

UNICEF warns of nutrition crisis affecting 165,000 children in Mali

9 October 2017 – A nutrition crisis, exacerbated by continuing violence, instability and displacement, is threatening the lives and futures of thousands of children in Mali, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) warned today.

A report published today shows that an estimated 165,000 children are expected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition across the country in 2018.

Behind [these figures](#) are the lives of the most vulnerable and forgotten girls and boys in Mali, said UNICEF Representative Lucia Elmi in a press release.

We must provide life-saving treatment and ensure each and every one of these children can fully recover. At the same time, we need to invest in the critical first 1,000 days of the lives of children to reduce the risk of acute malnutrition from occurring in the first place.

The rate of acute malnutrition among children under five has reached critical levels in the conflict-affected areas of Timbuktu and Gao, while the national rate also remains very high.

Behind these figures are the lives of the most vulnerable and forgotten girls and boys in Mali

The report finds acute malnutrition of children in Timbuktu has risen to 15.7 per cent and in Gao to 15.2 per cent, a worrying rise from serious to critical level on the World Health Organisation’s classification scale. Serious levels of acute malnutrition were also recorded in the regions of Kayes, at 14.2 per cent, and in Taoudéni, at 14.3 per cent, while the national rate is 10.7 per cent.

Children who suffer from the severe form of acute malnutrition have grave muscle wasting, very low weight for their height, and are nine times more likely to die in case of disease due to a weakened immune system.

Since the 2012 political and security crisis in Mali, violence and instability have led to displacements of population and disruption of social services in the north of the country, with detrimental impact on the nutritional status of the most vulnerable girls and boys. Other factors, such as limited access to water and sanitation in northern areas and childhood diseases like diarrhea, acute respiratory infections and malaria, have aggravated the situation.

Investing in the first 1,000 days of a child, through promotion of practices, such as exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and handwashing with

clean water and soap, can effectively prevent malnutrition.

[UN chief lauds Dominica's vision to become first climate-resilient nation after recent devastation](#)

8 October 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres visited Dominica on Sunday, taking stock of the immense damage caused by Hurricane Maria last month and the relief efforts underway, as well as paying tribute to its leaders for their vision to not only rebuild but to become the world's first climate-resilient nation.

The category-5 storm made landfall on 18 September, thrashing the country with extreme winds and rain. It left people without electricity and water, destroyed homes and health clinics and isolated communities on the mountainous island. The UN and its partners recently launched an appeal for \$31.1 million to reach over 90 per cent of Dominicans – some 65,000 people – in the next three months.

“I have never seen anywhere else in the world a forest completely decimated without one single leaf on any tree,” said Mr. Guterres, who flew by helicopter over some of the most affected areas. “In every community, most of the buildings are destroyed or heavily damaged.”

Speaking at a joint press conference with Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit in the capital, Roseau, Mr. Guterres echoed concerns similar to those expressed yesterday during a visit to Antigua and Barbuda, where he witnessed the destruction caused by Hurricane Irma and met with displaced persons.



Secretary-General António Guterres tours Dominica in the aftermath of the devastation left behind by Hurricane Maria. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

“One is to make sure the international community fully recognizes that the intensity of hurricanes and multiplication of hurricanes in the Caribbean in this season is not an accident. It is the result of climate change.”

Citing research by the UN World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Secretary-General said that natural disasters had tripled, while the economic damaged caused by them has increased five-fold.

“Today, there is scientific proof that climate change is largely responsible for the dramatic increase in the intensity and devastation caused by the hurricanes in the Caribbean and by many other phenomena around the world.”

There is scientific proof that climate change is largely responsible for the dramatic increase in the intensity and devastation caused by the hurricanes in the Caribbean Secretary-General Guterres

In addition to seeing the destruction by air, Mr. Guterres, accompanied by the Prime Minister, visited Salybia in the Kalinago territory, where they met with local authorities and members of the community during a distribution of relief aid.

“We thank you for bearing witness today, bearing witness to the future of all humanity if we do not respond to climate change,” stated Prime Minister Skerrit, who just two weeks ago told the UN General Assembly in New York that he had come straight from “the front line of the war on climate change.”



