radios to a local ambulance company and is planning to provide cash payments to hundreds of youth who have been participating in rubble-clearing operations at the main blast site.

For its part, the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is helping to synchronise the response of various UN humanitarian agencies and the massive donations of international partners supporting the recovery effort.

On behalf of UN family in Somalia – 137 of whom have donated blood – Mr.

Zenenga expressed deep sadness over the attacks that killed more than 300 civilians and injured more than 500.

While noting that many city hospitals had been overwhelmed by the number of people wounded and were running short of supplies, he said that the UN is working closely with the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to ensure that they provide adequate support to federal and local government ministries and agencies.

“Our support as the UN family will partly go through AMISOM, including some equipment and medical supplies,” Mr. Zenenga said.

Alan Macdonald, Director of UNMAS Somalia, pointed out the important role played by the agency’s sniffer dogs in searching for secondary explosive devices around the perimeter area of the main blast site.

“In the second day, the response changed, we have explosive detection dogs but we’ve also augmented that with combat engineering support where we are helping the AMISOM soldiers with heavy equipment for removing rubble at the site,” Mr. Macdonald noted.

[INTERVIEW: Hurricane-hit Caribbean nations can build back better, says UN development official](#)

19 October 2017 – Mere mention of the Caribbean conjures up images of pristine waters, beautiful beaches and fun in the sun. However, the images emanating from the region over the past couple of months have painted a very different picture.

“A paradise turned into hell,” was how United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres described Barbuda earlier this month after visiting the island that was ravaged by Hurricane Irma. During a two-day visit to the Caribbean, he also witnessed the devastation wrought by Hurricane Maria on the small island nation of Dominica.

Mr. Guterres was accompanied by Stephen O’Malley, the [UN Resident Coordinator and Resident Representative of the UN Development Programme \(UNDP\) for Barbados and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States](#).

“People want to live here for very good reason – they’re beautiful islands, it’s where people have lived for centuries, their families have lived here for centuries,” Mr. O’Malley said in an interview with *UN News* on the side lines of the Secretary-General’s visit. “So how do you make sure that you use the right techniques to keep yourself as safe, and your country as safe, as

possible?”

Mr. O'Malley, whose remit includes Barbados and nine other countries in the region, describes what it was like for him to see the aftermath for the first time, what the priority needs are, and what countries can do to mitigate the risks as well as build back better following such disasters.

UN News: What were your initial impressions when you saw the aftermath of the recent hurricanes?

Stephen O'Malley: Dominica, maybe I'll start there because I've been to Dominica probably 10 times over the last four years. It's a country that I feel I know quite well. When we were flying in and you were looking down at this 'nature isle', as it's called, and it was totally brown... you could see the trees blown over and hardly any green at all. We came in to land at this small airport and there are all these logs which had come down from the hillsides. They were all along the waterfront. We started driving into the city and, literally, it was like going... I'm from Canada... it was like going into a city after there'd been a snowstorm but the storm was mud and not snow. It had all been pushed up to the banks, on the sides of the street. You had galvanized sheeting, you had plastic, you had mattresses, all kinds of stuff. I had seen the pictures and I have to say it was still very emotional for me to see the effect.

VIDEO: Stephen O'Malley talks about the UN helping storm-ravaged Caribbean countries as well as reducing disaster vulnerability in the region.

UN News: Can you give us a brief overview of the current situation in Barbuda and in Dominica?

Stephen O'Malley: They're very different places. Barbuda is part of a twin-island State – Antigua and Barbuda – and is a relatively small island. There's about 1,600 people there. So they were very badly affected... I mean the infrastructure was very badly hit and then we had another storm coming, another hurricane right behind that. So the Government took the decision, I think wisely, to evacuate the population. Their houses were destroyed. They had nowhere to properly shelter. So they were evacuated to Antigua by plane and by boat in one day, which was really pretty amazing.

And since then they've been sheltering here, and the Government has been working on cleaning up the island. What does that mean? It's pumping out all the standing water. When I went there two weeks ago, you were just covered in clouds of mosquitoes because of the breeding. So clean up the standing water... and then clean up dead farm animals and other animals... and establish a health post... and try and make it a place where, as people are able to, they can come back and they can start working on their homes bit by bit to restore them. They've lifted the mandatory evacuation order but for now, people go back and forth during the day.

