

# [Iraq launches UN-supported action plan to save the lives of mothers and newborns](#)

10 August 2017 – Decades of conflict and under-investment have placed a huge strain on Iraq’s healthcare system – with pregnant women and their babies paying for it with their lives, according to three United Nations agencies.

Although progress has been made to lower maternal mortality rates, there has been [slow headway](#) in reducing the mortality rates for children under five, said the UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)), World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) and UN Population Fund ([UNFPA](#)) in a joint statement.

Newborn babies are particularly vulnerable because of poor birth practices, inadequate referral mechanisms and inefficient neonatal care, particularly in remote areas, they added.

With the support of UNICEF, the Ministry of Health launched the Every Newborn Action Plan ([ENAP](#)), which was developed jointly with UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA. The ENAP is an evidence based strategy to invest in, and improve the quality of maternal and newborn care.

According to the agencies, breastfeeding, neonatal resuscitation, kangaroo mother care for preterm babies, and the prevention and treatment of infections will help prevent these infant deaths.

Providing high quality care before and after birth not only saves lives, it is also an investment to ensure Iraqi children have the best start in life and meet their full potential, said Peter Hawkins, UNICEF’s Representative in Iraq.

WHO and other partners will work to support the Government of Iraq through the Ministry of Health to achieve equitable universal health coverage, including the provision of comprehensive services for every woman and newborn in Iraq in order to contribute to the substantial reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity, added in Musani Altaf, WHO Representative in Iraq.

Ramanathan Balakrishnan, UNFPA’s Representative in Iraq, added:  
Neonatal mortality contributes significantly to child mortality in Iraq. UNFPA is proud to have played a part in the formulation of the Newborn Action Plan and commits to support the Ministry of Health in its implementation.

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# Investing in women key to sustainable peace in DR Congo and Nigeria, UN deputy chief tells Security Council

10 August 2017 – Investing in women and girls must be central to global efforts towards sustainable peace and development in both Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the United Nations deputy chief said today.

“Both have dismayingly low levels of women’s political participation and are experiencing conflicts marked by extremely high levels of sexual- and gender-based violence,” said Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed as she updated the Security Council on [her recent trip](#) to the two African countries.

The trip, from 19 to 27 July, was “the first of its kind” because it focused entirely on the role of women in peace, security and development, she said.

The [joint AU-UN high-level mission](#) was undertaken by four African women, namely Ms. Mohammed, the UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, and the African Union (AU) Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, Bineta Diop.

The mission’s goal was to advance peace by advancing the equality, empowerment and well-being of women, which is in line with the Secretary-General’s vision and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

In both countries, Ms. Mohammed noted, the mission met with Heads of State, ministers, donors, diplomats, faith leaders, parliamentarian and the respective UN mission and country teams, spending the lion’s share of time with the women and girls most affected by conflicts, including through visits to camps for internally displaced persons.

The international community needs to better understand the role of women in development and peace building alongside the gender dimensions of conflict if our responses are to be effective UN deputy chief Amina Mohammed

While each country is unique, the situations share some commonalities, she said, noting that sexual violence is widespread in the DRC, and abductions, forced marriage and the use of women as suicide bombers have taken a terrible toll in northern Nigeria, where in the camps sexual exploitation, including in the form of “sex for food” is a new and alarming trend.

“The international community needs to better understand the role of

women in development and peace building alongside the gender dimensions of conflict if our responses are to be effective,&#8221 she said.

Turning to country-specific matters, the UN deputy chief said that the mission was touched by the meeting with the schoolgirls, who were abducted in Nigeria's Chibok and then released, after years in captivity, by the Boko Haram group.

&#8220Their remarkable strength as survivors rather than victims is inspiring. Many are receiving education and psychosocial support to prepare them for reintegration,&#8221 Ms. Mohammed said, noting that thousands of other young women who have been subjected to sexual violence and affected by conflict in other ways are still to receive adequate support.

#### *Beyond theoretical debate, humanitarian-development nexus requires tangible resources*

In the DRC, the mission emphasized the need to respect and implement the 31 December agreement, which provided a clear path towards democratic elections, she noted.

At the time of her visit, Ms. Mohammed said the electoral commission had registered more than 80 per cent of voters. That number now stands at more than 90 per cent. Of those registered, 48 per cent are women, placing the country in the same bracket as more established democracies such as Solomon Islands and Paraguay.

The mission also met with women who have no choice but to cook with coal in their tents, at great risk to their health and that of their children.

&#8220While we may debate the humanitarian-development nexus philosophically here in New York, without resources flowing to both sectors simultaneously and a real investment in early recovery, we can neither sustain peace nor prevent future gender based violence,&#8221 she said, encouraging donors to respond to the DRC's reintegration challenges based on need alone.

