

Many aid groups unable to manage war zone risks, says UN-backed report

22 June 2017 – Humanitarian aid workers want to help people in some of the biggest war zones, but extreme risks and threats are paralyzing their operations, a United Nations-backed report today concluded.

'Conflict parties' lack of respect for the fundamental tenets of international humanitarian law and the brutality and volatility of today's armed conflicts make it extremely difficult and dangerous for these brave aid workers [to deliver humanitarian assistance and protection](#) in complex emergencies, said UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien, whose Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) co-produced the report.

[Presence and Proximity: To Stay and Deliver, Five Years On](#), produced by OCHA, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Jindal School of International Affairs in India, is based on interviews with more than 2,000 international and national aid workers, and includes case studies on humanitarian aid in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic (CAR), Syria and Yemen.

It is our duty as aid workers to work where needs are greatest, said Jan Egeland, Secretary General of NRC. But our international humanitarian community is failing too many people in too many places, from Syria and Yemen to South Sudan and Nigeria. Extreme risks and threats are paralyzing too many organizations and their ability to deliver aid and save lives.

Among its findings, the report found that as overall needs in the field have grown, so have the funding gaps, which necessitate cutting of projects and aid work.

Based on interviews with aid workers, the authors also concluded that abductions of workers are on the rise, criminality is seen as a rising threat, and the number of incidents against national aid workers has increased.

Humanitarians expressed an increased sense of risk and vulnerability, even though most major security incidents affecting humanitarians occur in a very small number of countries and tend to reflect the increased level of humanitarian activity in proximity to ongoing conflict rather than expanded targeting of humanitarians around the world, the authors wrote.

The report is a five-year follow up to the 2011 document, [To Stay and Deliver](#), which provided advice and recommendations to practitioners on critical issues, such as risk management, responsible partnerships, adherence to humanitarian principles, acceptance and negotiations with relevant actors.

Among the conclusions, the authors wrote that not enough progress has

been achieved since 2011, and many of the recommendations contained in the initial report remain particularly relevant today.”

Other trends noted that humanitarians are more focused on security analysis, and that remote programming – the concept of using local organizations to help implement aid activities – can generate risks and undermine the quality of protection and humanitarian programmes.

[Iraq's children caught in cycle of violence and poverty as conflict escalates, UNICEF warns](#)

22 June 2017 – The past three years of intensifying conflict in Iraq have left the country's children trapped in a grinding cycle of violence and poverty, an assessment out today by the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) has warned, calling on the warring parties to immediately end hostilities.

“Across Iraq, [children continue to witness sheer horror](#) and unimaginable violence,” said Peter Hawkins, the UNICEF Representative in the country, in a statement on the launch of the new assessment.

Entitled *Nowhere to Go*, the assessment underscores that more than five million children in the country are in need of urgent humanitarian aid.

“They have been killed, injured, abducted and forced to shoot and kill in one of the most brutal wars in recent history,” Mr. Hawkins emphasized.

In west Mosul, children are being deliberately targeted and killed to punish families and deter them from fleeing the violence. In less than two months, at least 23 children have been killed and 123 have been injured in that part of the city alone, according to UNICEF.

Among others, the assessment on Iraq outlines that since 2014:

- 1,075 children have been killed, 152 in the first six months of this year;
- 1,130 have been maimed and injured, 255 in the first six months of 2017; and
- More than 4,650 have been separated from their families.

In addition, over the same three-year period, there have been 138 attacks on schools and 58 on hospitals; over three million children miss school on a regular basis while 1.2 million are out of school; and one in every four

children comes from a poor household.

For nearly four decades, Iraq has faced violence, war, sanctions and instability. But in the last three years alone, conflict has displaced three million people – half of them children. Many parts of the country were turned into war zones with civilian infrastructure severely damaged or destroyed. Half of all schools in Iraq are now in need of repairs.

As life opportunities for children dwindle, UNICEF continues to respond to their growing needs and those of their families.

