UN relief chief demands easier aid access to Yemen

The UN's new relief chief has demanded parties to the bloody war ease access for humanitarian workers after a five-day mission the country.

"It has been shocking to see the terrible impact of this man-made conflict," UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock said in a statement from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

"In Aden and Sanaa, and during my visits to Lahj, Hudaydah, Hajjah, and Amran governorates, I have met hundreds of Yemenis, and listened to their stories of atrocious suffering," he added.

Plunged into civil war between Houthi rebels and supporters of the internationally-recognised government in 2015, Yemen has faced one of the world's largest humanitarian crises, including the fastest growing cholera epidemic ever recorded, the world's largest food emergency and widespread population displacement.

Lowcock - who is also under-secretary general for humanitarian affairs - said the UN and partners can scale up their work but more funding is needed and all parties must not hinder humanitarians' work.

During this visit, his first to the country since his appointment in September, Lowcock held frank discussions with the government in Aden and those in positions of the rebel authority in Sanaa on ways to alleviate the suffering of the population.

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Mourad Wahba, Assistant of UN Secretary General & RBAS Regional Director, completes first visit to Yemen

UNDP’s Regional Director for Arab States completes official visits to Yemen: We maintain our focus on strengthening resilience and early recovery
In the immediate term, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continues to focus on strengthening the resilience of war-affected Yemeni communities and supporting early recovery efforts, including improving livelihoods, basic social service delivery, and mine action, according to UN Assistant Secretary General and UNDP Regional Director for Arab States, Mourad Wahba, Yemen Observer reported.

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UN relief chief demands easier …..

In Aden, he asked Prime Minister Ahmed Obeid bin Dagher, to ensure progress on paying salaries to health workers, teachers and other civil servants, to get Sanaa’s airport reopened for commercial and humanitarian flights and to improve the operation of the ports, especially al-Hudaydah.

In Sanaa, he raised serious concerns about the working conditions facing the UN and other humanitarian agencies.

"I am concerned about the increasing levels of interference in the work of the humanitarian agencies, including delays in granting and denial of visas, delays of essential equipment and supplies at the ports, bureaucratic impediments affecting NGOs and preventing essential assessments of needs so that we can target our assistance most effectively," he said.

Lowcock stressed the end to the suffering in Yemen requires an end to the conflict, for which a political resolution is needed.

"In the absence of substantial progress on all these points, the already dire situation will continue to deteriorate. The human suffering, already extreme, will grow and grow," he said.

Mourad Wahba, Assistant of UN Secretary …..

Wahba has just completed a two-day official visit to Yemen –his first since the beginning of the current conflict. He met with high level officials in the country, who expressed appreciation of UNDP’s ability to continue its operations during the crisis despite difficult circumstances that compelled many other international organizations to suspend their work in the country. Wahba received multiple requests to scale up UNDP’s operations in Yemen, particularly to improve livelihoods and restore basic services.

“The crisis in Yemen is the world’s largest crisis today. It requires an unprecedented response from the international community, including from UNDP. I came to Yemen to see for myself the scale of the response needed and to ensure that UNDP is in a position to step up its efforts to help the people of Yemen,” said Regional Director Wahba. “We work with our sister Agencies, the Yemeni authorities, and other partners to coordinate our activities to build resilience and preserve institutional capacities to serve the suffering Yemeni population”.

While in Aden, Regional Director Wahba visited UNDP-supported vocational training schemes for youth, funded by the Government of Japan as part of the ‘Yemen Stabilization Programme.’ These schemes are currently helping over 420 young women and men from 3 districts in Aden to gain the required skills to launch their small businesses. In Sana’a and Aden, Wahba visited cash-for-work projects targeting vulnerable populations. Such emergency employment schemes provide dignified and productive means for cash-strapped Yemenis to receive the money they badly need to afford all essentials, especially food. Over 39,000 workers have benefited from cash for work activities conducted through the first year of the Yemen Emergency Crisis Response Project (YECRP), funded by World Bank. Additionally, over 22,000 individuals directly benefited from similar cash for work activities under the Enhancing Rural Resilience Project (ERRY), funded by the European Union.

