WFP starts food distribution to 50,000 IDPs in Shabwa and Abyan

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has begun food distributions to over 50,000 people displaced by the current fighting between the army and al-Qaeda militants in Shabwa and Abyan provinces.

"In the past week, WFP succeeded in reaching some 4,900 households – about 27,000 people – with a one-off food ration in five districts in Shabwa and one district in Abyan", said WFP's Deputy Country Director in Yemen, Henning Scharpf.

The WFP is trying to reach the displaced families registered with the Government’s Executive Unit for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and local authorities and verified by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and WFP, Scharpf added.

“It was vital for us to reach all those who have been displaced quickly, as most of them had to flee their homes with little more than the clothes on their backs and they have no means to support themselves,” the WFP's official said.

He continued to say “The one-time round of food assistance can save lives while we do a proper needs assessment to determine how we can help these people on the move.”

The WFP's official revealed fears of a rise in the number of displaced persons in the future, due to an escalation in the armed confrontations." Accordingly, WFP is planning to provide a food ration for up to 7,500 households – 54,000 people – over the coming days," he added.

Children, Not Soldiers:
Yemen Signs Action Plan to End Recruitment and Use of Children by Armed Forces

"In a landmark development for the protection of children, today, the Government of Yemen signed an action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent the recruitment of children by the Yemeni Armed Forces.

“We stand by the commitment we make today to ensure that government forces are free of children” said Prime Minister Mohamed Salem Basundwah.

Mr. Paolo Lembo, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Yemen said, “The commitment made by the Government of Yemen today is another important step towards building a professional security sector accountable to the people, in full respect of the rule of law.”

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Mr. Lembo added, “The United Nations in Yemen stands ready to support the implementation of the action plan, and in particular the reintegration of children, which is key to prevent re-recruitment.”

The action plan sets out concrete steps to release all children associated with the Government Security Forces, reintegrate them into their communities, and prevent further recruitment. The measures include:

- Aligning domestic legislation with international norms and standards prohibiting the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict;
- Issuing and disseminating military orders prohibiting the recruitment and use of children below age 18;
- Investigating allegations of recruitment and use of children by the Yemeni Government Forces and ensure that responsible individuals are held accountable;
- Facilitating access to the United Nations to monitor progress and compliance with the action plan.

“With this action plan, Yemen has formalized its commitment to protect its future generations,” said Leila Zerrougui, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, in Sanaa for the signing ceremony. “This is an important step, but a lot remains to be done to realize the promise of a brighter future for the country’s children. I rely on the Government’s commitment to act on each of the points listed in the action plan, and I call on the international community to spare no efforts to support Yemeni authorities in this endeavor. On behalf of the United Nations, I pledge my full support to them.”

This Action Plan aims to ensure the release of all children within armed forces in Yemen and their effective reintegration into communities,” said Julien Harneis, UNICEF's Representative in Yemen. “It serves as a critical framework in our collective efforts to ensure the fulfilment of the basic rights of hundreds of children in Yemen”, Mr Harneis concluded.

A milestone for the campaign Children, not Soldiers

Yemen is one of eight countries whose national security forces are listed by the Secretary-General for recruitment and use of children. In March 2014, the Special Representative and UNICEF launched Children, not Soldiers, a campaign to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by Government security forces in conflict by 2016.

“Today, we are one step closer to a world in which no child is used by security forces in conflict,” said Ms. Zerrougui, who also used her time in Yemen to meet with Government ministers, donors and representatives of civil society organizations to secure their commitment to the implementation of the action plan.

The action plan was co-signed by the representative of the Minister of Defense, Chief of General Staff Maj. Gen. Ahmed Ali Al-Ashwal, the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the UNICEF Representative, in the presence of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Prime Minister of Yemen Mr. Mohammed Salem Basundwah.

The Yemeni Government Forces will be removed from the list of the Secretary-General upon successful completion and verification by the UN of all measures agreed to in the Action Plan.
FAO organizes workshop on food security information

A workshop to assess the capacities of organizations and bodies concerned with food security information started in Sana’a on Monday.

The two-day workshop organized by FAO Food Security Information System (FSIS) development programme discusses several papers on the methodology for assessing capacities, principles of capacity development, food security information networks and evaluation and survey process of Yemen’s food security information system.

