

UN's advice for hospitals: Help mothers breastfeed to give babies best possible start in life

Breastfeeding within the first hour of birth protects newborns from infections and saves lives, United Nations agencies said at the roll-out of their 10-step guidance to help new mothers and hospital workers embrace this practical advice and give children the best possible start in life.

The [Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding](#), issued jointly by the [UN Children's Fund](#) (UNICEF) and the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), encourages new mothers to breastfeed and informs health workers how best to support breastfeeding.

"Breastfeeding [saves lives](#)," said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore. "It's benefits help keep babies healthy in their first days and last well into adulthood."

Infants are at greater risk of death due to diarrhoea and other infections when they are only partially breastfed or not breastfed at all. Breastfeeding for the first two years would annually save the lives of more than 820,000 children under age five.

Hospitals are not there just to cure the ill. They are there to promote life and ensure people can thrive and live their lives to their full potential – WHO chief

Breastfeeding also improves IQ, school readiness and attendance, and is associated with higher income in adult life. It is vital to a child's lifelong health, and reduces costs for health facilities, families, and governments. It also reduces the risk of breast cancer in the mother.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that in many hospitals and communities around the world, whether or not a child is breastfed can make the difference between life and death, and whether a child will develop to reach his or her full potential.

"Hospitals are not there just to cure the ill. They are there to promote life and ensure people can thrive and live their lives to their full potential," said Mr. Tedros.

The new guidance provides the immediate health system platform to help mothers initiate breastfeeding within the first hour and breastfeed exclusively for six months, and describes how hospitals should have in place a written breastfeeding policy, staff competencies, and antenatal and post-birth care, including breastfeeding support for mothers.

It also recommends limited use of breastmilk substitutes, rooming-in, responsive feeding, educating parents on the use of bottles and pacifiers, and support when mothers and babies are discharged from hospital.

[Despite drop in numbers, desperate migrants to Europe face greater perils, UN refugee agency reports](#)

While the number of migrants and refugees reaching Europe declined last year, the dangers they faced along the journey in many cases increased, according to a new report from the United Nations refugee agency.

The number of people crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach Italy from Libya, for example, decreased by 74 per cent in the first three months of 2018 compared to the same period last year. But the share of these migrants perishing along the way more than doubled, according to the report, [Desperate Journeys](#).

Between January and March, one person died for every 14 persons successfully crossing the sea, compared to one death for every 29 arrivals in the first three months of 2017.

Furthermore, those reaching Europe in recent months arrived in extremely poor health and a significant share of them experienced trafficking, torture, sexual violence and other abuses prior to boarding boats in Libya, said the report, issued Wednesday by the [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#) (UNHCR).

Those attempting that sea journey also risk drowning aboard unstable boats, which often cram in people many times their capacity.

“Journeys to and through Europe for refugees and migrants remain fraught with danger,” said Pascale Moreau, director of the refugee agency’s Europe Bureau, as he [introduced](#) the report.

He underscored the importance of swift and fair asylum procedures for those seeking international protection.

“Managing borders and offering protection to refugees in line with States’ international obligations are not mutually exclusive nor incompatible,” Mr. Moreau said.

Many of the migrants and refugees hoping to reach Europe are seeking refuge from violence and deepening economic insecurity in their home countries, in

Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

While overall numbers reaching Europe were down in 2017 compared to 2016, the flow of desperate migrants to Spain climbed, and the number reaching Greece surged in the latter months of last year.

“Asylum-seekers arriving by sea to Greece faced extended stays in overcrowded and dire conditions on Greek islands,” the report said.



UNHCR/F. Malavolta

Survivors of a boat that capsized in the Mediterranean over the weekend of 18-19 April 2015 arrive in Sicily after being rescued. Hundreds are missing and feared dead.

For many, journey ends without setting foot on European soil

“When we reached Libya, the driver told us we had to pay another 1,500 dinars (\$1,100) per person, so 4,500 dinars for all three,” reads the testimony of 26-year-old Daniel, who left Cameroon in 2017 along with his brother and uncle hoping to reach Europe.

“We didn’t have any more money.”

Unable to pay the asking price, the three were [tortured and held captive](#) by traffickers in Libya, he said, before they were taken to Niger where he was bound into forced labour by his captors, while his family remained hostage.

There have been reports of human traffickers [demanding](#) as much as \$10,000 from individuals for transportation to Europe.

Elsewhere on the continent, increased restrictions and “push backs” facing people on the move have compelled them to take alternative and often dangerous routes to move across Europe, according to the new report. As Hungary tightened its borders, for example, more migrants are crossing from

Serbia to Romania while others move from Greece through Albania, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina to Croatia.



UNICEF/Georgiev

Walking along the train tracks connecting Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, a migrant woman carries a young boy as a young girl holds on to the back of her jacket. (file photo)

High risks for women and unaccompanied children

Women, especially those travelling on their own, and unaccompanied children remain particularly exposed to risks of sexual and gender-based violence along the routes as well as in some locations within Europe, the report said.

