

[Afghanistan makes progress in fighting corruption, enormous challenges remain – new UN report](#)

25 April 2017 – While enormous challenges remain, Afghanistan authorities have made headway in their fight against corruption, according to a United Nations report released today, which also finds that the country is making progress in other areas, such as restoring institutional control over the delivery of public services.

“For the sake of the country’s future, corruption in Afghanistan must be addressed and eliminated,” said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan [said](#) in Kabul.

He said the UN welcomes the progress already made, and fully supports the Government’s ongoing efforts to fight corruption in the interest of ending impunity, ensuring accountability and transparency, and restoring integrity to the management of public services, finances and natural resources.

Its report entitled [Afghanistan’s Fight against Corruption: The Other Battlefield](#), the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan ([UNAMA](#)), highlights the country’s progress in addressing corruption. Drawing on internationally recognized best practices, it provides recommendations for how the Government, with the continued support of the public and the international community, can build on those achievements.

“It is my sincere hope that the progress made so far in the fight against corruption and the recommendations contained in our report will serve as a platform to achieve greater policy coherence and coordination in Afghanistan,” said Mr. Yamamoto, who also heads UNAMA.

The report, which the Afghan ministries and judiciary received for input and endorsement prior to release, points out that corruption has affected all aspects of life in the country – undermining public trust and confidence in Government institutions and hindering efforts to bring lasting peace and prosperity to the State.

The report serves as a stark reminder that the fight against corruption cannot be won in the short term, and that the battle requires sustained commitment

A key component of Afghanistan’s fight against corruption is the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre (ACJC). Its dedicated police and prosecution units, and a new national primary and appeals court, was established by Presidential Decree to operate with jurisdiction over the broad range of corruption offences specified in the current penal code.

The Justice Centre's scope also includes money laundering, destruction or selling of cultural and historical relics, crimes against internal and external security, illegal extraction of mines and land usurpation.

In addition to outlining the advances made by the ACJC, which is actively investigating, prosecuting and adjudicating cases, the report indicates that Afghanistan is showing progress in restoring institutional control over the delivery of essential public services and management of public finances.

Recognizing that the Government's ongoing anti-corruption efforts have yet to impact the lives of most Afghans, the report makes several recommendations and concludes that – notwithstanding the many legal and policy reforms that have been undertaken – corruption remains a substantial obstacle to Afghanistan's long-term peace and prosperity.

"The report serves as a stark reminder that the fight against corruption cannot be won in the short term, and that the battle requires the sustained commitment on the part of the government and the general public, and full support from the international community," concluded Mr. Yamamoto.

[Latin America loses billions of dollars to 'double burden' of undernutrition and obesity – UN study](#)

25 April 2017 – Undernutrition and obesity are the two sides of malnutrition, and together they contributed to the loss of billions of dollars for economies in Latin America, a United Nations-backed study has found, warning that unless more is done to mitigate this health burden, the region faces a "frightening" future.

The Cost of the Double Burden of Malnutrition, released yesterday, is the result of a partnership between the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the UN World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) and calculates losses in productivity, health and education in Chile, Ecuador and Mexico.

While undernutrition undermines physical growth and impairs brain development, overweight and obesity can lead to non-communicable diseases such as type II diabetes, hypertension and cancer. Together, they inflict a 'double burden' on countries and people as they hinder the development of individuals, the well-being of communities and the goal of reaching Zero Hunger by 2030.

According to the study, gross domestic product (GDP) in each country shrinks every year as a result of losses in productivity caused by this double

burden. Losses are estimated at \$500 million in Chile, \$4.3 billion in Ecuador and \$28.8 billion in Mexico, which represent respectively 0.2 per cent, 4.3 per cent and 2.3 per cent loss of GDP.

“Over the last decade many middle income countries have made great inroads into reducing undernutrition. Yet the problem persists and we now witness a worrying trend among vulnerable communities with cases of undernourishment and overweight simultaneously within the same families,” [said](#) WFP Regional Director, Miguel Barreto.

“The double burden of malnutrition increasingly affects the poor and vulnerable population, thus becoming another cause for the current inequality in our region,” said ECLAC Executive Secretary, Alicia Bárcena.

The implications for the future of countries are frightening. According to the study, undernutrition is declining, but ‘overnutrition’ is expected to become the largest social and economic burden in the region. From 2014 to 2078, overweight and obesity are projected to cost on average \$1 billion in Chile, \$3 billion in Ecuador and \$13 billion in Mexico per year respectively.

The study recommends measures to mitigate this burden; governments should promote consumer education through clear policies and incentives to ensure reliable food labelling, physical activity initiatives, and the support of community-based nutrition education programmes.

It encourages the food industry to work with governments to guarantee the production, availability, and accessibility of healthier food products, and to play a positive and responsible role in educating consumers on healthy food choices.

