

## [Ukraine: 750,000 children at risk of losing access to safe drinking water, warns UN](#)

16 June 2017 – With the recent escalation of hostilities damaging vital water infrastructure in eastern Ukraine, at least 750,000 children are at imminent risk of being cut off from safe drinking water, the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) warned today.

Nearly three million people in eastern Ukraine rely on [water infrastructure that is now in the line of fire](#), said Afshan Khan, UNICEF's Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, noting that more families are expected to be cut off from safe drinking water, putting children at severe risk of disease and other dangers.

About 400,000 people, including 104,000 children, had their drinking water cut off for four days this week after two filtration stations for the South Donbass Water pipeline were destroyed by shelling. Urgent repairs were completed yesterday evening.

In Donetsk, power lines providing electricity to the city's water filtration station were damaged earlier this month, threatening more than 1 million people's access to safe water.

Children cut off from clean drinking water can quickly contract water-borne diseases such as diarrhea. Girls and boys having to fetch water from alternative sources, or who are forced to leave their homes due to disruptions to safe water supplies, face dangers from ongoing fighting and other forms of abuse.

All sides of the conflict must allow urgent repairs when water sources are destroyed and immediately stop the indiscriminate shelling of vital civilian infrastructure, said Ms. Khan.

Read more on: [Conflict in Ukraine enters fourth year 'with no end in sight' UN report](#)

UNICEF has provided access to safe drinking water to more than 1.5 million people in Government and non-Government-controlled areas of eastern Ukraine.

In 2017, UNICEF is appealing for \$31.3 million to provide health and nutrition support, education, clean water, hygiene and sanitation as well as protection for children and families affected by the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The appeal has received about \$9.9 million, still \$21.4 million short of the target.

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## [Ahead of Father's Day, UNICEF cites critical role fathers play in early childhood learning](#)

16 June 2017 – A majority of children aged between three- and four-years-old in 74 countries, or about 40 million, have fathers who do not play or engage in early learning activities with them, according to a new study released today by the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)).

What these numbers show us is that [father's are struggling to play an active role](#) in their children's early years," said Laurence Chandy, UNICEF Director of Data, Research and Policy, in a statement on the study, released as some 80 countries around the world are set to celebrate Father's Day this coming Sunday.

We must break down the barriers that prevent fathers from providing their babies and young children a conducive environment for them to thrive, including love, play, protection and nutritious food," he said.

The UNICEF analysis examined whether children aged three and four engaged in any play and early learning activities with their fathers, such as having their father read to the children, tell them stories or sing with them; taking them outside, playing with them; and naming, counting or drawing with them.

UNICEF urges governments and the private sector to increase spending and influence policies to support early childhood development programmes that focus on providing parents with the resources and information they need to provide nurturing care to their children.

We must ensure that all parents have the time, resources and knowledge they need to fully support their children's early development," Mr. Chandy said.

Advances in neuroscience have proven that when children spend their earliest years in a nurturing, stimulating environment, new neural connections can form at a once-in-a-lifetime speed of 1,000 per second. These connections help determine their health, ability to learn and deal with stress, and even influence their earning capacity as adults.

Research also suggests that exposure to violence and a lack of stimulation and care can prevent neural connections from occurring; and when children positively interact with their fathers, they have better psychological health, self-esteem and life-satisfaction in the long-term.

Read more: [Super Dads: New UNICEF campaign spotlights fathers' critical role](#)

## [in children's early development](#)

This month, UNICEF is inviting families to post photos and videos of what it takes to be 'super dads,' using the hashtag #EarlyMomentsMatter on their Instagram and Twitter accounts.

Photos and videos of UNICEF ambassadors and supporters who have got behind the campaign are being posted on UNICEF's Instagram and Twitter, and featured on the campaign's gallery, to inspire families across the world to share their 'super dads' moments.

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## ['BRICS' countries well place to help lead global hunger eradication charge – UN agency](#)

16 June 2017 – As the clock ticks towards the 2030 deadline for meeting global goals to eradicate hunger and poverty, the United Nations agriculture agency today asserted that five vitally important emerging economies, known collectively as the 'BRICS' countries, are well positioned to take a leading role in helping the world achieve these targets.

These five countries – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – form an economic block that accounts for more than 40 per cent of the world's population and over 20 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP). Together, they produce more than one-third of global cereal production, with Russia becoming the largest wheat exporter in the world.

The BRICS countries play an important political role in the international arena. Developing countries around the world look to your successes in economic development over the past few decades as an example to follow, [said](#) Kundhavi Kadiresan, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, during a statement to the 7th Meeting of the BRICS Ministers of Agriculture, in Nanjing, China.

Your experiences provide a path that can help us all meet our global collective commitments, namely those of the [2030 Agenda](#) and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the [Paris Agreement](#) [on climate change], added Ms. Kadiresan.

She pointed out that, despite trends towards urbanization, as poverty in the world today is primarily rural, accelerating rural development will be key to achieving the [SDGs](#).

The question is how can we do this? continued the regional

representative. Our experiences in countries in different parts of the world have shown that it can best be done through a combination of agricultural growth and targeted social protection, but also through growth in the rural nonfarm economy.

She underscored that agriculture can be a driver of sustained and inclusive rural growth, saying "In low-income countries, growth originating from agriculture is twice as effective in reducing poverty as growth originating from other sectors of the economy."

All tools, approaches and technologies must also be accessible to poor farmers in developing countries for increased production and productivity.

An excellent example is South Africa's Fetsa Tlala, a government-led initiative to support subsistence and smallholder farmers expand cultivated land to food production.

