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Largest yellow fever vaccination campaign in Nigeria's history under way – UN health agency



Yellow fever Reactive Vaccination in Zamfara state, north-western Nigeria. Photo: WHO

25 January – The Nigerian Government launched a mass vaccination campaign in alliance with the World Health Organization (WHO) on Thursday, aiming to immunize more than 25 million people before the end of this year.

This drive is part of a global effort to eliminate the risk of yellow fever epidemics by 2026, which should be possible if 90 per cent of the population can be reached. The preventive campaign will use vaccines funded by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and will also be supported by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The yellow fever virus is mosquito-borne, and the disease can cause jaundice due to liver damage.

Nigeria's current yellow fever outbreak began in September, and by early January this year, a total of 358 suspected cases had been reported, with 45 deaths.

In late 2017, Nigeria vaccinated more than three million people in an initial emergency yellow fever campaign, with the aim of quickly containing the outbreak.

However, the virus continues to spread in parts of the country where people remain largely unprotected.

WHO is supporting the campaign by training thousands of healthcare workers, helping to track cases, and by providing coordination and logistical support.

"With a single dose of vaccine, an individual is protected for life against yellow fever," Dr. Wondimagegnehu Alemu, WHO Representative in Nigeria, said on Wednesday. "This is a massive undertaking which took weeks of planning. Nearly 3000

vaccination teams are being deployed across the four states participating in the campaign.”

Time to stop ‘managing’ Israeli-Palestinian conflict, show leadership to resolve it – Security Council told

25 January – The United Nations, the Security Council and the wider international community all have fallen into a pattern of “managing, rather than resolving” the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the UN envoy on the Middle East peace process warned Thursday, saying it was time to end this paralysis, show political leadership and push for policies on the ground that rebuild trust.

“Twenty-five years after the Oslo Accords, we are at a critical point in the peace process,” said Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, at a Security Council briefing, referring to a set of agreements, the first of which was signed in 1993, establishing a timetable for achieving peace between the two sides.

The uncertainty and volatility of the current environment, he continued, is hardening positions and sharpening the rhetoric on all sides, “a situation that plays directly into the hands of extremists and increases the risk of another conflict.”

He said that absent a credible proposal that can become the basis of final status negotiations, the international community must continue to build the conditions necessary for a resumption of talks.

“We must also reaffirm the international consensus that the two-State solution remains the only viable option for a just and sustainable end to the conflict. We must be unwavering in this position,” he said.

The two-State solution means having Israel and Palestine as two separate States living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition.

Mr. Mladenov noted that there are those who believe that the conflict can be solved through peaceful bilateral negotiations and compromises, by addressing the final status issues of borders, security, refugees and the status of Jerusalem on the basis of prior agreements and relevant UN resolutions.

Some believe in malting unilateral moves that can only lead to a one-state reality that is incompatible with the aspirations of both peoples. And there are those who believe in violence, he said.

“We – the United Nations, the Security Council, the international community – have a responsibility to prove that those who believe in violence and confrontation are wrong,” he said.

With this year marking the 25th anniversary of the Oslo Accords, it is time to push for policies on the ground that rebuild trust; to engage on final status issues on the basis of international consensus; to show political leadership to remove the obstacles to a sustainable solution.

This paralysis has elicited a heavy price: continued violence and insecurity; Israel’s ever-expanding, illegal settlement enterprise; a persistent Palestinian political divide; and a deteriorating, unsustainable situation in Gaza under the control of Hamas. Taken together, these elements kill hope, breed frustration, and increase radicalization on the ground, he explained.

While the Accords’ “daring” vision for peace remains to be fulfilled, “now is not the time to give up on Oslo. The alternative is not a better deal, but a worsening reality of occupation and humiliation,” he stated.