Wahba also met UNDP staff in Sana’a and Aden, thanking them for their efforts delivering much needed assistance to the Yemeni population under very difficult circumstances.
In Lahj, Village Cooperative Council (VCC) paving road for the community

Lesha’ab, is a 112-household village located at Habil Jabr District in Lahj Governorate, the neglected mountainous road made the access to village difficult and this was affecting the villagers negatively making it difficult to access to nearby town market and services. It is a hard life that communities are facing in Lesha’ab and other nearby villages due to the rough road which dramatically deteriorates by flash floods and inability to maintain due to the current situation. As a result, some families leave their home and move to rented accommodation in close-by towns to get easy access to services and employment.

Highlights of story
• 112-households in Lasha'ab village were benefited from paving the road
• 30 Villages Cooperative Councils (VCCs) similar were established in Habil Jabr District

Since August 2016, the Enhanced Rural Resilience in Yemen (ERRY) Programme, funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by Social Fund for Development (SFD), worked through “Tamkeen” methodology of the Empowerment for Local Development (ELD) Programme to establish 30 Villages Cooperative Councils (VCCs) located in Habil Jabr District. Training sessions were provided to members of those VCCs on how to prepare their plans, were define resources and priorities. One such VCC was elected by Lesha’ab Village and five other nearby villages. The VCC established in Lesha’ab has prepared its Community Resilience Plan, determined its priorities, and started implementation. The first community self-help initiative was identified as a response to the need of facilitating the transportation from/to the village by paving the road as a prioritized supported community initiative.

There are ten VCCs members representing six villages, half of them are women. All have been received training from SFD in situation analysis, prioritization and planning. They prepared village current situation report and drafted the community resilience plan in six full working days. They knew clearly that they have to exceed limits in contributing by more effort as an elected body to serve their fellow villagers.

Khaled Muthana, one of Lesha’ab elected VCC members, described the initiative as “one of stabilization factors, and the important gate to deliver services”. He added, “a lot of families have moved to other more accessible places to get services in the district or governorate.” When Khaled was being asked about the infrastructure initiative implementation, he recalled that “the priority was agreed to be road paving so we paved 60 meters length with 3 meters width of the road as self-help initiative using our own resources, that was a 100% community initiative. Based on this success as a community, we applied for getting grant from the program to pave another 70 meters length. Fortunately, we got the grant and implemented 85 meters of the road”. He added “ It was not easy to gather the required community contribution which was about 58% of the initiative cost. The contribution of the community varied between the labour, and the provision of stones and some people contribution was money to procure the materials needed.”. When asked about VCC women members role, he said “they are active and have critical role, they implemented two self-help initiatives in their villages one in cleanliness campaign and another in raising awareness in girls education importance.”

This small community-owned infrastructure project showcased the functions, efforts and impact of an elected VCC. It reflected how community resilience can be enhanced through community dialogue first, liaison with district authorities and mobilization of resources to the community. Adel Ebrahim, one of the villagers motorbike owner also shared his excitement on the newly constructed paving road, “the villages are now accessible to transportation through easy and flat road that will enhance community resilience and stabilization of communities, I am truly proud of the work done by VCC, they tried their very best to serve the villagers. , I am one of them and was ready to support and cooperate with them.” He added “ I remember the tragic story of one sick old man needing urgent treatment carried slowly by neighbors form his village to another because the road was ruined by flash flood and the car couldn’t reach the village to transport him to the health center. Now villagers are less worried about such vulnerability and can concentrate on earning good livelihoods.
The World Bank and FAO have launched a $36 million project aimed at providing immediate assistance to over 630,000 poor and food-insecure people in Yemen - more than 30 percent of whom are women - as well as increasing longer term agricultural resilience in the conflict-ridden country, Relief Web reported.

The grant funds for the three-year "Smallholder Agricultural Production Restoration and Enhancement Project (SAPREP)" come from the World Bank's Global Agriculture Food Security Program (GAFSP).

With an estimated 17 million people facing Emergency or Crisis levels of acute food insecurity, Yemen is currently experiencing the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. The ongoing conflict has severely affected the agriculture sector and has had a devastating impact on the food security, nutrition and livelihood of Yemenis.

The grant will enable FAO to support priority projects, such as those in the areas of providing food-security support and rehabilitation of water resources that will increase smallholders' production, income and nutrition, as well as build the capacity of stakeholders involved in various projects related to the grant. The target areas will consist of 21 of the most food-insecure districts in the country, with those receiving special focus consisting of landless farmers with no or few livestock, sharecroppers, smallholder farmers and households headed by women and affected by conflict.

