

UN agencies supporting Kenyans in drought-hit areas

3 March 2017 – Some 2.7 million people in parts of Kenya are in urgent need of water and sanitation following the onset of a severe drought, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) today announced, noting the UN’s support for what the Government is calling a national disaster.

UNICEF is working in Kenya to support the Government’s efforts, alongside the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Food Programme (WFP), and other partners, according to a press release.

“Our efforts should not only alleviate the current suffering brought about by this emergency, but should also aim to build the resilience of families and the capacity of local governments to deal with future droughts and other calamities,” the Representative of UNICEF in Kenya, Werner Schultink said.

In addition to the need for water and sanitation, some 1.1 million children are food insecure, the UN agency said.

UN efforts of support include dispatching 12,000 cartons of ready to use therapeutic foods for the severely-malnourished children, for example.

The President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, recently declared the drought a national disaster and has called for international support.

On visit to Iraq, UN’s focal point for conflict-related sexual violent visits abused women

3 March 2017 – The United Nations focal point for ending conflict-related sexual violence is in Iraq where she today met with survivors of rape and other abuse by the Islamic State (ISIL).

Zainab Hawa Bangura, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, visited the Girls and Women Support and Treatment Centre in Dohuk Governorate, northern Iraq. Accompanied by Gyorgy Busztin, the Deputy Secretary-General of the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), she met with women and girls who had escaped from Mosul, where Iraqi forces launched an offensive two weeks ago to dislodge ISIL.

According to a press release, the Centre in a collaboration with the Dohuk Directorate General and in support from the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) is at the forefront of addressing the needs of the Yazidi sexual violence survivors, including medical and psychosocial support.

ISIL has systematically targeted the Yazidi community with rape and other sexual violence, including sexual slavery and forced marriage, according to the Office of Ms. Bangura whose legal and investigative teams have been working to aid survivors from the community.

Ms. Bangura has repeatedly called for a multipronged approach from the global to the local levels, to aid the survivors and their families and help them reclaim a role in their community.

As part of her visit to Iraq, Ms. Bangura has discussed the need for such support with Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Nechervan Barzani. In addition, she held discussions with Jassim Mohammed Al-Jaf of the Ministry of Migration and Displaced and with Faed Zaidan, the head of the High Judicial Council of Iraq.

She also met with Sunni religious leaders to discuss reintegration of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, and to ensure that children born of rape are not ostracized by the community.

[On Wildlife Day, UN says young people play special role as today's change-makers, tomorrow's custodians](#)

3 March 2017 – With the fate of the world's wildlife soon to be in the hands of the next generation, the United Nations is observing this year's World Wildlife Day with a call to harness the power of young people's voices in conservation efforts.

Poaching and illegal trafficking pose a significant threat to wildlife, especially some of the world's most iconic and endangered species, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said in his message for the Day, which this year is on the theme *Listen to the Young Voices*.

Strict enforcement of laws is important, but so too is awareness, Mr. Guterres added, appealing to young people to protect their inheritance by becoming informed and acting to protect wild animals and plants from the threat of extinction.

In her message, Irina Bokova, the Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), stressed that young people

have a special role to play as change-makers and future custodians.

"We must listen to them and nurture their engagement, to craft new forms of action to conserve and protect wildlife on the basis of solidarity," she said.

On 20 December 2013, the UN General Assembly decided to proclaim 3 March as World Wildlife Day – the day of the adoption of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 1973, which plays an important role in ensuring that international trade does not threaten the species' survival.



UN World Wildlife Day 3 March

"Given the current rate of poaching and smuggling, will future generations one day speak of elephants, rhinoceros and many other endangered species as we speak of mammoths...? We must not and will not allow this to happen," said CITES Secretary-General, John E. Scanlon.

"Our generation has not yet succeeded in securing the future of many wild animals and plants. Meeting this challenge will now be shared with the next generation," he added.

Habitat loss, climate change and industrial-scale poaching are impacting species great and small, from elusive pangolins to migratory sea turtles, to apex predators like the tiger. World Wildlife Day is a very special occasion on the UN calendar as it helps to galvanize national and international action.

To succeed, it is vital to fully harness the innovation and energy of youth, and combine it with the wisdom that comes with experience, he said.

Last year, the UN launched the Wild for Life campaign, which asked people to make wildlife crime personal. Since its launch, it has engaged 35 celebrity champions, reached over 1 billion people, generated 4.5 million social media engagement and 12,000 pledges of action.

And some are taking monumental steps to combat the destruction of species. In December 2016, the future of elephants was given a huge boost by China's declaration to ban all commercial ivory trade by the end of 2017.

