

## [UNICEF and partner agencies in South Sudan help reunite 5,000 children with families](#)

18 October 2017 – Since conflict broke out in South Sudan in 2013, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)), Save the Children and other partners have successfully reunited more than 5,000 children with their families.

“Keeping families together is the best way to ensure that children are protected, which is why the family tracing and reunification process for unaccompanied children is so important,” [said](#) UNICEF Country Representative Mahimbo Mdoe in a press statement Wednesday.

“Children rely on their family for a sense of stability, protection and support, and that’s even more imperative in times of conflict,” he added.

The 5,000th child to be reunited with his family was a 17-year-old boy, who had fled Tombura in Western Equatoria and sought refuge in Wau, Western Bahr El Ghazal. The boy had been separated with his mother for almost four years.

“I want to go back to school and someday help other children who are suffering like me,” he said. According to UNICEF, the boy’s mother said: “When I ate, I always thought about what my son could be eating. I only ate to stay alive but I never enjoyed it. I have been unhappy because I have been thinking about my son’s whereabouts. It was hard to forget him because I didn’t see him dead and bury him.”

Reuniting separated children with their families is a challenging process in a country with virtually no infrastructure and no telephone reception in many areas. Staff often have to trek for hours to look for separated families.

Family separation is considered one of the key drivers to psychosocial stress for internally displaced persons and other affected populations. The longer a child is separated from her or his family, the more difficult it is to locate them and the more at risk a child is to violence, economic and sexual exploitation, abuse and potential trafficking.

“The family tracing and reunification programme is one of the most effective child protection in emergencies interventions in South Sudan,” said Save the Children Country Director Deirdre Keogh.

A total of 16,055 unaccompanied and separated children have been registered by the organisations involved in the family tracing and reunification programmes in South Sudan.

Efforts continue to trace the families of the more than 10,000 children still separated from their family or caregivers, so that they too can be reunited.

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## Yemen: Education under threat as conflict shuts schools, teachers not paid for a year, warns UNICEF

18 October 2017 – The conflict in Yemen has now entered its third year and continues to take a toll on millions of children, with their education now under threat, adding to an already long list of bitter hardships including malnutrition, displacement and violence, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) has warned.

As of July 2017, 1,600 schools have been partially or totally destroyed, and 170 have been used for military purposes or as shelter for displaced families, said Geert Cappelaere, the UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, in a [statement](#) today.

The violence has forced one in ten schools across the country to close, and textbooks and other school materials are in severely short supply, he added, noting that the beginning of the school year has been postponed several times from its usual September start.

Adding to the crisis is the fact that three-quarters of the teachers in Yemen have not been paid in nearly a year, compelling them to resort to extreme measures to survive.

One such case is that of Hassan Ghaleb, a teacher for the past 20 years and the sole breadwinner for his family of four, who was evicted from his home with his children.

He had to sell what was left of his furniture just to feed them and treat his sick sister.

How can [they] teach if [they themselves are] in need? questions UNICEF, noting that over 166,000 teachers across the war-torn country are in a similar situation.

The children of Yemen have suffered in ways that no human being should have to bear. Education is their only way to secure a better future

Lack of education and the protective environment provided by a school is not only robbing the children of some semblance of a normal childhood, it is also leaving them vulnerable to recruitment into fighting or early marriage.

Ongoing humanitarian efforts are only a drop in the ocean of suffering that Yemen has become, underscored Mr. Cappelaere, urging the parties

to the conflict to protect schools, refrain from using schools for military purposes and work together to find an urgent solution to the salary crisis so that children can learn.

He also called on donors to step up their assistance and enable the payment of incentives to education personnel, health workers and other civil servants who deliver vital services for children.

“The children of Yemen have suffered in ways that no human being should have to bear. Education is their only way to secure a better future and to help put Yemen on the path to peace,” he said.

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## [UN health agency supports backs yellow fever immunization for 874,000 people in Nigeria](#)

17 October 2017 – A 10-day campaign launched by the Government of Nigeria will immunize nearly 874,000 people against yellow fever in the states of Kwara and Kogi, according to the United Nations health agency.

The campaign launched last week and the World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with Nigerian health authorities, is working to implement the initiative in nine local government areas in Kwara state and two in Kogi state.

“This campaign aims to ensure that people living in high-risk areas are protected from yellow fever, and to prevent the disease from spreading to other parts of the country,” said Dr. Wondimangednehu Alemu, WHO Nigeria Representative.

The campaign is mobilizing more than 200 health workers and volunteers, targeting residents aged nine months to 45 years old.

The last outbreak of yellow fever in Nigeria was reported in 2002, with 20 cases and 11 deaths.

Nigeria has requested support from the International Coordination Group (ICG) on vaccine provision for yellow fever. With the support of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the global stockpile of yellow fever vaccines sums to 6 million doses.

WHO has been supporting the Nigerian Government’s response to the outbreak since the first case was confirmed on September 12.

The agency has since deployed experts to African country to support

surveillance, investigation, lab testing, public-health measures and engagement with at-risk communities.

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## Myanmar: Plight of refugees focus of top UN political official's meetings

17 October 2017 – Concluding a visit to Myanmar, the top United Nations political official has underscored the importance of accountability and non-discriminatory rule of law and public safety as part of the comprehensive approach needed to address the fears and distrust among communities in Rakhine.