On large screen: Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov briefs the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question. UN Photo/Kim Haughton

Restive eastern DR Congo home to one of world's worst displacement crises for children – UNICEF



Children at a displacement camp in Goma, North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Photo: OCHA/Naomi Frerotte

25 January – More than 800,000 children have been forced from their homes by violence and armed clashes in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in what the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) calls "one of the world's worst displacement crises for children."

Inter-ethnic violence and clashes between the regular army, militia and armed groups in the provinces of Tanganyika and South Kivu have left some 1.3 million people displaced.

"Children in the eastern DRC continue to suffer devastating consequences as waves of violence destabilize the region," said Tajudeen Oyewale, the acting head of UNICEF in the vast African nation said on Thursday.

They are being sexually abused and recruited to fight.

UNICEF and its partners have identified more than 800 cases of sexual abuse, although the true scale of sexual violence being perpetrated against children is believed to be much larger.

Recent UNICEF data shows that more than 3,000 children have been recruited by militias and armed groups over the past year, raising concern over how the fighting has impacted children's health and nutritional wellbeing.

In 2017, the two provinces recorded 18,250 suspected cholera cases, twice as many as in 2016, and 18,000 suspected cases of measles. Today, numerous health centres are no longer functioning there.

"Hundreds of thousands of children in the region no longer have access to health care and education, while many have suffered atrocities at the hands of combatant," added Mr. Oyewale.

Violence has also prevented many people from working the fields to raise crops, fuelling a heightened risk of food insecurity and raising the possibility that thousands of children could suffer from malnutrition due to the lack of food.

As part of its emergency response programme in Tanganyika and South Kivu, UNICEF is providing multi-sectoral support to the displaced population, including immunizing children against measles; cholera prevention and treatment; assisting malnourished children; and offering protection, treatment and psychosocial support for children affected by violence, along with those who are injured or unaccompanied.

To assist the affected children both provinces, the UN agency has appealed for \$65 million in support of its response over the next six months.

UNICEF continues to call on all conflict parties to guarantee humanitarian access to people in urgent need of assistance.

"It is simply a brutal situation for children with no end in sight," Mr. Oyewale stressed.

Libya: UN relief wing and partners seek \$313 million to assist hundreds of thousands of people



A girl looks out of her house window in Benghazi, Libya. Photo: UNSMIL (file)

25 January – With people across Libya suffering amid the fallout from a protracted political crisis, outbreaks of violence and displacement, the United Nations humanitarian wing and its partners launched on Thursday a \$313 million appeal to cover the basic needs of 940,000 who need assistance and protection.

“The difficulties people in Libya face in providing for their basic needs are real, and we all need to be aware of the human cost of inaction,” said the Humanitarian Coordinator for Libya, Maria Ribeiro.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian (OCHA) noted that the 2018 Libya Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) seeks \$313 million to assist 940,000 people this year.

“In my interactions with Libyan men, women and children, I see people who want to feel safe, have their rights respected and know that they do not have to live from day to day,” explained Ms. Ribeiro.

The current crisis in Libya – which has been in conflict since a disputed election in 2014 following the 2011 toppling of long-time leader Muammar Gaddafi – is the result of ongoing hostilities among rival factions, political instability and a vacuum of effective governance that has resulted in a further breakdown of functioning systems within the country.

The 2018 HRP – the third coordinated appeal in Libya – is being launched on behalf of the humanitarian community in partnership with the Libyan authorities. It will help to implement 71 projects by 22 organizations, including UN agencies as well as national and international non-governmental organizations.

The projects aim to assist with deteriorating living conditions by extending civilian protections, in accordance with international law, to ensure basic service access for internally the displaced, returnees and the most vulnerable non-displaced Libyans, including migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

The funds will also help to strengthen families’ capacities to cope with the continued pressures of instability, fragmentation and economic decline.

Safety of Rohingya children must be guaranteed, before return to Myanmar – UNICEF

25 January – Improved security and unimpeded humanitarian access in Myanmar are essential before Rohingya children can be returned from Bangladesh, a senior official of the United Nations children's agency has said.

