

UN-backed measles vaccination campaign to reach 4.7 million children in north-east Nigeria

26 January 2017 – A major vaccination campaign against a measles outbreak in northeast Nigeria is reaching 4.7 million children, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

"Security has improved in some areas so we have acted quickly to access places we could not previously reach and protect children from the spread of a very dangerous disease," said Mohamed Fall, UNICEF Representative in Nigeria, in a news release.

The campaign, concluding this week, is covering the three states most affected by the Boko Haram conflict – Adamawa, Borno and Yobe – where insecurity has limited vaccination efforts. "We are still extremely concerned about children living in large areas of Borno state that are not yet accessible," said Mr. Fall.

In 2016, there were approximately 25,000 cases of measles among children in Nigeria; 97 per cent of the cases were in children under the age of ten and at least a hundred children died.

Measles infections tend to increase during the first half of the year because of higher temperatures. Measles vaccination coverage across Nigeria remains low, with a little over 50 per cent of children reached, but in areas affected by conflict, children are particularly vulnerable.

The risks for malnourished children who have weakened immunity are further heightened.

The vaccination campaign, conducted in partnership with the Nigerian Government, the World Health Organization (WHO), and several non-governmental organizations, also includes a vitamin A supplement for children under five to boost their immunity, as well as de-worming tablets.

The emergency in northeast Nigeria remains acute with more than 1.6 million people displaced because of the conflict.

Of the \$115 million called for in 2016, only \$51 million was received. In 2017, UNICEF is seeking \$150 million to respond to the urgent humanitarian needs in northeast Nigeria.

Security Council approves six-month extension of UN peacekeeping mission in Cyprus

26 January 2017 – Welcoming the progress thus far in negotiations led by Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leaders, as well as ongoing efforts, the United Nations Security Council today encouraged the sides to “grasp the current opportunity with determination” to secure a comprehensive settlement in Cyprus.

Through a unanimously adopted resolution, the 15-member Council called on the leaders to “put their efforts behind further work on reaching convergences on the core issues.”

It also called on them to “improve the public atmosphere for the negotiations, including by focussing public messages on convergences and the way ahead, and delivering more constructive and harmonized messages.”

The Council further urged the implementation of confidence-building measures, and said that it looked forward to agreement on and implementation of further such mutually-acceptable steps, that can contribute to a conducive environment for a settlement.

Also in the resolution, the Security Council – the primary UN body responsible for matters related to international peace and security – decided to extend the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) until end of July this year.

The Council further called on the Turkish Cypriot side and Turkish forces to restore the military status quo in Strovilia, which existed there prior to 30 June 2000, as well as called on both sides to allow access to deminers and to facilitate the removal of the remaining mines in Cyprus within the buffer zone.

It also urged them to extend demining operations outside the buffer zone.

Also in the adopted text, the Council hailed efforts being undertaken by UNFICYP to implement the UN Secretary-General’s zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and to ensure full compliance of its personnel with the UN code of conduct, and urged troop-contributing countries to take appropriate preventive action including conducting pre-deployment training.

It also called on the countries to take disciplinary action and other action to ensure full accountability in cases of such conduct involving their personnel.

UNFICYP – one of the longest-running UN peacekeeping missions – has been deployed on the Mediterranean island since 1964 to prevent further fighting between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities there and bring

about a return to normal conditions.

Global Goals on poverty and hunger require \$265 billion annually – UN conference told

26 January 2017 – The world must take urgent action to mobilise the estimated \$265 billion a year needed to achieve the first two Sustainable Development Goals to end poverty and hunger by 2030, the head of the United Nations agency for financing rural development projects has told an international conference.

The need is urgent, Kanayo F. Nwanze, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) said at last night's opening of a conference, titled 'Investing in inclusive rural transformation: innovative approaches to financing', held in Rome, Italy on 26-27 January.

Despite decades of commitments and considerable effort to end poverty and hunger, nearly 800 million children, women and men still go hungry every day, and an almost equal number live in extreme poverty, he added, stressing the need to be more creative in using public resources and mobilise financing.

He also emphasized the need to make it easier for the private sector and philanthropists to invest in rural areas, where rates of poverty and hunger are highest.

Speakers agreed it cannot be left up to governments alone. In 2015, Official Development Assistance (ODA) was approximately \$192 billion and only \$9 billion of that was earmarked for agriculture.

The conference comes at a critical time with political changes and humanitarian crises such as war, migration and natural disasters reshaping global priorities and potentially diverting money away from development.

The majority of these poor and hungry people live in rural areas of developing countries. Investments need to be targeted to transform rural areas into vibrant places that offer all people the opportunity to have decent jobs and lead dignified lives free of poverty and hunger.

Mr. Nwanze stressed that the financing needs for development are enormous, but so are the opportunities. 'Agri-food is already a \$5 trillion sector, and it is growing,' he said. 'It holds tremendous promise

for the private sector and for producers in developing countries.”

