

Nearly \$1.1 billion pledged for beleaguered Yemen at UN-led humanitarian conference

25 April 2017 – With nearly two-thirds of war-torn Yemen – about 19 million people – in need of emergency support, the international community today raised \$1.1 billion at a pledging event in Geneva to aid what the United Nations chief calls “the world’s largest hunger crisis.”

The aim was to bridge a funding gap in the 2017 [humanitarian appeal](#) of \$2.1 billion. Prior to the conference, only about 15 per cent had been met.

“We are witnessing the starving and the crippling of an entire generation. [We must act now](#), to save lives,” said [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres, who presided over the opening of the [High-level Pledging Event](#) on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, alongside the Foreign Affairs Ministers of Switzerland and Sweden.

He noted that the “man-made crisis” had devastated the economy of a country that was “pitifully poor” even before the current conflict, and forced three million people from their homes – leaving many being unable to earn a living or grow crops.

“Some 17 million are food-insecure, making this the world’s largest hunger crisis,” Mr. Guterres said, highlighting a situation worsened by import restrictions and the destruction of port facilities.

Calling particular attention to children at risk in Yemen, Mr. Guterres said that on average, one child under the age of five dies of preventable causes every 10 minutes in Yemen.

“This means fifty children in Yemen will die during today’s conference – and all those deaths could have been prevented,” he stated.



Secretary-General António Guterres (at podium) is joined by from left: Foreign Ministers Margot Wallström of Sweden, and Didier Burkhalter of Switzerland, and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O’Brien at the press briefing in Geneva of the High-Level Pledging Event for Yemen. Photo: OCHA/Violaine Martin

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), [pledges were made](#) by 48 Member States, the European Commission, the Central Emergency Response Fund ([CERF](#)) and four NGO/humanitarian organizations for humanitarian action in Yemen in 2017. “Now we must see the pledges translated into the scaled up action the people of Yemen need and deserve,” the Mr. Guterres said.

Yemen's next challenge: lifting restriction on aid access throughout the country

The exact pledges for the day totalled \$1,098,466,634, "a remarkable success" according to the Secretary-General, who expressed optimism at the close of the conference that the full amount required will materialize in the coming months.

The next challenge to overcome would be to lift access restrictions to and without Yemen. Mr. Guterres urged parties of the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and allow unhindered movement of humanitarian actors to reach those in need.

"[Access](#) is the key for the success of this pledging conference," he said, calling also for the necessary infrastructure to be allowed to operate in normal conditions and for goods to be imported and distributed.

Echoing the Secretary-General's calls for access, Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien noted the UN and its humanitarian partners are "scaling up and [ready to do more](#) provided there are resources and access."

Having visited Yemen thrice over the past two years, he recalled haunting images of a 13 year old girl who now headed her household, of toddlers too sick to register their mother's touch, and of families living with little access to food, clean water or medicines.

Both officials stressed that funding alone will not reverse the fortunes of the millions of people impacted. They called for a cessation of hostilities and a political settlement, with talks facilitated by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

'Between famine and starvation lies disease'

More than two years of fighting has destroyed the country's infrastructure – including attacks that targeted civilians. Some 325 attacks have been verified on health facilities, schools, markets and other infrastructure.

As the violence rose, the ability to aid those in need has been hampered. The disruption of health services has been "severe," Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), told the pledging event.

Less than half of the country's health facilities are functioning and the majority of health providers, if they stayed, have not been paid since at least August 2016.

She warned also that infections would increase as the population grows more hungry.

"Large swaths of the population are on the [brink of famine](#)," Dr. Chan said. "Between famine and death from starvation lies disease. Infections that a well-nourished body wards off become deadly in severely malnourished people."

She called for more services, such as vaccinations, and access to basic

health services.

[Ghana, Kenya and Malawi to pilot malaria vaccine trial – UN](#)

25 April 2017 – The United Nations health agency’s regional office for Africa has announced that Ghana, Kenya, and Malawi will take part in a breakthrough pilot programme to make the world’s first malaria vaccine available in selected areas, beginning in 2018.

“The prospect of a malaria vaccine is great news. Information gathered in the pilot will help us make decisions on the wider use of this vaccine”, said Matshidiso Moeti, World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) Regional Director for Africa, in a [news release](#).

