

As South Sudan famine ebbs, millions still face 'extreme hunger on the edge of a cliff' – UN

21 June 2017 – While famine has eased in South Sudan, the situation across the crisis-torn country remains dire, as the number of people struggling to find food each day has grown from 4.9 million in February to six million today – the highest level of food insecurity the young nation has ever experienced, according to the United Nations.

The [increase in food insecurity](#) has been driven by armed conflict, below-average harvests and soaring food prices as well as the effects of the annual lean season, said the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) in a joint press statement today.

According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) update, an analysis by the UN agencies, the Government and other partners, the technical definition of famine no longer applies to former Unity State's Leer and Mayandit counties where famine was declared in February. Immediate and sustained humanitarian assistance most likely played a significant role in preventing the Koch and Panyijiar counties from deteriorating into famine.

However, hunger has flared in in the nation's north-east corner – the western bank of the Nile River – while those in the south-west are facing unprecedented levels of need.

The crisis is not over. We are merely keeping people alive but far too many face extreme hunger on the edge of a cliff, said FAO's Director of Emergencies Dominique Burgeon. The only way to stop this desperate situation is to stop the conflict, ensure unimpeded access and enable people to resume their livelihoods.

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The three UN agencies warned that the improvements in the worst hunger hotspots must not be lost. People's ability to feed themselves has been severely eroded and continued life-saving emergency food and livelihoods support must continue to prevent a shift back to famine.

The gains made in the famine-affected counties show what can be achieved when sustained assistance reaches families. But the job is far from done, said Joyce Luma, WFP's Representative and Country Director in South Sudan. This is a crisis that continues to get worse with millions of people facing the prospect of starvation if humanitarian assistance

ceases. An end to this conflict is imperative.”

“When humanitarian agencies have access and resources we are able to mount a swift and robust response, and save lives,” said Mahimbo Mdoe, UNICEF Representative in South Sudan. “And yet more than one million children in South Sudan are estimated to be malnourished.”

Food insecurity is a key issue, but so is lack of health care, poor water and sanitation and, most crucially, access to those children in need of treatment. At present, too many parts of the country remain cut off due to insecurity, leaving hundreds of thousands of children on the cusp of catastrophe.

Each of the agencies has stepped up its response:

- WFP has reached 3.4 million people in South Sudan since the beginning of the year, including assistance for 2.6 million people displaced or affected by conflict and 800,000 people through a recovery operation;
- UNICEF and partners have treated some 76,000 children with severe acute malnutrition and provided 500,000 people with safe drinking water and 200,000 others with access to sanitation facilities; and
- FAO has provided fishing, crop- and vegetable-growing kits to more than 2.8 million people, including 200,000 in the famine-affected areas, and vaccinated more than 6 million livestock to save lives through livelihoods.

[World population to hit 9.8 billion by 2050, despite nearly universal lower fertility rates – UN](#)

21 June 2017 – The world population is now at least 7.6 billion, up from 7.4 billion last year, spurred by the relatively high levels of fertility in developing countries – despite an overall drop in the number of children people have around the globe – the United Nations today reported.

The concentration of global population growth is in the poorest countries, according to [World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision](#), presenting a challenge as the international community seeks to implement the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which seeks to end poverty and preserve the planet.

“With roughly [83 million people being added to the world's population](#) every year, the upward trend in population size is expected to continue, even assuming that fertility levels will continue to decline,” said the report's authors at the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

At this rate, the world population is expected to reach 8.6 billion in 2030, 9.8 billion in 2050 and surpass 11.2 billion in 2100.

The growth is expected to come, in part, from the 47 least developed countries, where the fertility rate is around 4.3 births per woman, and whose population is expected to reach 1.9 billion people in 2050 from the current estimate of one billion.

In addition, the birth rates in African countries are likely to at least double by 2050, according to the report.

That trend comes despite lower fertility rates in nearly all regions of the world, including in Africa, where rates fell from 5.1 births per woman up to 2005 to 4.7 births in the five years following.

In contrast, the birth rates in Europe are up to 1.6 births per woman, up from 1.4 births in 2000-2005.

