

UNICEF-backed projects for 9 million children in and around Syria 'on the verge of being cut off'

16 June 2017 – Programmes supported by the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) to assist more than nine million children in Syria and neighbouring countries are on the verge of being cut off due to a critical funding shortage.

"This is the most severe funding gap UNICEF has had since we started responding to the Syria crisis, one of the largest humanitarian operations in the history of the organisation," [said](#) Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, in a press release.

"Humanitarian needs continue to grow by the day inside Syria and in neighbouring countries, while pressure on generous host communities is seriously jeopardizing their ability to make ends meet," he added.

UNICEF appealed for \$1.4 billion for its emergency operations in 2017 inside Syria and in neighbouring Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt. To date, UNICEF has received less than 25 per cent of its funding requirements.

Pressure on generous host communities is seriously jeopardizing their ability to make ends meet

In its seventh year and with no end in sight, the war in Syria has become the largest humanitarian and displacement crisis in the world since World War II. Inside Syria, nearly 6 million children are in need of assistance while more than 2.5 million live as refugees across Syria's borders. Neighbouring countries, already supporting large numbers of vulnerable people, have received 80 per cent of all refugees from Syria.

Without an injection of new funds, some critical and lifesaving activities supported by UNICEF are at a serious risk being cut off.

These include safe water and sanitation services for 1.2 million children living in camps, informal settlements and host communities; access to healthcare and essential nutrition treatments for almost 5.4 million children; cash assistance to families that helps keep nearly half a million children in school; and the distribution of clothes and blankets in winter months.

UNICEF calls for a number of immediate actions to put an end to the war in Syria, prioritize the protection of civilians and the rights of children, improve the delivery of services and infrastructure such as healthcare, education and water in refugee host countries; and provide much-needed financial support to organisations like UNICEF to continue lifesaving

assistance.

[‘All of us can and must be prepared to speak out’ to halt abuse of older persons – UN rights expert](#)

15 June 2017 – Many older persons are at risk of being abused by their own relatives, a United Nations human rights expert has warned, urging greater vigilance and more reporting of suspected cases, especially since many fear on the part of older persons may not speak up for fear of reprisals – or to protect family members from criminal prosecution.

“Older people are afraid to say they are being abused,” said Rosa Kornfeld-Matte, the UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, speaking to *UN News* ahead of [World Elder Abuse Awareness Day](#), which is marked annually on 15 June.

“They are afraid because they feel lonely. They believe that if they denounce the person next to them, they will find themselves alone,” she said, echoing a statement issued by the UN Office for the High Commissioner of Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)) in which she said she is [particularly appalled](#) that older persons are often at risk from members of their own family.

“We must not close our eyes to the fate of older persons, even though it is difficult to accept that our families are not always a safe haven. On this World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, I urge everyone who suspects any form of elder abuse, including financial abuse, to report their concerns,” stated Ms. Kornfeld-Matte.

According to the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), around one in six older persons experience some form of abuse, a figure higher than previously estimated and predicted to rise as populations age worldwide. By 2050 the number of people aged 60 and over will double to reach two billion globally, with the vast majority of older people living in low- and middle-income countries.

The agency warned that if the proportion of elder abuse victims remains constant, the number of people affected will increase rapidly due to population ageing, growing to 320 million victims by 2050.

All of us can and must be prepared to be advocates for older people, if this abuse is ever to be halted
UN Independent Expert Rosa Kornfeld-Matte

Along these lines, a recent [study](#) published in the *Lancet Global Health* found that nearly 16 per cent of those subject to abuse aged 60 years and older, were subjected to either psychological abuse, financial abuse, neglect, physical abuse or sexual abuse.

“Elder abuse is [rarely discussed in policy circles](#), less prioritized for research and addressed by only a handful of organizations,” noted Dr. Etienne Krug, Director of the WHO Department for the Management of Noncommunicable Diseases, Disability, Violence and Injury Prevention.

“Governments must protect all people from violence. We must work to shed light on this important societal challenge, understand how best to prevent it, and help put in place the measures needed,” Dr. Kurg stressed.

If you see something, say something

While most cases of abuse go undetected despite clear warning signs, Ms. Kornfeld-Matte urged everyone to step up if they are witness to such incidents.

“If a neighbour, a senior citizen or even a nursing home employee sees any abuse type of situation, they have to go to the police and report what they see,” she said, stressing: “We cannot assume the victims will report what is happening to them.

She explained that despite facing abuse such as being physically restrained, left in soiled clothes, over-medicated or emotionally neglected, they may not speak up for fear of reprisals – or to protect family members from criminal prosecution. In some cases, the victims may not be fully aware that what is happening to them constitutes abuse.

“This all adds to the weight of our collective responsibility to act, and to speak up for older persons when they are unable or unwilling to speak for themselves. All of us can and must be prepared to be advocates for older people, if this abuse is ever to be halted,” she said.

[UN envoy strongly condemns attack on popular restaurant and hotel in Somali capital](#)

15 June 2017 – The United Nations envoy for Somalia today strongly condemned last night’s attack on a pizza restaurant and an adjacent hotel in Mogadishu that reportedly killed at least 19 people.

“Last night’s attack was clearly aimed at civilians who were breaking

the fast,” [said](#) the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia, Michael Keating, in a statement to the press.

“There can be no justification for such acts of wanton bloodshed. The holy month of Ramadan is a time of peace and compassion; the attackers have shown cynical contempt for this, and set back the prospect for a peaceful solution to Somalia's problems,” he added.

Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for the attack, which was triggered by a suicide car bomber and targeted customers who frequent the Pizza House restaurant and adjacent Posh Hotel. Five militants who seized control of the restaurant were subsequently killed by Somali security forces.

