

UN migration chief urges more support for Rohingyas fleeing Myanmar or 'thousands will suffer'

19 October 2017 – The United Nations migration agency and its partners are supporting Bangladesh in coordinating assistance for the influx of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees, including with clean water and sanitation, shelter, food and psychosocial care for the most vulnerable.

The world has rarely witnessed [a refugee crisis of such speed](#), with more than half a million crossing into Bangladesh in just over a month, said William Lacy Swing, Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), on Wednesday, as he completed a three-day visit to Bangladesh.

The arc of misery that exists between Northern Rakhine state and Cox's Bazar is deeply upsetting – too many people suffering desperately with too little support, he said, adding that just two days ago, some 1,500 more Rohingya refugees waded through a river as monsoon rains drenched the country.

The Bangladesh Government has confirmed that it will move an estimated 15,000 people currently stranded in a so-called 'no man's land' near the Anjuman Para border crossing point in Cox's Bazar's Ukhia District, into more appropriate settlement areas.

Director General Swing began his visit with a day-long tour of the makeshift settlements in Ukhia and Teknaf sub-districts, where an estimated 800,000 refugees are now living, to observe the scale of the crisis and the sheer enormity of needs.



William Lacy Swing, the Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), visits Rohingya refugees at makeshift settlements in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar. Photo: IOM

I saw women carrying small babies, only a few days old, sometimes born while their young mothers were fleeing deadly violence in torrential rains. I saw young children, who had lost not just their parents, but any remnants of hope, Mr. Swing stated.

He called for global commitment to these women and children, who are among the most vulnerable in the world, to do everything possible to ensure that their suffering stops here. If adequate resources are not mobilized by the international community, we cannot make that commitment. Thousands will suffer without food, shelter, health care and protection, he emphasized.

We must make a commitment to these women and children, who are among the most vulnerable in the world, that we will do everything in our ability to ensure that their suffering stops here.

Based on the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State established by Myanmar's Office of the State Counsellor and the Kofi Annan Foundation, the Director General highlighted the critical importance of a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

“Humanitarian aid alone is not a solution. The root causes of this crisis are in Myanmar and there can be no lasting peace in Rakhine without inclusive development,” he said, pointing to the recommendations as a roadmap to peaceful co-existence and welcoming the Myanmar Government's commitment to implementing the Commission's findings.

“The first step in that implementation process will be to urgently allow UN agencies to resume their work in Rakhine state,” Mr. Swing said.

Since late August, IOM has scaled up quickly, providing: shelter to 379,000 people; health consultations to 47,000 individuals; over 11,000 dignity kits; 678,000 litres of water; and 200 staff to assist the Health Ministry in vaccinating 679,000 people against cholera. IOM staffing has also been boosted with 443 staff and in-country volunteers.

[Despite drop in under-five mortality rate, 7,000 newborns die every day – UN report](#)

19 October 2017 – More must be done to stop babies from dying the day they are born, United Nations agencies said in a new report issued Thursday, which argued that life-saving know-how and technologies must be made readily available – particularly in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa – where they are most needed.

Although the number of children dying before age five is at a new low – 5.6 million in 2016 compared with nearly 9.9 million in 2000 – the proportion of newborn deaths during that period has jumped from 41 to 46 per cent – or 7,000 babies.

This is according to the [Levels and Trends in Child Mortality 2017](#), released today by the Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (IGME) – comprised of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank and the Population Division in the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs.

"The lives of 50 million children under-five have been saved since 2000, a testament to the serious commitment by governments and development partners to tackle preventable child deaths," said Stefan Swartling Peterson, the UN Children's Fund's (UNICEF) Chief of Health, in a joint press statement.

But without a greater effort to stop babies from dying the day they are born, or days after their birth, this progress will remain incomplete. "We have the knowledge and technologies that are required – we just need to take them where they are most needed," he added.

Current trends suggest that between 2017 and 2030, 30 million newborns will die within first 28 days of life. As such, the agencies stress that measures must be taken to achieve universal health coverage and ensure that more newborns survive and thrive, including by serving marginalized families.

Universal health coverage and improving quality and availability of services

"To prevent illness, families require financial power, their voices to be heard and access to quality care," says Dr. Flavia Bustreo, WHO's Assistant Director-General for Family, Women's and Children's Health. "Improving quality of services and timely care during and after childbirth must be prioritized."

Tim Evans, Senior Director of Health Nutrition and Population at the World Bank Group said that it is unconscionable that in 2017, pregnancy and child birth are still life-threatening conditions for women.