Understandably, the people who are here [Antigua], who were evacuated, the Barbudans, like people everywhere else, they want to go home. They have one

thought in mind – how can I go home? When can I go home? And so in the meantime they've been in shelters, and the United Nations – [UNICEF](#), [UNFPA](#), [UN Women](#), [IOM](#) – we've been supporting them in those shelters. So has the Government, of course. And then some people are with family or friends. But, people want to go home. So, how can that be done in a safe way? What are the minimum conditions that people need? And of course, there wouldn't be any operational schools there. So what do you do if you have school-age children?

The biggest challenge is that the storms are getting stronger.

Dominica, I was there two weeks ago, and I was just there the beginning of this week as well. You could see the change. You could see that there was actually some green on the hillsides and the roads were clear. There's a bit more order to things. Civil servants were coming back to work because they were able to get into the city. But you know they still have some very big challenges. I mean we've managed to help the Government distribute 60 metric tonnes of food in the last week. We have to keep that up so that people feel safe and secure, that they do feel like 'okay I'm being properly taken care of, I have enough food, I have enough water, I have enough shelter, things are getting better.' People have to believe that and if they believe that, that's a very important psychological boost. They can get the medical care they need, etc.

So, it's getting better but we have a long, long way to go, and there's still parts of the country we've only maybe been to once or twice because the access has been so difficult. We were very fortunate that we had support from a number of different foreign militaries and they airdropped via helicopter or took boats in and dropped stuff off to a range of coastal communities. More than 50 different coastal communities received some kind of food and/or water drop from, primarily, the Dutch and French military but also the Americans, the Canadians, the Brits and the Venezuelans.

UN News: What are the most immediate needs right now?

Stephen O'Malley: I think the most immediate thing is to keep that good flow of relief aid to people so that they feel comfortable and they feel they're being properly taken care of. I mean, the water system is coming back up slowly, electricity is coming back up slowly but that's still mostly in the capital city of Roseau. It's people in the rural areas who we have to reach in one way or the other. So we need to make sure they have the food and the water, then they can start to shelter themselves. But we still have two more months in this hurricane season left.



Scene from Codrington town in Barbuda during the Secretary-General's visit to survey the damage caused by recent hurricanes. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

UN News: What will be the main challenges going forward?

Stephen O'Malley: I think it will be expensive to rebuild. Two years ago, there was a tropical storm over Dominica – Tropical Storm Erica. It was mostly heavy rainfall... In six hours, it did about \$480 million worth of damage. Even two years later, in some places the country's still recovering from that. So now we have damages which are clearly going to be higher than that. And so where do you get the money, as a small island developing State, to redevelop? So we have the money part.

I think the other big piece... and this is where I think the Government in Dominica is working hard... is what's the strategy? You need to have a way to get money back into people's hands. You want to get the economy going again, and then you want to start building real climate-resilient infrastructure.

On Barbuda, I think it's how do people get back and start rebuilding their lives there. Here you have people who are displaced and they want to go home. How can they do that in a way that's safe and in a way that contributes in a positive way to the redevelopment of the country? Again, you need a good strategy and certainly there'll be some funding requirements as well.

UN News: What have you heard from the people you've met who have been uprooted?

Stephen O'Malley: I think the biggest thing was the sense of shock at how fierce the storm was. I know people across the region. I know people who were in Dominica, people who told me 'you know I was sitting in a house' – a concrete house, we're not talking about a flimsy, wooden building or a tin-walled shack, we're talking about concrete-block wall houses – and people telling me 'I thought I was okay. I was in this house, and then the wind just ripped the roof off.' It was a terrifying experience for a lot of people.



Aerial view of Salybia, Dominica, where swathes of forests were left bare following the category-5 hurricanes that struck the region. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

UN News: In a region that has seen its share of natural disasters, what can countries do to mitigate the risks, as well as build back better?