FSIS is a three-year programme to be carried out in cooperation with Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and the Food Security Technical Secretariat (FSTS) in provinces of Abyan, Dhale, Lahj, Baidha, Hodaida and Hajjah.

It aims to assist and support the efforts of the Government in establishing a conducive institutional set up for food security decision making supported by a relevant, effective and sustainable National Food Security Information System.
The Organization of the International Council for Human Rights has designated Yemeni activist Hana’a al-Adimi as an honorary “Goodwill Ambassador” in recognition of her efforts and contributions in media and humanitarianism.

Al-Adimi is the chairwoman of Third Eye for Media and Development and Goodwill and is also an advisor on diplomatic relations.

Head of Diplomatic Relations Dr. Mohammed al-Jamsy said that he hopes that al-Adimi will help provide strategies to move forward in achieving goals that support human rights and world peace.

Al-Adimi said that this choice came in recognition of the Yemeni women in general.

"I will support various humanitarian causes and contribute to the achievement of peace and security.”
Government of Yemen and UNDP signs two Project Documents supporting Yemen during the transitional period

SANA'A, a signing ceremony was organized at the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation in which two of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) projects to support Government of Yemen efforts during the transitional period were signed.

The first project which is supporting Yemen being Party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) since 21 February 1996 and to the Kyoto Protocol since 17 January 2008 as non–Annex I Party. The project will assist Yemen in the preparation of its First Biennial Update Report (BUR) and Third National Communication (TNC) for the implementation of the obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC). The First BUR will be submitted to the UNFCCC at COP20 in 2014 and the TNC is planned to be submitted during the year 2016. In addition, the project will further assist in building additional national capacities to fulfill Yemen’s commitments to the Convention on a continuing basis besides increasing the awareness on climate change issues particularly among policy-makers to take into consideration while setting out national and sectoral polices, strategies, and programmes. This project is jointly financed by UNDP and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for a total amount of US$ 952,000 for thirty months.

The second project aims is to build a strong pool of well capacitated and reliable NGOs and professional partners to all stakeholders to be able to deliver required support, humanitarian and development, to the needy population in the urban and rural areas in Yemen. The trained Governorate Based NGOs (GB NGOs) will be sustainable, reliable and professional partners, for the Government of Yemen, UN agencies and international partners and thus increase the national capacity to: deliver aid to men, woman, girls and boys in need that cater to their distinct needs and experiences; and to advocate for civil society rights; and hold authorities accountable. Moreover, these trained Governorate NGOs will also be instrumental as delivery agents within the context of the federal system that to be implemented in the near future as part of the recommendations of the National Dialogue Conference outcomes. The project is financed by UNDP, OCHA and Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) with total budget of US$ 4,986,000 over a period of thirty months.

The signing ceremony was attended by officials from the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Environmental Protection Authority, Humanitarian Forum Yemen and UNDP.
World Bank finances Yemen highway project

In a statement published on Wednesday, the World Bank (WB) confirmed that it will fund Yemen’s roads development by putting forward an aid package which will enable the construction of “a new highway, which will connect the port city of Aden in the south with the Saudi Arabian border near Saada in the north, a total length of 710 km."

The monster project, which aims to promote regional cooperation, access and boost intra and inter regional trades, will help connect Yemen to the rest of the Arabian Peninsula and thus integrate the impoverished nation into the configuration of the GCC countries. WB has pledged it will cover all construction from Aden seaport to Noubat Dokaim, about 55 kilometres north. While evidently this only constitutes small portion of the overall project, Yemeni officials and WB have stressed such project will act as important cornerstone.

WB statement read, “For Yemen’s transitional government, the 710 km Saada to Aden Yemen Corridor Highway (of which the Bank-funded section of the highway is a part), is a flagship project aimed at bringing north and south Yemen closer together—physically, economically, politically—following 14 months of popular consultation, known as the National Dialogue, that ended in January of this year.

Once completed, Yemen new highway will connect the country northern and southern region in one smooth and cohesive stretch of road, a physical connection which officials in Sana’a hope will seal Yemen’s territorial integrity.

The highway is also part of a greater process of regional integration: In time, it should link key towns and “cities along a north-south axis through Yemen’s mountainous terrain, making it possible to drive from Aden to Yemen’s northern border with Saudi Arabia, in seven hours,” noted WB.