"The best measure of success for universal health coverage is that every mother should not only be able to access health care easily, but that it should be quality, affordable care that will ensure a healthy and productive life for her children and family. We are committed to scaling up our financing to support country demand in this area, including through innovative mechanisms like the [Global Financing Facility](#)," he added, referring to the principle financing arm of the UN-backed [Every Woman Every Child](#) initiative.

Despite progress, large disparities in child survival still exist across regions and countries – especially in Southern Asia sub-Saharan Africa.

"This new report highlights the remarkable progress since 2000 in reducing mortality among children under age five," said UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Liu Zhenmin.

Yet many deaths at these ages are easily preventable through simple, cost-effective interventions administered before, during and immediately after birth. "Reducing inequities and reaching the most vulnerable newborns, children and mothers are essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target on ending preventable childhood deaths and for ensuring that no one will be left behind."

[With fast-growing youth population, Africa's boasts enormous potential – UN deputy chief](#)

18 October 2017 – African countries individually represent relatively small markets, but collectively, they represent enormous market potential, the United Nations deputy chief told an Africa Week event in New York on Wednesday.

“The continent’s large and growing population represents [enormous market potential](#), especially with growing urbanization contributing to rapid growth in consumption by households and businesses,” said Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed in her keynote address to the [event](#), titled ‘Regional and Economic Integration in Africa: How to Effectively Involve Africa’s Youth across National Borders.’

Yet, despite this potential, she continued, intra-African trade represents only about 13 per cent of Africa’s total trade.

By building on market potential and promoting regional integration, African countries could reduce their dependency on the sale of primary commodities, and shift to value added products – creating employment, reducing inequalities, investing in sustainable infrastructure and ensuring sustainable economic growth.

Establishing a Continental Free Trade Area, as agreed by the African Union in 2012, would be a major step in the right direction.

“Once established, it would be the largest free trade area in the world with 54 member states – a single market of more than one billion people with a young and growing population,” she said.

The transformative changes envisaged in Africa’s development vision, Agenda 2063, can only be realized if they are forged around stronger regional integration, she added.

There are also encouraging success stories elsewhere. Today, regional blocks in South and Central America, Southeast Asia and China play a major role in global economy.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations ([ASEAN](#)) Free Trade Area was established in 1992 to eliminate trade and non-trade barriers and improve the Southeast Asia’s competitiveness. Consequently, intra-ASEAN trade more than doubled between 1995 and 2010, and kept increasing to reach around 24 per cent of global trade last year – and 40 per cent if trade with China is included.

“We can achieve the same success in Africa,” Ms. Mohammed said.

Africa has the fastest growing youth population in the world, with 60 per cent of its population under 24.

Harnessing their capacity requires greater investments in education, especially in science and technology, to ensure a robust labour force capable of meeting the increasingly competitive demands of today’s globalized markets, she said.

Noting that gender inequality is costing sub-Saharan Africa tens of billions a year, she stressed the need to truly integrate women into Africa’s economies towards creating a prosperous and vibrant Africa.

Iraq: Security Council voices concern over reported violence in Kirkuk

18 October 2017 – The Security Council on Wednesday expressed concern over recent reports of violence near the city of Kirkuk in northern Iraq.

According to media reports, the city was reportedly seized by Iraqi Government forces from Kurds.

“Council members called on all sides to refrain from the threat and use of force, and to engage in constructive dialogue as a pathway to de-escalation and a means to preserve Iraqi unity while upholding the provisions of the Iraqi constitution,” said a press statement issued by the 15-member body.

The Council reaffirmed its respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and unity of Iraq, as well as the importance of remaining focused on efforts to defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh).

The Council likewise voiced its full support for UN efforts to facilitate dialogue between Iraqi stakeholders.

Security Council strongly condemns terrorist attacks across Afghanistan

18 October 2017 – The United Nations Security Council has strongly condemned a wave of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan that killed at least 70 people and

injured more than 200.

“The members of the Security Council condemn in the strongest terms the heinous and cowardly terrorist attacks that took place in Paktia, Ghazni and Kabul,” said a [press statement](#) issued by the 15-member body on Tuesday.

The Taliban has claimed responsibility for the attacks that reportedly targeted police and Government facilities across the country.

The Council also reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security and that all States need to combat such threats by all means.

The Council also underlined the need to bring perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these acts to justice, urging all States to cooperate actively with the Government of Afghanistan and all other relevant authorities in this regard.

The Council expressed its deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government of Afghanistan and wished a speedy and full recovery to those who were injured.