According to a [press note](#) issued by the UN, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman visited several communities affected by the recent violence in northern Rakhine state and viewed dozens of burned and destroyed villages by air.

“He witnessed how, in addition to the documented endemic discrimination against the Rohingya population, socio-economic challenges adversely affect all communities,” read the note.

Mr. Feltman noted the Government’s endorsement of the recommendations of the final report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State and urged their comprehensive implementation – which the UN can help support if so requested – the note added.

Visiting the country from 13-17 October, the UN official met with State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Tatmadaw (the country’s armed forces) Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, among other officials, as well as with representatives of Myanmar’s civil society, the resident diplomatic community and representatives of international non-governmental organizations.

Most of Mr. Feltman’s discussions focused on the situation in Rakhine state and the plight of the hundreds of thousands of refugees who have fled to Bangladesh in the aftermath of the 25 August attacks on security positions and subsequent military action.

“He reiterated [Secretary-General](#) Antonio Guterres’ call that humanitarian actors be given full and unhindered access to northern Rakhine state and that refugees be allowed voluntary, safe and dignified return to their place of origin,” added the press note.

Acknowledging the announcements by the Government of Myanmar, including the State Counsellor’s address to the nation on 12 October, regarding the establishment of programmes and policies to address the humanitarian concerns

in Rakhine and the return of refugees from Bangladesh, Mr. Feltman encouraged the authorities to utilize the capacities, best practices, and extensive experience of the UN to help assure that stated intentions could be implemented in a timely and effective manner.

In his meeting with the Tatmadaw officials, Mr. Feltman said that in the UN's experience, successful counter-terrorism efforts do not rely exclusively on security measures.

Returning to New York, Mr. Feltman will report to Secretary-General as the Organization continues to respond to the humanitarian and human rights crisis and positions itself to work with Myanmar to help relieve the suffering of the Rohingya population and address the grievances and needs of Rakhine and other ethnic groups.

During his visit, the UN official also attended the commemoration of the signing of Myanmar's National Ceasefire Agreement and met with the signatory ethnic organizations. He also visited internally displaced persons' camps outside Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine state, set up in 2012.

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## [Libya: Smugglers holding refugees and migrants in deplorable conditions, say UN agencies](#)

17 October 2017 – After weeks of conflict in western Libya, United Nations agencies have been working around the clock to meet the urgent needs of the more than 14,000 [refugees and migrants](#) who had been held captive in numerous locations in the coastal city of Sabratha – approximately 80 kilometres west of Tripoli.

“The refugees and migrants were [taken to a hangar](#) in the Dahman area in Sabratha that has been serving as an assembly point since the onset of the crisis,” Andrej Mahecic, Spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) told reporters Tuesday at the regular press briefing in Geneva.

From the hangar in Sabratha – a main departure point for migrant boats attempting to journey across the Mediterranean to Europe – they are being transferred to official detention centres for humanitarian assistance by Libyan authorities, who estimate that an additional 6,000 migrants and refugees remain captive by smugglers. If confirmed, it would bring the total number of those held to 20,500 – including those in official detention centres.

“As a priority, UNHCR teams have been working on identifying refugees and

they continue to advocate for their release. In some locations, UNHCR has provided tents that are being used as makeshift hospitals where UNHCR doctors are providing medical assistance,” said Mr. Mahecic.

“Colleagues on the front lines describe a picture of human suffering and abuse on a shocking scale,” he elaborated, noting that the rescued refugees and migrants are visibly traumatized – most of whom say they were subjected to numerous human rights abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence, forced labour and sexual exploitation.

He also pointed to “a worrying number of unaccompanied and separated children, many under the age of six,” saying that many of them report losing parents on the journey to Libya or in the chaos that resulted during the last few weeks.

While UNHCR is working very closely with the authorities to respond to the growing needs, the scale of the emergency has overwhelmed existing facilities and resources. Detention centres and assembly points are at full capacity and lack basic amenities, like water tanks and sanitation facilities. Many people, including children, have to sleep outside in the open.

“The devastation in Sabratha further reaffirms the need for international action and highlights the high price refugees have to pay to reach safety in the absence of safe legal pathways,” stressed Mr. Mahecic. “UNHCR will continue to call on resettlement countries and the international community to step forward and open more resettlement places and look for a way to protect vulnerable refugees who need international protection.”

For its part, the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) is providing support to those in Zuwara and the Sabratha assembly point in the form of core relief packages, which include mattresses, blankets, pillows and hygiene kits at six separate locations and more than 100,000 meals.

Pointing out that the migrants are from almost a dozen nations, IOM reported that out of 1,631 interviewed, 44 per cent wished to return to their countries of origin through IOM’s Voluntary Humanitarian Return Programme. To this end, IOM has provided online consular sessions for 332 migrants to speed up the travel document issuance procedures.

The UN migration agency strongly advocates for alternatives to detention.

“We are concerned about the large number of [migrants transferred to detention](#),” said Othman Belbeisi, IOM Libya Chief of Mission, saying they are overcrowded and do not meet the minimum international human rights standards.

“We stand ready to provide any necessary support to the Libyan authorities in providing alternatives to detention, especially for the most vulnerable groups, including pregnant women and children,” he underscored.