Pointing out that all warring parties owe it to the children of Iraq to end the violence, UNICEF is appealing for an immediate end to the conflict. The agency is also calling for all children affected by the crisis to have access to unimpeded and sustained humanitarian assistance and basic services; and for children in detention to have access to legal protection and services in line with international standards of juvenile detention.

UNICEF also requesting an end to all grave violations against children – including killing, maiming and recruitment – and an end to attacks on civilian infrastructure; freedom for all families to move, should they wish to flee or return to home; and increased investments to improve the quality of education, healthcare and protection services for all children.

Finally, the agency called for sustained humanitarian contributions, noting its funding gap of \$100 million for lifesaving emergency operations in Iraq and to support children returning home to resume their lives.

[UN agency condemns killing of two journalists working on assignment in Iraq](#)

22 June 2017 – The killing of two journalists in Iraq drew strong condemnation today from the United Nations agency tasked with defending press freedom and the safety of journalists.

“Journalists face tremendous dangers in carrying out their job, a job where they provide us with vital information enabling us to build towards peace,” said Irina Bokova, the head of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)).

Kurdish journalist Bakhtyar Haddad and French reporter Stéphane Villeneuve were working together in Mosul, Iraq, on a programme for France 2 when they were killed as a result of a roadside bomb explosion.

Their names will be added to UNESCO's [dedicated webpage](#) commemorating the lives of journalists killed in the line of duty.

[Uganda and UN to convene 'solidarity summit' amid fast-growing refugee emergency](#)

21 June 2017 – Facing a fast-growing refugee crisis, Uganda is set to host in its capital, Kampala, a 'Solidarity Summit' with the support of the United Nations, to rally international support for refugees and host communities in the form of donations, investments and innovative programmes.

The two-day Summit, which opens Thursday, 22 June, comes as the UN [estimates](#) that in just one year, largely due to an influx of people fleeing violence and instability in South Sudan, the refugee population in Uganda has more than doubled – from 500,000 to more than 1.25 million – making the country host to the world's fastest growing refugee emergency.

Hosted by President Yoweri Museveni and UN [Secretary-General](#) Antonio Guterres, the event, which is expecting 30 Heads of State and international donors, looks to raise \$2 billion to meet the humanitarian needs of refugees and to support the hosting communities over the next four years.

Nearly 86 per cent of all South Sudanese refugees in Uganda are women and children

For many South Sudanese refugees, the first stop once they cross the border is Imvepi camp in northern Uganda's Arua district. A tent run by UN partner organization Doctors Without Borders, known by its French acronym, MSF, is where they receive vaccinations, malnutrition screenings and primary healthcare.

Mary Opangi, a young woman from crisis-torn Yei town in South Sudan, was nine months pregnant when she fled, and gave birth just after arriving at the Ugandan border. "Just as we came there, my stomach started to feel pain, that's why they took me to the hospital," she said.

She is one among a seemingly endless stream of daily arrivals that are putting a huge strain on Uganda's already meagre available resources.

VIDEO: Hundreds of South Sudanese flee to Uganda every day due to violence. With 1.3 million refugees, Uganda is now the world's third largest host country. The East African nation is set to host at 'Solidarity Summit' to rally international support to assist in tackling the fast-growing crisis.

Imvepi camp, which opened in February this year and is already filling up, is hosting 120,000 refugees, U Aye Maung, Field Officer for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) told *UN News*, which is on the ground in Uganda ahead of the Summit.

Water is scarce, he explained, and providing adequate shelter is another challenge the UN refugee agency is facing.

“I think the biggest challenge is, if you see the terrains, one is the scarcity of water, we need a huge [amount] of water supplies every day. If you see 100,000 people [in the camp] ... shelter will be another priority for the next.”

Furthermore, the newly arriving refugees depend entirely on food assistance.

The current funding does not cover the vast needs, the UN Office in Uganda underscored, and there is a risk that food rations might get cut.