Aerial view of the devastation in Dominica following successive category five hurricanes in September 2017. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

“We thank you for taking the time to walk with us on this battlefield of shattered lives,” he added at today’s press conference.

“Our devastation is so complete that our recovery has to be total,” Mr. Skerrit said. “And so we have a unique opportunity to be an example to the world, an example of how an entire nation rebounds from disaster and how an entire nation can be climate resilient for the future.”

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Prime Minister Skerrit of Dominica

“We did not choose this opportunity. We did not wish it. Having had it thrust upon us, we have chosen actively and decisively to be that example to the world.”

He added that the UN has an important role in guiding Dominica on its journey to become the world’s first climate-resistant nation, with good analysis on how to achieve and monitor national climate resilience.

Together, the Secretary-General and the Prime Minister also met with UN staff and non-governmental partners, who have set up a coordination centre at a local hotel that suffered heavy damage during the hurricane.

Noting the difficult circumstances under which they are working, Mr. Guterres expressed his appreciation to the staff, adding: “I’m very proud to be your colleague in these circumstances.”

UN chief urges global solidarity, accelerated climate action after visit to hurricane-stricken Barbuda

7 October 2017 – Having seen first-hand the destruction wrought by the recent hurricanes in the Caribbean, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres on Saturday called for the full mobilization of the international community to support the people of the affected areas, while stressing the need to accelerate climate action.

“I have just witnessed a [level of devastation](#) that I have never seen in my life,” Mr. Guterres told a press conference following a visit to storm-battered Barbuda.

“I have been in areas torn by conflict. In my own country, I have seen earthquakes, I’ve seen storms [...] I have never seen such a high-level of devastation like the one that I witnessed in Barbuda,” he stated.

“This must make us think seriously,” added Mr. Guterres, who arrived today for a two-day visit to Antigua, Barbuda and Dominica to survey the damage and to assess what more the UN can do to help people recover from the [back-to-back, category 5 hurricanes](#) that struck the region recently.

The Secretary-General cited “a clear link” between the level of greenhouse gas in the atmosphere, including CO₂, the temperature of the water and the intensity of the rainstorms and of the different hurricanes in the region and in other parts of the world.

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Hurricane Irma, which struck the region in early September, had winds of 300 km per hour for 37 hours – the longest such period ever recorded.

“So the link between climate change and the devastation we are witnessing is clear, and there is a collective responsibility of the international community to stop this suicidal development,” stated Mr. Guterres.

“And for that, it is essential that the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change is fully endorsed and respected but also to recognize that the commitments made in Paris are not enough,” he said.

Mr. Guterres also stressed the need to mobilize resources, including through innovative financial mechanisms, so that people can rebuild their lives, noting that middle-income countries such as Antigua and Barbuda cannot do it alone.

“This is an obligation of the international community, because they are suffering the effects of climate change but they have not contributed to it.”

In Barbuda, the Secretary-General walked through Codrington town and met with some of the returnees. The island’s 1,600 residents were evacuated to Antigua before Hurricane Irma struck last month. In Antigua, many of the displaced are staying in shelters, while others with family and friends. Some residents have been traveling back to Barbuda to check on their homes and lands.

Since the disasters struck, the UN and partners have delivered relief by both air and the sea, reaching thousands across the region with food, water purification tablets, water storage tanks, tents, school kits, mosquito nets and cash assistance. They also launched a \$113.9 million appeal to cover humanitarian needs for the immediate period ahead. The UN family is also supporting those staying in the shelters.

Mr. Guterres had a chance to meet with some of the displaced during a visit to the National Technical Training Center in Antigua, which is currently sheltering 112 people, and even got a lesson from some of the younger residents in ‘warri’ a game that was brought over to the region from Africa and is played with 48 seeds on a rectangular board with 12 receptacles or ‘houses.’

“The most immediate need they have right now is privacy,” Samantha Burnette, who manages the shelter at the Training Centre, told *UN News*. “Most of them are complaining that they have been bunking with a lot of people. So they don’t have the space they need.”