[Somalia: UN launches lifesaving vaccination campaign for children facing measles threat](#)

25 April 2017 – Almost 30,000 young Somali children, many of them displaced by a searing drought, are being vaccinated against measles this week in a United Nations-backed emergency campaign in one of the country’s hardest-hit towns.

“Among vaccine-preventable diseases, none is more deadly than measles,” said UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) Country Representative Steven Lauwerier in a [news release](#).

[Measles](#) is a viral respiratory infection that spreads through air and contact with infected mucus and saliva, thrives in congested, unsanitary displacement

camps.

Many children have never been immunized before as a decades-old conflict has made it difficult for health workers to reach remote areas from which they come.

So far this year, almost 5,700 cases of suspected measles have been reported across the country, more than the total number of cases in 2016.

More than 100,000 people have come to Baidoa, in Somalia's south-western region, in search of assistance, including at least 70,000 in March alone.

The threat of famine once again looms large over Somalia. Up to a million children are, or will be, acutely malnourished this year, with one in five requiring life-saving treatment.

"And we know only too well from the 2011 famine that measles, combined with malnutrition and displacement, is an especially lethal combination for children," said Mr. Lauwerier. "The only way to prevent sickness and death from measles is to make sure all children receive the vaccine."

The Baidoa campaign is being conducted in partnership with Somalia's Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), and several non-governmental organizations.

Children are also given a vitamin A supplement to boost immunity as well as de-worming tablets.

[UN migration agency releases funding for emergency response to Congolese fleeing Kasai](#)

25 April 2017 – The United Nations migration agency released emergency funding in the amount of \$100,000 to kick-start relief operations in Angola for the 1.1 million Congolese displaced by fighting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) south-central Kasai region.

UN Migration Agency Director General William Lacy Swing approved the funding from [IOM's](#) Operational Support Income budget to cover the period until donor funding comes in.

"We continue to work with our UN, Congolese and Angolan counterparts to see whether it is possible to launch a [cross-border emergency relief operation](#) to reach southern areas of the Kasai, which until now remain inaccessible because of widespread insecurity and a poor network of roads," said Jean-

Philippe Chauzy, the UN Migration Agency's DRC Chief of Mission.

Up to 2.4 million people have been affected by fighting between Government forces and tribal militias loyal to a local customary chief who was killed in August last year. The groups have been accused of a number of crimes and human rights abuses, including killings and abduction, recruitment of children, and targeting schools, hospitals and churches.

Thousands of Congolese have fled to neighbouring Angola to escape the violence.

The IOM mission in the DRC is preparing to position experts in its Mbuji Mayi Office in Kasai Oriental to help track and monitor displacements and population mobility, including returnees from Angola. The mission is also planning to deploy additional specialists in shelter and camp coordination and camp management to support the nascent international humanitarian response.

"The challenges that we and other humanitarians are facing in the parts of the Kasai bordering Angola are considerable," said Mr. Chauzy. "Internal displacements and the return of more than 11,000 Congolese from Angola are exacerbating existing vulnerabilities, including the risks of epidemic outbreak."

The UN agency is also working to strengthen local capacities to prevent, detect and respond to disease outbreaks and other public health occurrences along the border with Angola.

[UN-led conference to mobilize global action to avert 'humanitarian catastrophe' in Yemen](#)

24 April 2017 – The United Nations together with the governments of Sweden and Switzerland will convene a one-day conference in Geneva, tomorrow, to draw global attention to the deepening humanitarian crisis in war-torn Yemen where millions are close to a breaking point.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), nearly 19 million people in Yemen are in need of urgent humanitarian or protection assistance, including some 10.3 million who need immediate assistance to save or sustain their lives.

"Yemen is the largest humanitarian crisis in the world [...] the time is now to come together to prevent an impending humanitarian catastrophe in the country" said the UN relief wing on its [website](#), noting that the

conflict in the country and its economic consequences is also driving the largest food security emergency in the world.

Senior UN officials, including [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres and the Organization's Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien, together with top officials from Swedish and Swiss Governments, will be speaking the opening of the [event](#) tomorrow.

The event also features thematic briefings from UN agencies and humanitarian organizations on the ground.

The two-year long conflict in [Yemen](#) has already displaced more than 3.3 million people and resulted in a breakdown in public services, particularly in health care with less than half of the health centres are functional and medicine and equipment are limited.

Access to safe water also remains a challenge and there is a lack of proper sanitation, increasing the risk of communicable diseases.

Yemen is also the most food insecure country in the world and millions are also at the risk of a ['man-made' famine](#).

Over 17 million people are currently food insecure, of whom 6.8 million are severely food insecure and require immediate food assistance. Of particular concern is the condition of nearly two million children suffering from acute malnutrition.

In February this year, OCHA together with partners launched a \$2.1 billion appeal for its 2017 humanitarian response plan for the country. The money is crucial to fund food, nutrition, health and lifesaving assistance programmes.

However, only 15 per cent has been received, representing a massive \$1.8 billion funding gap.

VIDEO: The Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen: 2 years in 2 minutes. Credit: UN OCHA