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## **Smugglers throw 300 African migrants off boats headed to Yemen – UN agency**

10 August 2017 – A total of 300 migrants have reportedly been forced from boats over the past two days by smugglers off the coast of Yemen &#8211 many feared dead or missing, the United Nations migration agency has reported.

&#8220The survivors told our colleagues on the beach that the smuggler [pushed them into the sea](#) when he saw some 'authority types' near the coast,&#8221 said Laurent de Boeck, the Yemen Chief of Mission of the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)).

They also told us that the smuggler has already returned to Somalia to continue his business and pick up more migrants to bring to Yemen on the same route. This is shocking and inhumane. The suffering of migrants on this migration route is enormous. Too many young people pay smugglers with the false hope of a better future," Mr. de Boeck added.

According to IOM, up to 180 migrants were reportedly thrown into the sea from a boat today by the smugglers. Five bodies have been recovered so far, and around 50 are reported missing.

This latest incident comes barely 24 hours after smugglers forced more than 120 Somali and Ethiopian migrants into the sea as they approached the coast of Shabwa, a Yemeni Governorate along the Arabian Sea, resulting in the drowning of around 50 migrants. The migrants had been hoping to reach countries in the Gulf via war-torn Yemen.

Shortly after yesterday's tragedy, IOM staff found the shallow graves of 29 migrants on a beach in Shabwa, during a routine patrol. The dead had been quickly buried by those who survived the smuggler's deadly actions. The approximate average age of the passengers on the boat was 16.

Since January of this year, IOM estimates that around 55,000 migrants left the Horn of Africa to come to Yemen, most with the aim of trying to find better opportunities in the Gulf countries. More than 30,000 of those migrants are under the age of 18 from Somalia and Ethiopia, while a third are estimated to be female.

This journey is especially hazardous during the current windy season in the Indian Ocean. Smugglers are active in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, offering fake promises to vulnerable migrants. IOM and its partners operate across the region to support these migrants and provide lifesaving assistance to those who find themselves abused or stranded along the route.

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## [UN agency begins moving hunger-relief assistance to Nigeria's troubled northeast](#)

10 August 2017 – The United Nations humanitarian agency fighting hunger has begun transporting food assistance to Nigeria's crisis-hit northeast, where people displaced by Boko Haram violence and the fight against it face the threat of famine.

The World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) has already begun moving the first batch of rice donated by the Government of Nigeria, which contributed 5,000 metric tons of rice and pledged a further 2,000 metric tons of millet.

This donation once again testifies to the quality of relations between WFP and Nigeria, [said](#) Ronald Sibanda, WFP's interim Country Director, in a news release, noting that the assistance will help feed nearly half-a-million internally displaced people in the country's conflict-ravaged northeast.

The United States will cover the associated costs of getting the donated rice to those displaced in the hardest-hit states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe, as part of its \$100 million contribution to WFP's Nigeria response.

Nigeria's crisis has spilled over borders, leaving millions in the broader Lake Chad Basin region uncertain of where their meal is coming from. Experts have warned that without sufficient and timely humanitarian assistance, northeast Nigeria risks tipping into famine.

Since launching operations last year, WFP has rapidly expanded its offer of food, nutrition and cash to reach more than a million people a month. Having overcome a funding challenge, it has set its target at 1.36 million people during the current pre-harvest lean season, the hungriest time of the year.

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## [Expert concludes review of new information on death of former UN chief Dag Hammarskjöld](#)

9 August 2017 – The United Nations today received an expert report that summarizes the new information made available by Member States and other sources and assesses whether and to what degree that information helps to establish the conditions and circumstances resulting in the tragic deaths of former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld and 15 others traveling with him.

Mr. Hammarskjöld served as the top UN official from April 1953 until his death at the age of 56 in a plane crash in Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia, along with 15 others in September 1961.

According to an information [note](#) issued by the Office of the UN Spokesperson, the report, presented by Mohamed Chande Othman, former Chief Justice of Tanzania, to [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres, sets out findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Mr. Othman was appointed by Mr. Guterres in February 2017 and is familiar with this matter from his role as Chair of the 2015 Independent Panel of Experts, which concluded, among other things, that there was significant new information with sufficient probative value to further pursue aerial attack or other interference as a hypothesis of the possible cause of the crash.

Since Mr. Othman's appointment, the UN chief has urged Member States to disclose, declassify or allow access to information that they may have regarding the tragic 1961 plane crash.

Mr. Othman's new mandate was to review potential new information, assess its probative value and determine the scope that any further investigation should take. The mandate also allows him, if possible, to draw conclusions from the investigations already conducted, including by the 2015 Independent Panel of Experts and the 2013 Hammarskjöld Commission.

The Secretary-General will transmit Mr. Othman's report to the General Assembly before the end of its seventy-first session and report on progress made.