During 2010-2015, fertility was below the replacement level in 83 countries comprising 46 per cent of the world's population, according to the report.

The lower fertility rates are resulting in an ageing population, with the number of people aged 60 or over expected to more than double by 2050 and triple by 2100, from the current 962 million to 3.1 billion.

Africa, which has the youngest age distribution of any region, is projected to experience a rapid ageing of its population, the report noted.

Although the African population will remain relatively young for several more decades, the percentage of its population aged 60 or over is expected to rise from five per cent in 2017 to around nine per cent in 2050, and then to nearly 20 per cent by the end of the century, the authors wrote.

In terms of other population trends depicted in the report, the population of India, which currently ranks as the second most populous country with 1.3 billion inhabitants, will surpass China's 1.4 billion citizens, by 2024.

By 2050, the third most populous country will be Nigeria, which currently ranks seventh, and which is poised to replace the United States.

The report also noted the impacts of migrants and refugees between countries, in particular noting the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis and the estimated outflow of 4.2 million people.

In terms of migration, although international migration at or around current levels will be insufficient to compensate fully for the expected loss of population tied to low levels of fertility, especially in the European region, the movement of people between countries can help attenuate some of the adverse consequences of population ageing, the authors wrote.

As crises multiply, UN revises annual aid appeal to assist over 100 million around the world

21 June 2017 – As the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance around the world reach record levels, United Nations and relief partners have revised their global aid appeal to \$23.5 billion – up nearly 6 per cent from the original \$22.2 billion announced late last year.

According to a news release issued by the UN Office for Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), [new natural and man-made disasters as well as deteriorating protracted emergencies](#) have resulted in an additional 8 million people around the world needing assistance.

Since its launch on 5 December 2017, donors have provided about \$6.2 billion for the 2017 global appeal. However, with more than half of the year still remaining and needs rising, more is needed.

With generous donor support, humanitarian partners have swiftly scaled up to deliver record levels of life-saving assistance in challenging and often dangerous environments, Stephen O'Brien, the UN Emergency Relief Coordination and head of OCHA, said on the first day of the annual Economic and Social Council Humanitarian Affairs Segment in Geneva.

[But] we are in a race against time. People's lives and well-being depend on increasing our collective support, he added.

Some of the crises that pushed up the requirements include the rapid escalation of violence in Kasai province in the Democratic Republic of Congo as well as a drought in Kenya, tropical cyclones in Madagascar and Mozambique, and flooding in Peru, as well as looming famines across north-eastern Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen.

The revised appeal aims to reach over 101 million highly vulnerable people among the estimated 141 million people across 37 countries in need of humanitarian assistance.

Funding to response plans is a high-impact investment as they are prioritized on the basis of thorough needs assessment and analysis. Supporting the plans also provides the most neutral and impartial aid, Mr. O'Brien noted, calling on the international community to step up assistance: We now need donors to set the bar higher and increase their support.

The Humanitarian Affairs Segment, being held from 21-23 June is a major global platform to discuss activities and issues related to strengthening

UN's humanitarian response around the globe.

The forum also provides a key opportunity for UN Member States, Organizational entities, humanitarian and development partners and the affected communities to discuss emerging and pressing humanitarian issues.

Coinciding with the Humanitarian Affairs Segment, OCHA today also launched the [Global Humanitarian Overview 2017 Status Report](#), which documents evidence humanitarians efforts to assist the world's most vulnerable people.

According to the Status Report, UN and partners have provided life-saving assistance to 5.8 million people in Yemen and over 3 million people in South Sudan. Also 2.7 million people in Somalia and 2.2 million affected by the Syria crisis have received food. In north-eastern Nigeria, over 2.3 million people have received both emergency food assistance and livelihood support through UN-coordinated plans.

[Protection of civilians in Syria must be ensured, stresses UN chief Guterres](#)

21 June 2017 – Expressing alarm over the suffering of people Syria, in particular those in Raqqa and in other locations where fighting continues, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has called on all those conducting military operations in the country to ensure the safety and protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure.