Co-organised by IFAD, the Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Brookings Institution and the University of Warwick, the conference brings together development agencies, governments, philanthropic organisations, the private sector, academia and farmers' organisations to look at innovative ways to mobilise money and smarter ways to spend it.

IFAD invests in rural people, empowering them to reduce poverty, increase food security, improve nutrition and strengthen resilience. Since 1978, it has provided about \$18 billion in grants and low-interest loans to projects that have reached some 462 million people.

Latin America and the Caribbean can make hunger history – UN agricultural agency

25 January 2017 – With continued and strengthened implementation of a regional food security plan, Latin America and the Caribbean could become the first developing region to completely eradicate hunger, the head of United Nations agricultural agency said today.

“This region has all the necessary conditions to achieve this, starting with the great political commitment that sustains the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication Plan,” said the Director-General of the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), José Graziano da Silva.

Speaking at the Summit of Presidents and Heads of State and Government of CELAC in Punta Cana, the Dominican Republic, the FAO chief added: “The Plan represents the crystallization of governments' political will to eradicate hunger before 2025 (five years ahead the target set in the Sustainable Development Goals).”

Approved by CELAC in 2015, the Plan promotes comprehensive public policies to reduce poverty, improve rural conditions, adapt agriculture to climate change, end food waste and mitigate disaster risks.

A key element of the Plan is that it not only focuses on addressing hunger but also obesity, which affects about 140 million people in the region.

According to the FAO, the Plan is also fully in line level global commitments including the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Strengthening family farming to tackle climate change

Mr. Graziano da Silva also highlighted the threats posed by climate change, which has the potential to reverse the gains made in the fight against hunger and extreme poverty in the region.

“Agriculture is the sector most affected by climate change and its main victims are small family farmers, men and women, many of whom struggle daily for their survival,” he noted.

Together with CELAC, FAO is developing a plan of action for family agriculture and rural territorial development that promotes sustainable intensification of production, public procurement and food supply systems, rural services and greater opportunities for rural youth.

FAO has also supported the countries of the region to draw up a Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Management for Agriculture and Food Security, which promotes resilience and adaptation of farmers through s

ustainable farming techniques and resource management.

Link between peace, food security and sustainable development

Noting the links between peace, food security and sustainable development, the FAO head recalled the peace process in Colombia and added that it showed the interconnectedness of the issues.

“There will be no social stability or peace as long as there is hunger, poverty and inequality. Nor can we move forward if we continue to exploit our natural resources. Sustainability is a pre-condition for development,” he noted.

Sustainable agriculture, better-managed water supplies, vital to tackling water-food nexus – UN

25 January 2017 – Highlighting the challenges associated with the inextricable links between water and food – the so-called ‘water-food nexus’ – for food security, as well as for sustainable development, the United Nations agricultural agency today outlined steps that can be taken to improve water sustainability for current and future needs.

“The magnitude of the water-food nexus is underappreciated,” said Pasquale Steduto, UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) Regional Strategic Programme Coordinator for the Near East and North Africa regions.

In his briefing during an event at UN Headquarters in New York, the FAO official also pointed to the fact that a person needs between two to four litres of water for daily consumption, and for domestic uses (washing, etc.) between 40 to 400 litres per family.

But for food and nutritional needs, the requirement is between 2,000 and 5,000 litres per person, depending on diet, or “roughly one litre per kilocalorie” he explained.

He further emphasized that the nexus is particularly significant for strengthening food security given that the world population is estimated to cross the nine billion mark by 2050, another 50-60 per cent food would need to be produced over current levels to feed everyone.

“This would imply having at least 50 per cent more water – which we will not have. Estimates show we can mobilize up to 10 per cent more, [highlighting] the issue of water scarcity,” added Mr. Steduto.

He also stressed the significance of water for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

While Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) explicitly calls for ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, water is a key component for other Goals including those on poverty (SDG 1), hunger and malnutrition (SDG 2), and climate change (SDG 13).

Thus, highlighting the need for intensification of sustainable agriculture, Mr. Steduto called for improving efficiency in the use of resources; protecting and conserving natural resources; having a people-centred approach and protecting rural livelihoods; strengthening resilience of people, community and ecosystems, particularly to climate change; and ensuring good governance to safeguard sustainability for natural and human systems.

Speaking further on the response to tackling water scarcity, the FAO official emphasized the need to augment the availability of water, such as through employing large-scale water harvesting methods (including for agricultural purposes), as well as the use of non-conventional water (such as treated waste water and desalination plants).

He also underlined the need to be prudential on the demand side, such as reducing food losses and food waste, and promoting sustainable diets, could also go a long way in staving off water scarcity.

Between supply and demand, he outlined enhancing efficiency and productivity, strengthening governance, employing water saving and optimization technologies, as well as strategic planning and policy for water and food security, including the water-food-energy nexus approach, are important components of addressing this complex challenge.

In his briefing, he also noted FAO initiatives tackling water scarcity at various levels.