Once children arrive in European countries, lengthy waiting periods

for asylum applications, slow family reunification processes and limited access to relocation mechanisms compound the challenges, it said.

Increased solidarity and responsibility-sharing needed

Addressing the desperate situation requires wider international support for States at primary arrival points in Europe, such as arrangement of safe relocations. The European Union, it suggested, should strengthen cooperation among countries within the region.

The refugee agency also called for enhanced access to safe and legal pathways for those in need of international protection, including greater commitments to resettlement, removal of obstacles to family reunification and strengthened protection for children.

[UNESCO condemns deadly attack on World Heritage site that claimed seven lives in DR Congo](#)

The lives of six guards and their driver were taken Monday during an attack on the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation in the Virunga Park, a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) World Heritage site in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – drawing condemnation from the UN agency.

“I [condemn this deadly attack](#) on six guards of the Virunga National Park and their driver,” said Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, on Wednesday.

“I call on the Democratic Republic of the Congo to take all the necessary legal measures to put an end to these repetitive attacks,” added.

The Director-General paid tribute to the courage of the guards who risk their lives to ensure the protection of this heritage.

Since 1996, attacks in the Virunga National Park have claimed over 175 victims, UNESCO said.

This marks the third attack this year against the staff of the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation in the Virunga Park and follows similar acts on other World Heritage sites in the country, namely in Dja and Sangha Tri-National.

The Director-General called on the international community to help the Institute ensure the safety of local people and staff.

With the support of the European Union, UNESCO has, for several years, been investing in strengthening human capacity and resources of World Heritage Sites in the countries of central Africa that are facing security challenges.

[UN chief condemns attacks against peacekeepers in Central African](#)

Republic

The United Nations chief has condemned the latest killing and wounding of the world body's peacekeepers in the Central African Republic during an exchange of fire with armed groups on 10 April.

A statement issued overnight by UN Spokesman, Stéphane Dujarric, said that Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, recalling that attacks against UN peacekeepers "may constitute a war crime," called on the country's authorities to [investigate them](#) and swiftly bring those responsible to justice.

A Rwandan peacekeeper serving the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) was killed and eight others of the mission were injured during the incident in the capital, Bangui.

The incident followed a joint operation launched on 8 April by MINUSCA and the Central African forces and police to disarm and arrest heavily armed criminal groups, Mr. Dujarric said, noting that the Secretary-General offered his deepest condolences to the family of the bereaved, as well as to the Government of Rwanda, and wished a swift recovery to the injured.

The Central African Republic has been [plagued by decades of instability and fighting](#). A renewed violence erupted in December 2012 when the mainly Muslim Séléka rebel coalition launched a series of attacks. A peace agreement was reached in January 2013, but the rebels seized the capital, Bangui, in March, forcing President François Bozizé to flee.

A transitional government has since been established and entrusted with restoring peace. The conflict, however, has taken on increasingly sectarian overtones as the mainly Christian anti-Balaka movement took up arms and inter-communal clashes erupted again in and around Bangui.

Security Council fails to adopt three resolutions on chemical weapons use in Syria

Days after alleged chemical weapons attack in the Damascus suburb of Douma, the United Nations Security Council failed to adopt two competing resolutions that would have established a mechanism to investigate use of such weapons in Syria, as well as another concerning a fact-finding mission in the war-torn

country.

Had one of the two mechanisms proposed in the drafts been approved, it could have filled the vacuum left by the Organisation for Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) when its mandate expired last November.

The [first draft considered today](#) – penned by the United States – which would have established a new investigative mechanism for one year, as well as identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons, was rejected owing to a negative vote from Russia.

The draft received 12 votes in favour, two against (Bolivia and Russia) and one abstention (China).

A negative vote – or veto – from one of the Council's five permanent members – China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and the United States – blocks passage of a resolution.

Today's meeting marked the twelfth time Russia has used its veto to block Council action on Syria.

Similarly, [a competing draft](#) – penned by Russia – which would have established the mechanism for one year as well but would have given the Security Council the responsibility to assign accountability for the use of chemical weapons in Syria, was also not adopted.

This draft received six Council members' vote in favour (Bolivia, China, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Kazakhstan and Russia), seven against (France, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States) and two abstentions (Cote d'Ivoire and Kuwait).

The Council rejected a third text – also proposed by Russia – which concerned the work of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM).

The draft received five votes in favour (Bolivia, China, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan and Russia), four against (France, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States), and six abstentions (Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru, and Sweden).

Ahead of the Security Council [meetings](#) today, UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) had repeated his call on 15-member body to "[find unity](#)" on the issue of use of chemical weapons in Syria and ensure accountability.

"The norms against chemical weapons must be upheld. I appeal to the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility and find unity on this issue," he said.

"I also encourage the Council to redouble its efforts to agree on a dedicated mechanism for accountability."