"The project will have a strong humanitarian impact in Yemen, as it will provide emergency support and help in building the resilience of the vulnerable Yemeni population," said Abdessalam Ould Ahmed, FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for the Near East and North Africa.

"Since agriculture is one of the most important economic sectors in Yemen, reviving agricultural activities will increase people's access to food as well as income-generating activities, which means greater food security."

"But the project also goes beyond immediate humanitarian assistance," Ould Ahmed added. "The project will strengthen the capacities of the Yemen Social Development Fund, government agencies and local NGOs to restore the capacity of Yemeni farmers who lost their livelihoods due to ongoing conflict and ensure they will be able to maintain crucial access to their livelihood in years to come."
IOM chief calls for immediate scale-up of aid in Yemen to save lives

As famine and cholera threaten to engulf Yemen in a vast humanitarian crisis, William Lacy Swing, Director General of the UN Migration Agency, on a visit to the country today (02/10), urged authorities to permit an immediate expansion of humanitarian access in order to save lives, Relief Web reported.

“There is a veneer of normalcy in Sana’a with people thronging busy streets. This disguises the deep crisis that Yemenis are facing. Already 80 per cent of the population – 21 million people – are in desperate need of aid as a result of years of armed conflict, which regularly sees clashes and aerial bombings of urban areas. These 21 million vulnerable Yemenis (along with tens of thousands of migrants passing through the country) do not know where their next meal is coming from. Basic sanitation has broken down across much of the country and millions are without clean water,” said DG Swing.

“The authorities have a responsibility to give humanitarians more access, including reopening the airport for essential aid deliveries, and the world has an obligation to come to the aid of the Yemeni people. The escalating armed conflict is restricting humanitarian aid delivery, aggravating malnutrition and spreading disease. The world’s worst cholera outbreak is now part of this volatile mix and, as mind-numbing as it may seem, one million Yemenis are expected to contract the deadly disease by the end of this year”.

There have been over 2,000 deaths from the cholera outbreak since October 2016. While it can be deadly within hours, if left untreated, it is easily preventable through basic hygiene. The country’s healthcare and sanitation services are facing complete breakdown. So far, some 750,000 Yemenis have been hit by cholera (up from 276,000 last July) and more than 5,000 additional people are being infected every day.

In addition, more than 3 million of Yemeni children under the age of 5 are at risk of severe acute malnutrition as an ever-present risk of famine looms larger.

“The internecine conflict, which has convulsed Yemen for over two years already, shows no sign of being resolved. It has displaced more than 3 million people from their homes, putting them and their children at grave risk. Of specific concern to IOM is the tragedy that continues to befall many of the 6,000 migrants who continue to enter the country each month. They come in the hope that they can make their way through Yemen to the Gulf countries to find work,” stated DG Swing.

“Few realize the grave dangers they are likely to face along the route, like exploitation and other abuse. Many are abducted by criminal gangs upon landing in Yemen. A common technique is to call the migrant’s family while allowing burning plastic from an empty water bottle drip on a migrant’s skin causing burns and excruciating pain. Families usually pay up quickly and the migrants continue their journey often to be extorted repeatedly by different gangs before reaching their destination,” DG Swing added.
Caught in Yemen’s two-year conflict are tens of thousands of families forced to migrate to other parts of the country only to be able to support themselves and their families until they can return home one day. Displaced and uprooted from their livelihood and familiar surroundings, the internally displaced persons (IDPs), often face severe social and economic transformation under conditions worsened by unemployment, food insecurity, and malnutrition.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Yemen is engaged in a number of projects across conflict-lines that, directly or indirectly, benefit many thousands of IDPs through a wide variety of assistance, ranging from food assistance to distribution of live animals. The theme of the 2017 World Food Day is “Changing the future of migration: Investing in food security and rural development.”

One such FAO program in Yemen is the three-year Emergency Livestock Restocking implemented in Taiz and Hajjah governorates, along the Red Sea in the south and the north of the country, respectively, benefitting many of the IDPs.

Beneficiaries receive two goats or sheep in the first round with the third to follow three months later, conditional on the successful upkeep of the two, along with relevant vaccinations. They also benefit from 32 training sessions to cover topics on improved breeding, feeding and disease prevention and treatment practices, to ensure that the sheep or goat herds are given the opportunity to express their maximum potential.