Uganda has also opened its doors to refugees from Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia. With an average of 2,000 new arrivals each day, the country needs urgent and robust support to deal with the refugee crisis.

‘Uganda’s magnificent response has been met by meagre support’ UN refugee agency chief

In an opinion piece, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said the South Sudan refugee crisis and the question of Uganda’s capability and resilience is proving to be an early test of the commitments of the [New York Declaration](#), adopted at a UN Summit last year with the aim of helping States plan a just, coordinated approach for global governance of both [refugees and migrants](#) within two years.

“So far, Uganda’s magnificent response has been met by meagre support, but [...] there’s a chance to turn the page, he said, stressing international indifference undermines Uganda’s often-praised model for welcoming, supporting and integrating refugees. Yet, the Solidarity Summit is a chance for the world to step up so Uganda can continue to show us the way.”

[UN spotlights health benefits of yoga, ancient practice that can ease stress of our modern ‘laptop’ lives](#)

21 June 2017 – Recognizing the universal appeal of yoga, the United Nations marked the 2017 edition of the [International Day of Yoga](#), which aims to

integrate the benefits of healthy lives and wellbeing – essential aspects of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development.

“Yoga is a practice that can be relevant to all ages, relevant to all cultures, irrespective of what socio-economic status people represent. It can be used to unite our complex and difficult world to promote not only healthy lifestyles but to promote peace and security in the world,” [said](#) Dr. Nata Menabde, Executive Director of the New York Office of the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), at an event entitled *Conversation: Yoga for Health*.

The theme for this year’s celebration, organized by the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, is ‘Yoga for Health.’

WHO defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. While affordable health care services are vital, it is also important to spread awareness about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle in promoting good health.

Yoga is an ancient physical, mental and spiritual practice that originated in India, with the Sanskrit word *yoga* meaning ‘to unite’ – symbolizing the union of body and consciousness.

Today, it is practiced in various forms around the world and continues to grow in popularity – promoting the practice of achieving sustainable lifestyles that are in harmony with nature. In this way, yoga contributes to wider societal wellbeing.

“Yoga is about our ability to feel yoga in our souls, to connect it to our minds and to integrate [...] with nature and the planet,” underscored Ms. Menabde.



Prior to the Day, the North Lawn of UN Headquarters was converted into a temporary yoga studio. Photo: UN News/Elizabeth Scaffidi



Swami Sivadasananda of Sivananda Yoga Retreat House in Austria led an abbreviated yoga class. Photo: UN News/Elizabeth Scaffidi



The men and women were taken through asanas, or yoga postures, as an introduction to the practice. Photo: UN News/Elizabeth Scaffidi



A special event on ‘Conversation on Yoga for Health’ was organized by the Indian Mission in association with WHO and the Department of Public Information. UN Photo/Kim Haughton



At the event, Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji, Dr. Bruce Lipton, Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswatiji and Keith Mitchell share their experiences and knowledge to enrich the collective understanding of the unique features of Yoga. UN Photo/Kim Haughton



UN stamps illustrate Organizational aims, with recent issues covering the environment, world peace and the promise of a better world. Today, the UN Postal Administration issued a new special event sheet to commemorate the International Day of Yoga. Photo: UN News/Elizabeth Scaffidi

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Swami Sivadasananda of Sivananda Yoga Retreat House in Austria, who led an outdoor yoga class on the North Lawn of UN Headquarters, explained: “We are all caught up in our laptop jobs, our shoulders are stooped and we don’t breathe properly. Yoga fits like a glove” to alleviate these everyday stresses.

The United Nations endorsed the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India, by adopting General Assembly resolution 69/131 that proclaimed 21 June as the International Day of Yoga.

The Day, which aims to raise awareness worldwide of the many benefits of practicing yoga, was also immortalized with the unveiling of a UN Postal Administration’s special Yoga Day commemorative stamp.