On behalf of the United Nations and the broader international community, he extended heartfelt condolences to the families and victims of the deceased and wished a full and speedy recovery to those who sustained injuries.

[Closing gender gap at work can open doors to incredible benefits, UN report shows](#)

14 June 2017 – Reducing gender disparities at workplaces by 25 per cent by 2025 could inject nearly \$5.8 trillion into the global economy and boost tax revenues, a new report released today by the United Nations International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)) has revealed.

According to the UN agency, even though women are significantly less likely to participate in the labour market than men, once they manage to enter the labour market, finding work remains even more difficult for them their male counterparts.

“[Helping women access the labour market is nevertheless an important first step](#),” said ILO in a news release, noting that in 2017, the global labour force participation rate for women – at just over 49 per cent – is nearly 27 percentage points lower than for men.

This figure is forecast to remain unchanged in 2018.

Further recalling the commitment expressed by G20 leaders, in 2014, to reduce the gap in participation rates between men and women by 25 per cent by the year 2025, the ILO report [World Employment and Social Outlook Trends for Women 2017](#), estimates that some \$5.8 trillion could be added to the world economy.

This could also unlock large potential tax revenues, in particular in

countries in the North Africa, Arab and Southern Asia regions.

In addition to the significant economic benefits, engaging more women in the world of work would have a positive impact on their well-being since most women would like to work.

“The fact that half of women worldwide are out of the labour force when 58 per cent of them would prefer to work at paid jobs is a strong indication that there are significant challenges restricting their capabilities and freedom to participate,” said Deborah Greenfield, the ILO Deputy Director-General for Policy.

“The most immediate concern for policy makers, therefore, should be to alleviate the constraints that women face in choosing to enter the labour market and address the barriers they are confronted with once they are in the workplace,” she added.

Attitudes on women and men ‘roles’ have to change

Furthermore, the ILO report also highlighted the need to “redefine the roles” of men and women at the workplace.

“We need to start by changing our attitudes towards the role of women in the world of work and in society. Far too often some members of society still fall back on the excuse that it is ‘unacceptable’ for a woman to have a paid job,” said Steven Tobin, the lead author of the report.

The report also emphasized the need to promote equal pay for work of equal value; tackle root causes of occupational and sectoral segregation; recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work; as well as transforming institutions to prevent and eliminate discrimination, violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work.

“Policies should also address the socio-economic factors that influence participation by introducing policies that improve work-family balance, create and protect quality jobs in the care economy and target the macroeconomic environment and informal economy,” added Mr. Tobin.

Political will, financial support needed to bolster new approach to cholera in Haiti – UN deputy chief

14 June 2017 – The United Nations deputy chief today called on Member States to fund the Organization’s new strategy to counter cholera in Haiti, stressing that the initiative is facing a critical shortage of resources.

Without additional resources, the intensified [cholera response and control](#) efforts cannot be sustained through 2017 and 2018, [said](#) Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed during an informal briefing to the General Assembly on the Organization's latest report on the strategy. Without your political will and financial support, we have only good intentions and words.

Last December, then-Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon put forward a [New Approach to Cholera in Haiti](#) to demonstrate the Organization's commitment to the elimination of the disease. He also [apologized](#) to the Haitian people on behalf of the United Nations stating that the Organization simply had not done enough with regard to the cholera outbreak and its spread in Haiti and that it was profoundly sorry for its role.

The new approach has two tracks:

- Track 1 involves intensifying the Organization's efforts in order to reduce and ultimately end the transmission of cholera, improve access to care and treatment and address the longer-term issues of water, sanitation and health systems in Haiti.
- Track 2 is a package that will provide material assistance and support to those Haitians most directly affected by cholera.

[Secretary-General](#) António Guterres is strongly committed to taking forward the New Approach, she said.



UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed (left) briefs member states on the United Nations' New Approach to Cholera in Haiti. General Assembly President Peter Thomson is seated right. UN Photo/Evan Schneider

In the weeks following Hurricane Matthew last October, the number of suspected cholera cases increased. However, the number of suspected cases has since declined significantly. As of 27 May of this year, the Haiti Ministry of Health had reported 6,762 suspected cases, compared to 16,822 at the same time last year, she said.

The vaccination campaign being carried out by the Pan American Health Organization and World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) is well advanced, and is expected to reach 85 per cent of the 700,000 target by the end of this month. The next campaign, scheduled for the last quarter of 2017, aims to vaccinate 2.6 million people in the country's most vulnerable areas.

As of 20 April, voluntary contributions to the UN Cholera Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund totalled about \$2.7 million from seven Member States, namely Chile, France, India, Liechtenstein, the Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom, against the envisaged expenditure of \$400 million over two years. Outside of the Trust Fund, Canada and Japan, committed nearly \$7 million. The Fund has also received approximately \$17,000 from UN staff members and private donors.

However, three projects, which together cost \$2.5 million, have nearly depleted the Trust Fund, which now has just \$183,000. No new contributions have been received.

The Secretary-General proposes to address the need for resources in several ways, including the soon-be-announced appointment of a high-level envoy to develop a comprehensive fundraising strategy to seek additional voluntary contributions from Member States and other sources.

The Secretary-General and she will continue to use their own interactions with world leaders to urge them to provide further voluntary financial and other appropriate support.

The Secretary-General has asked Member States to consider voluntarily waiving the return of the 2015-2016 unencumbered balances and credits from miscellaneous income and adjustments from the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti, a peacekeeping mission known as MINUSTAH, and instead direct them to the Trust Fund.

Those balances total \$40.5 million, she said.

In his [remarks](#), General Assembly President Peter Thomson said “much remains to be done to eliminate cholera in Haiti, and help move the country from fragility to sustainable development and economic growth.”

“If we are to live together as good neighbours and employ our international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples, here is a prime opportunity for good action,” he said.