Nabila Al-Hakim, 39, and Hamoud Ali, 45, are two IDPs whose stories are testimonial to FAO’s contributions in Yemen. Al-Hakim fled with her four kids from Taiz city to Damna Khadeer village a year ago due to the conflict. Her husband, who used to work in car maintenance, passed away three years ago.

"The situation is unbearable. We have been displaced for a year due to the conflict and we have no source of income. We are depending on aids. The situation is getting worse day by day,” she said. Al-Hakim has to pay 20,000 YER (55.5 USD) per month for the new house rent. "My husband’s pension stopped almost a year ago. If I had enough money, I would buy wheat to feed my children," she added. The two sheep she received from FAO in April might just be the immediate help she needs. Once her sheep give birth and grow for 4-5 months, she can sell the new sheep for 55 USD – the amount she needs to pay rent.

"We are waiting impatiently for the new sheep to be born. I will sell them, which might mitigate the situation of displacement. I hope my kids will lead a secure and easy life. I do not know how long I will live. I keep thinking about my four kids and do my best to be strong for their sake," she said. Further north in the governorate of Hajjah, Ali, who lives with his wife and 10 kids in a two-room house, is equally eager to end life as an IDP.

"Nobody can feel what it means to be a displaced person just those who have lived away and were forced to leave their houses searching for safety. I lost my job because my employer couldn't afford to pay salaries and, eventually, he shut down his store," he said. Like Al-Hakim, FAO has provided Ali with live animals and the necessary training to equip him to rear them properly and benefit from them, leading to his improved livelihood.
Endless violence shutters schools, teachers unpaid for a year, threatening education for 4.5 million children in Yemen

Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa said: “More than two and a half years of renewed conflict in Yemen have once again put the education of 4.5 million children on the line, adding to the long list of bitter hardships that children have endured. Three quarters of teachers have not received their salaries in nearly a year, and the violence has forced one in ten schools across the country to close.

“As of July 2017, 1,600 schools have been partially or totally destroyed, and 170 have been used for military purposes or as shelter for displaced families. An estimated 2 million children are out of school. “The beginning of the school year was postponed several times from its usual September start and textbooks and other school materials are in severely short supply.

“The salary crisis has pushed teachers to extreme measures just to survive. Hassan Ghaleb, a teacher for the past 20 years and the sole breadwinner for his family of four, was evicted from his home with his children. He had to sell what was left of his furniture just to feed them and treat his sick sister. ‘How can I reach school if I have no money for transport? How can I teach if I myself am in need?’ he asks.

“More than 166,000 teachers from across Yemen ask the very same question, every day.

Yemen children caught in war in dire need of aid: UN

More than 11 million Yemeni children need humanitarian aid as a result of a war raging since March 2015, the UN’s humanitarian coordination agency OCHA said on Monday.

A Saudi-led Arab military coalition intervened in Yemen in 2015 to support the government of President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi after Iran-backed Huthi rebels forced him into exile. OCHA, which described the conflict as "devastating" said children are facing "the largest food security crisis in the world and an unprecedented cholera outbreak".

"Deprived of access to basic health and nutrition services, children are unable to fulfil their potential," it said in a statement.

“Children in Yemen are dying of “preventable causes like malnutrition, diarrhoea, and respiratory tract infections," it said. "The education system is on the brink of collapse, with more than five million children at risk of being deprived of their right to education."

The United Nations has listed Yemen as the world's number one humanitarian crisis, with seven million people on the brink of famine and a cholera outbreak that has caused more than 2,000 deaths.

More than 8,650 people have been killed in the conflict and around 58,600 others wounded, many of them civilians, according to the World Health Organization.
International Day of Peace
21 September

The theme for 2017 is “Together for Peace: Respect, Safety and Dignity for All.”

Our world faces many grave challenges.
Widening conflicts and inequality.
Extreme weather and deadly intolerance.
Security threats – including nuclear weapons.
We have the tools and wealth to overcome these challenges. All we need is the will.
The world’s problems transcend borders.
We have to transcend our differences to transform our future.
When we achieve human rights and human dignity for all people – they will build a peaceful, sustainable and just world.
On United Nations Day, let us, ‘We the Peoples’, make this vision a reality.


UNIC Sana'a Resume Work from IOM

It's with great anticipation and pleasure to let you know, UNIC Sana'a Office is relocating to a more comfortable and spacious area. UNIC Sana'a office moved out to its new premises at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) located in Hadda area. UNIC Sana'a staff started to work from the new office on the beginning of October 2017.