Announcement of the coordinated rollout comes as the international community marks [World Malaria Day](#) and the kick-off of [World Immunization Week](#), 24-30 April, which celebrates the widespread use of vaccines that protect people against 26 diseases. Overall, vaccines prevent an estimated two to three million deaths each year, according to WHO.

The injectable RTS,S vaccine was developed to protect young children from the most deadly form of malaria caused by [Plasmodium parasites](#). It will be assessed in the pilot programme as a complementary malaria control tool to potentially be added to the core package of WHO-recommended measures for malaria prevention.

“Combined with existing malaria interventions, such a vaccine would have the potential to save tens of thousands of lives in Africa,” Dr. Moeti added.

Africa bears the greatest burden of malaria worldwide. Global efforts in the last 15 years have led to a 62 per cent reduction in malaria deaths between 2000 and 2015, yet approximately 429,000 people died of the disease in 2015 – the majority of them young children in Africa.

The WHO pilot programme will assess whether the vaccine’s protective effect in children aged 5 – 17 months old during Phase III testing can be replicated in real-life. Specifically, it will assess the feasibility of delivering the required four doses of RTS,S, the vaccine’s potential role in reducing childhood deaths and its safety in the context of routine use.

Pilot implementation strategy

The three countries selected to participate in the pilot were based on the criteria of high coverage of long-lasting insecticidal-treated nets; well-functioning malaria and immunisation programmes – a high malaria burden even

after scale-up of LLINs; and participation in the Phase III RTS,S malaria vaccine trial.

Each country will decide on the districts and regions to be included, with high-malaria-burden areas prioritized, as they are predicted to provide the broadest benefit. Information garnered from the pilot will help to inform later decisions about potential wider use of the vaccine.

The malaria vaccine will be administered via intramuscular injection and delivered through routine national immunization programmes. WHO is working with the three countries to facilitate regulatory authorization of the vaccine for use in the pilots through the African Vaccine Regulatory Forum. Regulatory support will also include measures to enable the appropriate safety monitoring of the vaccine and rigorous evaluation for eventual large scale use.

Malaria: Facts, figures and prevention strategies



Coverage gaps in Sub-Saharan Africa. Source: WHO

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance; the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; and the International Drug Purchase Facility UNITAID, are partnering to provide \$49.2 million for the first phase of the pilot programme (2017-2020), which will be complemented in-kind by contributions from WHO and the British pharmaceutical company GSK .

[Afghanistan makes progress in fighting corruption, enormous challenges remain – new UN report](#)

25 April 2017 – While enormous challenges remain, Afghanistan authorities have made headway in their fight against corruption, according to a United Nations report released today, which also finds that the country is making progress in other areas, such as restoring institutional control over the delivery of public services.

“For the sake of the country’s future, corruption in Afghanistan must be addressed and eliminated,” said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan [said](#) in Kabul.

He said the UN welcomes the progress already made, and fully supports the Government’s ongoing efforts to fight corruption in the interest of ending impunity, ensuring accountability and transparency, and restoring integrity

to the management of public services, finances and natural resources.

Its report entitled [*Afghanistan's Fight against Corruption: The Other Battlefield*](#), the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), highlights the country's progress in addressing corruption. Drawing on internationally recognized best practices, it provides recommendations for how the Government, with the continued support of the public and the international community, can build on those achievements.

"It is my sincere hope that the progress made so far in the fight against corruption and the recommendations contained in our report will serve as a platform to achieve greater policy coherence and coordination in Afghanistan," said Mr. Yamamoto, who also heads UNAMA.

The report, which the Afghan ministries and judiciary received for input and endorsement prior to release, points out that corruption has affected all aspects of life in the country – undermining public trust and confidence in Government institutions and hindering efforts to bring lasting peace and prosperity to the State.

The report serves as a stark reminder that the fight against corruption cannot be won in the short term, and that the battle requires sustained commitment

A key component of Afghanistan's fight against corruption is the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre (ACJC). Its dedicated police and prosecution units, and a new national primary and appeals court, was established by Presidential Decree to operate with jurisdiction over the broad range of corruption offences specified in the current penal code.

The Justice Centre's scope also includes money laundering, destruction or selling of cultural and historical relics, crimes against internal and external security, illegal extraction of mines and land usurpation.