Most of the residents have made up their mind to stay out the year in Antigua. “Some of them are saying there’s nothing in Barbuda to go back to right now,” said Ms. Burnette. “They don’t mind going back but after it has been rebuilt. Some of them are willing to go back as it is now. But the majority are here and they don’t want to move and go nowhere. If they do go over, it’s just for the day and they come back.”

Despite the difficulties they have gone through, the residents have adjusted well to their new situation, Ms. Burnette said. “I really feel they have adjusted themselves well. You can see they are smiling a little more now.”

[As Bubonic and Pneumonic plagues spread in Madagascar, UN health agency](#)

ramps up response

6 October 2017 – The United Nations health agency is rapidly scaling up its response to a plague outbreak in Madagascar that has spread to the capital and port towns, infecting more than 100 people in just a few weeks.

“WHO is concerned that plague could spread further because it is already present in several cities and this is the [start of the epidemic season](#), which usually runs from September to April,” said Charlotte Ndiaye, the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) Representative in Madagascar in a news update.

Plague is a disease of poverty. It thrives in places with poor sanitary conditions and inadequate health services. It can kill quickly if left untreated, but can also be cured by common antibiotics if delivered early, according to WHO.

The Government of Madagascar has confirmed that the death of a Seychellois basketball coach visiting the nation for a sports event was due to pneumonic plague. He died in the hospital in Antananarivo on 27 September.

Health authorities are tracing people with whom he came in contact, thus exposing them, to administer antibiotics as a precautionary measure to prevent infection.

The incident brings the total number of dead to 21 since the outbreak was identified in late August while at least 114 others have been infected.

“Our teams are on the ground in Madagascar providing technical guidance, conducting assessments, supporting disease surveillance and engaging with communities,” Dr. Ndiaye explained.

Further deployments of WHO staff and response partners in the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network are underway, as well as increased supplies of antibiotics, personal protective equipment and other supplies.

“We are doing everything we can to support the Government’s efforts, including by coordinating health actors,” she added.

The Malagasy Red Cross is also [scaling-up community surveillance](#), contact tracing and communication in to stem the spread as it points out that the bubonic plague bacterium can travel to a person’s lungs, causing pneumonic plague, which can spread quickly from person to person through droplets in the air.

WHO has released \$300,000 in emergency funds, as well as critical medical supplies, to quickly scale up operational efforts, and is appealing for \$1.5 million to support the response.

Plague is endemic to Madagascar, where around 400 cases of – mostly bubonic – plague are reported annually. Contrary to past outbreaks, this one is affecting large urban areas, which increases the risk of transmission. The

number of cases identified to date is higher than expected for this time of year.

Bubonic plague is spread by infected rats via flea bite while pneumonic is transmitted person-to-person. The current outbreak includes both forms of plague. Nearly half of the cases identified so far are of pneumonic plague.

The last reported outbreak in December 2016 was mainly bubonic plague occurring in remote area.

[Mali: Security Council urges parties to adopt timeline for implementing peace agreement](#)

6 October 2017 – The Security Council today expressed a deep concern over the persistent delays in fully implementing key provisions of the peace agreement between the Government of Mali and the *Plateforme* and *Coordination* armed groups, urging the parties to adopt an agreed-upon timeline for implementation.

In a press statement, the Council welcomed the signing on 20 September 2017 by the *Plateforme* and *Coordination* armed groups of a series of commitments, including an immediate, comprehensive and definitive cessation of hostilities, calling on the armed groups to strictly adhere to this commitment.

The 15-member body underscored the pressing need to deliver tangible and visible peace dividends to the population in the country's north and elsewhere to keep the momentum of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, signed in 2015.

The Council expressed its intention to dedicate a specific focus of its upcoming visit to the Sahel region to the implementation of the Agreement.

The Council urged all parties to comply with their obligations under applicable international law and to bring an end to all human rights violations and abuses, and encouraged the Government to continue its efforts to combat impunity, with the support of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali ([MINUSMA](#)).

Expressing a concern about the security situation in Mali and the threat posed by terrorism and transnational organized crime in the Sahel region, the Council underlined that the efforts by the force of the Group of Five for the Sahel States to counter the activities of terrorist groups and other organized criminal groups will contribute to create a more secure environment

in the region and help MINUSMA fulfil its mandate to stabilize the country.