Germany supports transition in Yemen with € 27.6 mln

Yemen and Germany signed here on Tuesday an agreement to support the transition phase in Yemen at total cost of € 27.6 million.

The agreement, which was signed by Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Dr. Mohammed al-Sa'adi and Charge d'affaires of the German embassy in Sana'a, stipulated that the German government shall present a funding support to the transition phase in Yemen worth €27.6 million.

Following the signing of the agreement, al-Sa'adi praised the German government's support, noting the level of the existing cooperation between Yemen and Germany.

In turn, the German Charge d'affaires renewed the keenness of his country's government to continue to provide all aspects of the necessary support to enhance the Yemeni government's abilities to face the challenges of the transitional phase.
Le Petit Prince contest : "A wish for the planet"

As part of a Cultural Diplomacy Initiative developed in collaboration with the International Organization of La Francophonie (IOF) and the Estate of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the Education Outreach Section, Outreach Division, DPI is organising an International Contest: "A wish for the planet", for young people between 5 and 18 years old. Stories and drawings should be sent to education-outreach@un.org by 5 June 2014, on World Environment Day.

Awards will be announced at United Nations Headquarters in September, 2014 during the commemoration of the International Day of Peace.

We would like to count on the support of our UNIC colleagues in encouraging children around the world to be inspired by the Little Prince and participate in the contest.

Useful materials:

- Contest flyer enclosed, which is also available at http://bit.ly/1dgPv5x
- a bilingual (FR/ENGL) brochure enclosed comparing the values of the Little Prince, the United Nations and the International Organization of La Francophonie.
- The United Nations Radio produced a inspiring programme on a Little Prince event, which took place at the New York Public Library, as one of the activities of the Cultural Diplomacy Initiative http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/french/2014/04/la-journee-du-petit-prince-un-hymne-a-lhumanisme-plus-pertinent-que-jamais/#.U0f-WaK5Fhl

More on the contest:

- Participants should answer the question "Are the values of The Little Prince still universal values today?"
- Three awards will be given for each age category (5-8, 9-12, 13-15, and 16-18) and the winning submissions will be posted on a United Nations website.
- Participants should include their first name, last name, date of birth, and e-mail address.
- All drawings must be digitized and text submissions, either in English or French, must not exceed 500 words.
- Participants retain ownership rights for their drawings or text, but by participating in the contest, they agree to give the United Nations the exclusive, irrevocable right to use the contents of their submission, fully or partially, without compensation.
- Winners must provide proof of their date of birth.
THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

MESSAGE ON WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

3 May 2014

Each year on World Press Freedom Day, we reaffirm our commitment to the fundamental freedom to receive and impart information and ideas through any media, regardless of frontiers, enshrined in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Yet every day of the year sees this right under assault.

Journalists are singled out for speaking or writing uncomfortable truths – kidnapped, detained, beaten and sometimes murdered. Such treatment is completely unacceptable in a world ever more reliant on global news outlets and the journalists who serve them.

In conflict areas, journalists often wear blue uniforms and helmets so that they can be easily identified and protected against attack. As we know from the UN’s own peacekeeping operations, the colour blue provides no guarantee of safety.

Last year 70 journalists were killed, many caught in the cross-fire of armed hostilities. Fourteen more have suffered the same fate this year.

Last year, 211 journalists were being held in prison. Some 456 journalist have been forced into exile since 2008. And since 1992, well over 1,000 journalists have been killed -- nearly one per week.

These are alarming figures. Behind each statistic stands a man or a woman simply going about their lawful business.

There must be no impunity for those who target journalists for violence, intimidation or distorted uses of legal procedures to disrupt or impede their work.

Media freedoms must continue to be at the centre of our work to promote security, dignity and prosperity for all.

Member States are deep in discussion about the post-2015 development agenda. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to steer the world in a more sustainable and equitable direction.

Free media, traditional and new, are indispensable for development, democracy and good governance. They can promote transparency about the new goals that Member States will adopt – progress as well as shortfalls. Social media and mobile technologies offer new tools for accelerating citizen participation and economic and social progress. The media’s watchdog function is essential for holding Governments, businesses and others to account.

On this World Press Freedom Day, I call on all Governments, societies and individuals to actively defend this fundamental right as critical factors in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the post-2015 development agenda.

Freedom of expression, independent media and universal access to knowledge will fortify our efforts to achieve lasting results for people and the planet.