“Some 58 per cent of the refugees are children, many of whom are still traumatized by their experiences of violence,” said UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Justin Forsyth on Wednesday, speaking from the Kutapalong refugee camp in southern Bangladesh.

“It is critical that their rights and needs in terms of protection and aid are front and centre in any agreement to return families to Myanmar. Return of refugees to Myanmar must be voluntary, safe and dignified,” he added.

The vast Kutupalong camp shelters many of the 688,000 Rohingya refugees who have fled across the border from Myanmar's Rakhine State following an outbreak of violence there in late August last year. More than half of the refugees are children.

“In just the last few days we have heard reports of fires and shooting in villages across the border. Until the safety and wellbeing of any child returning to Myanmar can be guaranteed, talk of repatriation is premature,” he stressed, while praising the leadership of Bangladesh for supporting these desperate people and helping avoid “the worst potential consequences of this human calamity.”

However, Mr. Forsyth pointed out that with the rainy season approaching, there were still huge challenges ahead.

“Conditions in the camps here are undoubtedly harsh – the overcrowding, the shortages of clean water, sanitation, health care and education all carry a particular risk for children.”

Working with partners, UNICEF has dug hundreds of water-bore wells, installed up to 16,000 toilets, helped immunize nearly a million children and adults against cholera, screened 335,000 children for malnutrition, and provided learning for nearly 80,000 children.

Even so, waterborne and other diseases are a constant threat in the overcrowded camps, which need to be urgently decongested to ensure basic facilities reach all inhabitants. Currently, up to 100 people must use a single latrine and water supplies often run short.

More must also be done to protect vulnerable children from traffickers and other dangers and to provide psychosocial care to those who are still traumatized by the experiences that drove them from their homes.

Learning and recreational spaces for children have been expanded rapidly, but still fall well short of the needs. Nearly 220,000 children are currently deprived of an education.

“The longer these children remain without the chance to learn, the greater the risk that they will miss out on the chance to build a future for themselves and their families,” Mr. Forsyth warned.



Rohingya refugees who crossed the Naf River, which demarcates the border between Myanmar and Bangladesh, on makeshift rafts made of logs, bamboo poles and jerrycans, walk along an embankment.
Photo: UNICEF/Brown

Yemen: UN chief welcomes measures by Saudi-led coalition to ease access for humanitarian aid



The Yemeni city of Sa'ada has been heavily hit by airstrikes since conflict escalated last year. Here, aid officials stand amid the rubble of a market in the old city of Sa'ada, which was hit by an airstrike in April 2015. OCHA/Philippe Kropf

25 January – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has welcomed news that five tankers carrying 180,000 litres of fuel reached Yemen's northern province of Marib on Wednesday as part of the Saudi-led coalition's wider plan to facilitate humanitarian action in the war-ravaged country.

"The coalition has committed to increase humanitarian fuel deliveries to one million litres per week over the coming weeks," Mr. Guterres said in a statement on Thursday.

He noted that in light of the dire, unrelenting humanitarian crisis, the fuel will be delivered, based on need, to health facilities and water stations to keep life-saving services running for local communities.

"I also welcome the generous \$1 billion pledge by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to support humanitarian action in Yemen, as

well as their commitment to raise an additional \$500 million from other donors in the region," he stated.

The 2018 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan (YHRP) was launched on 20 January and seeks \$2.96 billion to assist 13.1 million people across the country.

The Secretary-General urged all donors to channel their contributions through the YHRP and rapidly convert pledges into cash for aid agencies.

He renewed his call to all parties to cease hostilities and engage meaningfully with the UN to achieve a lasting political settlement.

"The most effective way to address humanitarian suffering in Yemen is to end the conflict," he stressed.

Since the escalation of violence in March 2015, when conflict broke out between forces loyal to President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi and those allied to the Houthi rebel movement, Yemen, already the poorest in the region, has been left on the verge of a humanitarian collapse.