"China has set a great example to the world with its ivory ban. Young people should take heart from this and push for further progress globally to ensure that wildlife and their habitats are sustainably managed in the future," said UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Executive Director Erik Solheim.

Hunger persists in chronic conflict zones despite strong global harvests – UN

2 March 2017 – Despite robust food supply conditions, droughts are worsening food security across swathes of East Africa, and access to food has been dramatically reduced in areas suffering civil conflicts, a new United Nations report has found.

“This is an unprecedented situation. Never before have we been faced with four threats of famine in multiple countries simultaneously,” Kostas Stamoulis, the Assistant Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), said in a news release issued today, noting that famine has been formally declared in South Sudan, and the food security situation is of grave concern in northern Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen.

According to the new edition of FAO’s Crop Prospects and Food Situation report, some 37 countries require external assistance for food, 28 of them in Africa as a result of lingering effects of last year’s El Niño-triggered droughts on harvests in 2016.

In South Sudan, 100,000 people were facing famine in Leer and Mayendit Counties, part of former Unity state. Overall, about 4.9 million people across the country were classified as facing crisis, emergency or famine.

In Yemen, 17 million people, or two-thirds of the population, are estimated to be food insecure. The report notes that “the risk of famine declaration in the country is very high.”

In northern Nigeria, 8.1 million people are facing acute food insecurity conditions, and in Somalia, an estimated 2.9 million people have been severely food insecure from six months ago.

Conflicts and civil unrest in Afghanistan, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Myanmar and Syria are also exacerbating food insecurity conditions for millions of people as well as affecting nearby countries hosting refugees.

Global food supply conditions robust

The report says, however, global food supply conditions are robust.



Various types of rice at a market in Hissar, Tajikistan. Photo: FAO/Nozim Kalandarov

Cereal production made quite strong gains in the world overall in 2016, with

a record recovery in Central America, and larger cereal crops in Asia, Europe and North America.

Prospects are favourable for the 2017 maize crop in Brazil and Argentina and the outlook is generally positive for coarse grains throughout the Southern Hemisphere. Prospects for rice are mixed, but it is still too early to make firm predictions for many of the world's major crops.

Maize harvests in Southern Africa, slashed by El Niño, are forecast to recover this year, with South Africa's output expected to increase by more than 50 per cent from 2016.

Although FAO's first global wheat production forecast for 2017 points to a 1.8 per cent decline from last year's record level, that is due mostly to a projected 20 per cent output drop in the United States.

[UN-backed narcotics control body calls for more policies to address drug dependence among women](#)

2 March 2017 – Citing a significant rise over the past year in the number of women dying from drug overdoses globally, the independent expert body which monitors Governments' compliance with the United Nations international drug control treaties is today calling for the implementation of gender-sensitive drug policies and programmes.

The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) said that women and girls comprise one-third of global drug users yet are only one-fifth of those receiving treatment, as significant systemic, structural, social, cultural and personal barriers affect women's ability to access substance abuse treatment..

Further, they are also more likely to be prescribed narcotics and anti-anxiety medication than men, and are thus more likely to abuse these medications.

For example, Germany and Serbia have reported that fatal overdoses from prescription drugs are more frequent among women. Additionally, countries such as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland have seen larger increases in overdoses, of all substances, among women than among men.

These are among the key findings in the 2016 Annual Report launched today by the INCB. It stresses that Governments should prioritize providing health care for drug-dependent women, in addition to more funding and coordination to prevent and treat drug abuse among women.

"We want to change perceptions and remind people, particularly policymakers, of the importance of protecting the rights of women who use drugs or who have committed drug-related offences and the rights of their families," said the organization's President, Werner Sipp, in a news release.

The report also highlights the importance of targeting prevention programmes to specific populations, such as prisoners, pregnant women, people living with HIV/AIDS, and sex workers.

It notes that women prisoners and sex workers are at "particular risk" of drug use.

Countries are also encouraged to seek alternatives to imprisonment for drug-related offences, such as treatment, rehabilitation and social integration.

The INCB also repeated its longstanding call for countries to abolish the death penalty for drug-related offences.

Among its other observations, the Board noted with "great concern" recent reports in some countries of the targeting of individuals suspected of involvement in drug-related activity, including drug use, who have been subjected to violent acts of reprisal and murder at the hands of law enforcement personnel and members of the civilian population.

In some instances, those acts have been committed with the expressed or tacit approval, or even encouragement, of political forces and, in many cases, have gone unpunished, said the Board, emphasizing that it condemned such practices, including the extrajudicial targeting of persons suspected of drug use, "in the strongest possible terms," and denounced them as a "serious violation of human rights [...] and an affront to the most basic standards of human dignity."