Stephen O'Malley: I think that's a very important question. The countries know their location. The biggest challenge is that the storms are getting stronger. And that seems to be the consensus of scientists, that these storms are going to get stronger for a variety of interrelated reasons – the warming Caribbean Sea and other things. We may get more frequent storms but the storms we get will be stronger. So, what do you require to have a house or an office building that can withstand that? It's interesting, you know you can go to communities and you can see three or four houses that are really badly affected and another one that isn't. You can look at that house and you can say, 'well I can see that this house was constructed to building code.' How do you make sure everybody has the resources they need, because not everybody has the money to build to code. And then, those houses that already exist that need to be retrofitted, again you have to help people with that.

So for me, the technologies are not difficult. They're not complex. People know them. It's how do we enforce the building codes. And then, it's the reality of some of these islands... I mean Dominica is a mountainous island. You have these very steep hillsides and a coast road running along there. In the best of times, you're getting rock fall and other debris coming down the mountains. So what can you do about that so that every time you have a serious storm, you don't have your entire road network go down for a week to two weeks? What are some of the other things you can do with the power systems? Now they have one interconnected power system, one interconnected transmission grid, and the electrical company is looking at the question of 'well, maybe we should split this grid into different pieces so that it might be less vulnerable.' You can bury the lines. You can see that in the Caribbean, you still have a lot of lines that are strung on poles. And that's another question – could we bury more of the lines and that would stop the electricity from going down.

So there are things we can do. People want to live here for very good reason – they're beautiful islands, it's where people have lived for centuries, their families have lived here for centuries. So how do you make sure that you use the right techniques to keep yourself as safe, and your country as safe, as possible.

[Governments endorse UN-backed plan to tackle cancer, diabetes and other deadly diseases](#)

19 October 2017 – Global leaders have pledged to take bold action to reduce suffering from noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), which include the world's leading killers – heart and lung diseases, cancers and diabetes – the United Nations health agency has reported.

Governments on Wednesday endorsed the [Montevideo Roadmap 2018-2030 on NCDs as a Sustainable Development Priority](#) at the opening of the three-day global conference in the Uruguayan capital after which the strategy is named, hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the country's Presidency.

“It is shocking to see the growing toll diseases like cancer and diabetes are taking on the people who can least afford healthcare,” said WHO Director-General Tedros Ad-hanom Ghebreyesus.

The pledge follows world leaders' agreement to reduce by one-third premature NCDs deaths by 2030, as part of the UN's [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development.

Today, these diseases kill 40 million annually, more than any other cause of

death, of which 15 million occur prematurely among people aged 30-70 years, and seven million in low- and low-middle income countries.

“Governments must act on pledges to prevent these diseases in the first place, and to ensure that people can obtain services to treat them,” he added. “Failure to do this imposes massive costs on individuals and communities. It totally contradicts global commitments to sustainable development.”

The Montevideo Roadmap highlights the need for coordinated and coherent action from all sectors and the whole of society, as many of the main drivers of ill health lie beyond the control of health ministries, systems and professionals. Non-State actors, including civil society and industry, have important roles to play.

In addition to improved disease detection and treatment, the Roadmap also points out that the bulk of NCD deaths could have been prevented by action, such as against tobacco, unhealthy diets and harmful use of alcohol.

Among challenges identified in the Roadmap are uneven and insufficient progress to reduce premature deaths from NCDs; influence of the private sector on governments to prioritize trade over public health goals; and lack of high-level political leadership to ensure that health promotion and NCD prevention and control are part of all areas of government policy.

Mr. Tedros Adhanom, who last week announced the launch of a new WHO high-level commission on NCDs, added: “This conference is a critical opportunity to accelerate efforts to get ahead of noncommunicable diseases. We must be prepared to have some tough conversations, and to take brave action.”

“One vital step is for all countries to follow trailblazers, like Uruguay, that have ratified the protocol to eliminate the illicit trade in tobacco products,” he added. “Ensuring that this protocol can come into force next year is key to advancing the impact of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.”

The Montevideo Roadmap will guide global preparations for the UN General Assembly’s third High-level Meeting on NCDs next year to assess progress in meeting the target of reducing premature NCD deaths by 25 per cent by 2025 and then by one-third by 2030.