In addition to outlining the advances made by the ACJC, which is actively investigating, prosecuting and adjudicating cases, the report indicates that Afghanistan is showing progress in restoring institutional control over the delivery of essential public services and management of public finances.

Recognizing that the Government's ongoing anti-corruption efforts have yet to impact the lives of most Afghans, the report makes several recommendations and concludes that – notwithstanding the many legal and policy reforms that have been undertaken – corruption remains a substantial obstacle to Afghanistan's long-term peace and prosperity.

"The report serves as a stark reminder that the fight against corruption cannot be won in the short term, and that the battle requires the sustained commitment on the part of the government and the general public, and full support from the international community," concluded Mr. Yamamoto.

Latin America loses billions of dollars to 'double burden' of undernutrition and obesity – UN study

25 April 2017 – Undernutrition and obesity are the two sides of malnutrition, and together they contributed to the loss of billions of dollars for economies in Latin America, a United Nations-backed study has found, warning that unless more is done to mitigate this health burden, the region faces a “frightening” future.

The Cost of the Double Burden of Malnutrition, released yesterday, is the result of a partnership between the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the UN World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) and calculates losses in productivity, health and education in Chile, Ecuador and Mexico.

While undernutrition undermines physical growth and impairs brain development, overweight and obesity can lead to non-communicable diseases such as type II diabetes, hypertension and cancer. Together, they inflict a ‘double burden’ on countries and people as they hinder the development of individuals, the well-being of communities and the goal of reaching Zero Hunger by 2030.

According to the study, gross domestic product (GDP) in each country shrinks every year as a result of losses in productivity caused by this double burden. Losses are estimated at \$500 million in Chile, \$4.3 billion in Ecuador and \$28.8 billion in Mexico, which represent respectively 0.2 per cent, 4.3 per cent and 2.3 per cent loss of GDP.

“Over the last decade many middle income countries have made great inroads into reducing undernutrition. Yet the problem persists and we now witness a worrying trend among vulnerable communities with cases of undernourishment and overweight simultaneously within the same families,” [said](#) WFP Regional Director, Miguel Barreto.

“The double burden of malnutrition increasingly affects the poor and vulnerable population, thus becoming another cause for the current inequality in our region,” said ECLAC Executive Secretary, Alicia Bárcena.

The implications for the future of countries are frightening. According to the study, undernutrition is declining, but ‘overnutrition’ is expected to become the largest social and economic burden in the region. From 2014 to 2078, overweight and obesity are projected to cost on average \$1 billion in Chile, \$3 billion in Ecuador and \$13 billion in Mexico per year respectively.

The study recommends measures to mitigate this burden; governments should

promote consumer education through clear policies and incentives to ensure reliable food labelling, physical activity initiatives, and the support of community-based nutrition education programmes.

It encourages the food industry to work with governments to guarantee the production, availability, and accessibility of healthier food products, and to play a positive and responsible role in educating consumers on healthy food choices.

[Somalia: UN launches lifesaving vaccination campaign for children facing measles threat](#)

25 April 2017 – Almost 30,000 young Somali children, many of them displaced by a searing drought, are being vaccinated against measles this week in a United Nations-backed emergency campaign in one of the country's hardest-hit towns.

“Among vaccine-preventable diseases, none is more deadly than measles,” said UN Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) Country Representative Steven Lauwerier in a [news release](#).

[Measles](#) is a viral respiratory infection that spreads through air and contact with infected mucus and saliva, thrives in congested, unsanitary displacement camps.

Many children have never been immunized before as a decades-old conflict has made it difficult for health workers to reach remote areas from which they come.

So far this year, almost 5,700 cases of suspected measles have been reported across the country, more than the total number of cases in 2016.

More than 100,000 people have come to Baidoa, in Somalia's south-western region, in search of assistance, including at least 70,000 in March alone.

The threat of famine once again looms large over Somalia. Up to a million children are, or will be, acutely malnourished this year, with one in five requiring life-saving treatment.

“And we know only too well from the 2011 famine that measles, combined with malnutrition and displacement, is an especially lethal combination for children,” said Mr. Lauwerier. “The only way to prevent sickness and death from measles is to make sure all children receive the vaccine.”

The Baidoa campaign is being conducted in partnership with Somalia's Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), and several non-governmental organizations.

Children are also given a vitamin A supplement to boost immunity as well as de-worming tablets.