“Civilians continue to be killed, injured and displaced at a terrifying rate [and] places of refuge, such as hospitals and schools continue to be targeted,” said the Secretary-General in a statement today.

“I [make an urgent appeal](#) to all those conducting military operations in Syria to do everything in their power to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure,” he added.

In the statement, the UN chief voiced particular concern for the civilians in Raqqa as well as those stuck in other besieged and hard-to-reach areas, some of whom have been deprived of food and basic medical assistance for years on end.

According to estimates, more than 430,000 civilians are in need across the larger Raqqa governorate, in areas either cut off from relief or where transporting aid is extremely difficult. In all, [the crisis now it in its seventh year](#) has left more than 13.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, displaced 6.3 million internally, and forced more than 5.1 million to flee across Syrian borders.

Further in the statement, Mr. Guterres hailed the efforts of UN and humanitarian workers, who he said are "all they can do to stem the suffering in Raqqa and across Syria, often at great personal risk."

"It is critical for all parties [to the conflict] to facilitate improved humanitarian access to allow aid to reach those in urgent need of life-saving assistance without delay," he said.

Heading to Uganda for 'solidarity summit,' UN chief marks World Refugee Day with calls for action

20 June 2017 – Refugee protection is not a matter of solidarity or generosity, but an obligation under international law, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today said, detailing five strong appeals to the international community for respecting refugees' rights.

"We are still witnessing many remarkable examples of [solidarity in today's world](#). But at the same time, we are seeing more and more borders being closed, we are seeing more and more refugees being rejected and, namely in countries of the developed world," Mr. Guterres said in his first press conference in New York since becoming Secretary-General.

Among his calls on Member States, Mr. Guterres urged Governments to manage their borders but to increase their resettlement quotas and protect asylum seekers and people who deserve protection; to seek political solutions to world's conflicts which are spurring the record 65.6 million refugees; and to fund humanitarian aid work.

In line with [World Refugee Day](#), marked annually on 20 June, Mr. Guterres, who was the UN High Commissioner for Refugees for a decade prior, announced that he would be leaving later today for Uganda, which this week hosts a UN-backed summit to support the more than 1.3 million refugees within its borders for the next four years.

Some 950,000 refugees from South Sudan have crossed into Uganda since the start of the conflict in the world's newest country in December 2013. The figure is three times higher than the number of refugees who crossed the Mediterranean Sea into Europe last year, Mr. Guterres said, adding that Uganda not only provides protection but land for the refugees.

I also think it's important to underline that the difficulties faced by refugees are also linked to the fact that the migration debate has become quite irrational in today's world.

In contrast, the UN chief had sharp words for developed countries not doing enough to provide support for refugees or take them in despite heart breaking pleas for food, water and other basics.

Some 80 per cent of the world's refugees are hosted by developing countries with a dramatic impact on their economy, society and security, he noted.

This is particularly worrying, especially when associated to forms of political populism, xenophobia, racism, in which refugees become a target, Mr. Guterres said, many times being accused of being part of the terror threat when refugees are not terrorists they are the first victims of terror, they are fleeing terror; that is why they are refugees.

RELATED: [Sheer scale of influx into Uganda means Africa's largest refugee crisis now a 'children's crisis,' UNICEF warns](#)

Speaking alongside Ninette Kelley, the Director of the NY Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Mr. Guterres lashed out at the irrational debate surrounding migration, calling it a necessary element of establishing different forms of equilibrium in the global society and the global economy.

Stressing that Governments need to apply their own migration policies in their countries, he urged world leaders to respect human rights and to create opportunities within their borders so that people migrate out of choice and not out of necessity.

Addressing the difference between [refugees and migrants](#), Mr. Guterres said that the UN General Assembly will next year hold two key debates with the aim of agreeing on two compacts one on refugees and one on migration.

We are talking about two different situations: refugees crossing borders, fleeing conflict or prosecution, [and] economic migrants who aspire legitimately to have a better life and move from one country to another, aiming at a better future for them and their children, the Secretary-General said.

He added that migration is necessary: If something is necessary, it's better to control it and to do it regularly than to let smugglers and traffickers be in charge of these movements.