### ***Agricultural growth***

Achieving agricultural growth would require research and development investments, in which BRICS countries could play a leading role as all five have strong agricultural research systems working on developing countries' challenges. Biotechnology and agro-ecological approaches would also be essential.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are becoming more widespread by the day, and they offer a promising approach to address many of the challenges small farmers face with regard to information on prices, weather forecasts, vaccines, financial services, and much more.

FAO is collaborating with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the International Food Policy Research Institute to make sure these technologies benefit smallholders.

Ms. Kadiresan also points out that social protection programmes also play a key role in rural development reducing poverty, benefitting health and strengthening family farmer confidence.

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## **UNICEF-backed projects for 9 million children in and around Syria 'on the verge of being cut off'**

16 June 2017 – Programmes supported by the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) to assist more than nine million children in Syria and neighbouring countries are on the verge of being cut off due to a critical funding

shortage.

“This is the most severe funding gap UNICEF has had since we started responding to the Syria crisis, one of the largest humanitarian operations in the history of the organisation,” [said](#) Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, in a press release.

“Humanitarian needs continue to grow by the day inside Syria and in neighbouring countries, while pressure on generous host communities is seriously jeopardizing their ability to make ends meet,” he added.

UNICEF appealed for \$1.4 billion for its emergency operations in 2017 inside Syria and in neighbouring Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt. To date, UNICEF has received less than 25 per cent of its funding requirements.

Pressure on generous host communities is seriously jeopardizing their ability to make ends meet

In its seventh year and with no end in sight, the war in Syria has become the largest humanitarian and displacement crisis in the world since World War II. Inside Syria, nearly 6 million children are in need of assistance while more than 2.5 million live as refugees across Syria’s borders. Neighbouring countries, already supporting large numbers of vulnerable people, have received 80 per cent of all refugees from Syria.

Without an injection of new funds, some critical and lifesaving activities supported by UNICEF are at a serious risk being cut off.

These include safe water and sanitation services for 1.2 million children living in camps, informal settlements and host communities; access to healthcare and essential nutrition treatments for almost 5.4 million children; cash assistance to families that helps keep nearly half a million children in school; and the distribution of clothes and blankets in winter months.

UNICEF calls for a number of immediate actions to put an end to the war in Syria, prioritize the protection of civilians and the rights of children, improve the delivery of services and infrastructure such as healthcare, education and water in refugee host countries; and provide much-needed financial support to organisations like UNICEF to continue lifesaving assistance.

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**‘All of us can and must be prepared to**

## Speak out' to halt abuse of older persons – UN rights expert

15 June 2017 – Many older persons are at risk of being abused by their own relatives, a United Nations human rights expert has warned, urging greater vigilance and more reporting of suspected cases, especially since many fear on the part of older persons may not speak up for fear of reprisals – or to protect family members from criminal prosecution.

“Older people are afraid to say they are being abused,” said Rosa Kornfeld-Matte, the UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, speaking to *UN News* ahead of [World Elder Abuse Awareness Day](#), which is marked annually on 15 June.

“They are afraid because they feel lonely. They believe that if they denounce the person next to them, they will find themselves alone,” she said, echoing a statement issued by the UN Office for the High Commissioner of Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)) in which she said she is [particularly appalled](#) that older persons are often at risk from members of their own family.

“We must not close our eyes to the fate of older persons, even though it is difficult to accept that our families are not always a safe haven. On this World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, I urge everyone who suspects any form of elder abuse, including financial abuse, to report their concerns,” stated Ms. Kornfeld-Matte.

According to the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), around one in six older persons experience some form of abuse, a figure higher than previously estimated and predicted to rise as populations age worldwide. By 2050 the number of people aged 60 and over will double to reach two billion globally, with the vast majority of older people living in low- and middle-income countries.

The agency warned that if the proportion of elder abuse victims remains constant, the number of people affected will increase rapidly due to population ageing, growing to 320 million victims by 2050.

All of us can and must be prepared to be advocates for older people, if this abuse is ever to be halted  
UN Independent Expert Rosa Kornfeld-Matte

Along these lines, a recent [study](#) published in the *Lancet Global Health* found that nearly 16 per cent of those subject to abuse aged 60 years and older, were subjected to either psychological abuse, financial abuse, neglect, physical abuse or sexual abuse.

“Elder abuse is [rarely discussed in policy circles](#), less prioritized for research and addressed by only a handful of organizations,” noted Dr. Etienne

Krug, Director of the WHO Department for the Management of Noncommunicable Diseases, Disability, Violence and Injury Prevention.

“Governments must protect all people from violence. We must work to shed light on this important societal challenge, understand how best to prevent it, and help put in place the measures needed,” Dr. Kurg stressed.

***If you see something, say something***

While most cases of abuse go undetected despite clear warning signs, Ms. Kornfeld-Matte urged everyone to step up if they are witness to such incidents.

“If a neighbour, a senior citizen or even a nursing home employee sees any abuse type of situation, they have to go to the police and report what they see,” she said, stressing: “We cannot assume the victims will report what is happening to them.

She explained that despite facing abuse such as being physically restrained, left in soiled clothes, over-medicated or emotionally neglected, they may not speak up for fear of reprisals – or to protect family members from criminal prosecution. In some cases, the victims may not be fully aware that what is happening to them constitutes abuse.

“This all adds to the weight of our collective responsibility to act, and to speak up for older persons when they are unable or unwilling to speak for themselves. All of us can and must be prepared to be advocates for older people, if this abuse is ever to be halted,” she said.