UN Humanitarian Coordinator Gives Harrowing Account of Conditions in Yemen, “A Place with Hope in Very Short Supply”

It’s a place with hope in very short supply, Yemen,” said Jamie McGoldrick, the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen, opening his presentation at an IPI Humanitarian Affairs Series event on “Addressing the Humanitarian Situation in Yemen” September 22nd. “There is no citizen in that country spared by what’s going on,” he said.

“We’ve got is a man-made crisis with people touched by it who have no power to stop it”. A two-and-a-half-year-old conflict in Yemen has turned the country into what the UN says is now the world’s largest humanitarian crisis and largest food insecurity crisis.

The current hostilities erupted in March of 2015, just months after the arrival of Mr. McGoldrick, a seasoned UN humanitarian official with past service in places like Nepal, Pakistan, Georgia, and Lebanon. The conflict pitted a Saudi-led coalition loyal to the internationally recognized government of President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi and those allied with the Houthi rebel movement and widely thought to be supported by Iran.

As a result of fighting since then—much of it involving devastating attacks from the air—the economy is now near collapse, public and private services have all but disappeared, and average citizens, having lost their livelihoods and whatever savings they had, face tremendous hardship while the most vulnerable are struggling simply to survive. Supplying the stark details, Mr. McGoldrick said that 7 million Yemenis faced the threat of famine, and that there are already 650,000 cases of cholera, a statistic he said was expected to rise. Food insecurity, already critical, has jumped 20 percent this year; 50 percent of all health structures have been destroyed; 1.2 million civil service workers, 30,000 of them health workers, have not been paid, and up to 10,000 people, by the count of the Norwegian Refugee Council, have died prematurely without treatment or because travel out of the country is blocked.

“People go in villages and die because there’s no health service for them,” he said. “They die because the cancer services don’t work, the blood bank doesn’t work, dialysis doesn’t work, insulin’s not available”.

Air strikes in the first six months of 2017 equal the number in all of last year, and military activity is “heavily stalemated,” he said. “There are many instances of armed clashes, shellings and IEDs, and their indiscriminate nature is unparalleled”. 

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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...

“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.
Global hunger rising again, driven by conflict and climate change – UN report

The number of people hungry around the world is up for the first time in more than a decade, says a new United Nations report issued recently, pointing to violent conflicts and climate change as the major drivers.

“This has set off alarm bells we cannot afford to ignore: we will not end hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030 unless we address all the factors that undermine food security and nutrition. Securing peaceful and inclusive societies is a necessary condition to that end,” said the heads of five UN agencies in their joint foreword to the report.

The report, launched in Rome, is the first UN global assessment on food security and nutrition to be released following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which aims to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030 as a top priority.

Some 815 million people were hungry last year – an increase of 38 million from the previous year – affecting some 11 per cent of the world population, according to UN figures.

Some of the highest proportions of food-insecure and malnourished children in the world are now concentrated in conflict zones, according to The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World.

Earlier this year, famine struck parts of South Sudan, and there is a threat of famine in conflict-affected countries such as Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen. Even in regions that are more peaceful, droughts or floods linked in part to the El Niño weather phenomenon, as well as the global economic slowdown, have also seen food security and nutrition deteriorate, added the agencies – the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Cindy Holleman, senior economist with FAO, said the report is one of the first to review malnutrition among children, as well as obesity among children and adults.

“This is a growing problem worldwide and also has significant implications for people’s health and living,” said Ms. Holleman, noting that some countries have problems of malnutrition, as well as obesity.

UN Humanitarian Coordinator Gives Harrowing….. Continued from page 1

There is an overall disdain for international humanitarian and human rights law by all parties in the conflict, with killing and wounding of civilians, recruitment of child soldiers, destruction of civilian infrastructure, and unlawful restrictions on the passage of humanitarian assistance.

“The belligerents understand their obligations under the Geneva Conventions, but there’s a blatant disregard for them,” Mr. McGoldrick declared. “No matter what we do to talk to the parties, we get silence, we get indifference, and until that changes, we will have this recurring humanitarian nightmare”.

Everyone realizes that the war is a “massive failure,” he said, “but we still have to get the parties to be much more willing to accept a political solution”.

In a final commentary on the inhumanity of the situation, he said, “You never hear any of these parties ever say caring statements about the population. That’s not what they care about. What they care about is political gain, and that has to change”.

He said the only way a humanitarian response can get through is “to end the war.
Funding shortfall jeopardizes humanitarian response in Yemen, UN Aid Chief warns

Top United Nations relief official said that efforts to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, currently the world’s largest, are being hampered by insufficient funding and other challenges.

“Despite the extraordinary scale of the suffering linked to the brutal conflict, including the threat of famine and the world’s worst cholera outbreak, Yemen does not receive the international attention it deserves,” Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock told a high-level event held in the margins of the General Assembly.

Mr. Lowcock, who is also UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, noted that nearly 21 million people are in need of emergency aid or protection, most of them children, and that this year’s humanitarian response plan for Yemen is just 45 per cent funded, which means short-changing famine prevention efforts, and discontinuing programmes.

The World Food Programme (WFP) did reach 7 million people last month, helping to avert potential famine – but this came at the cost of cutting rations for about half of recipients to 60 per cent of the normal level.

“Yemen is an absolute catastrophe,” WFP Executive Director David Beasley said at a separate event today. “Of the less than 30 million people that live there, 20 million literally don’t know what’s going to happen from day to day; 17 million of them are on the brink of famine.”

He noted that WFP has received about half of the funds its needs, adding that the Gulf States, in particular, need to “step up and fill in the gap.”

Mr. Lowcock called on donors to provide full funding for the Humanitarian Response Plan, noting that the Yemen Humanitarian Fund is one of the quickest and most effective ways to support the most urgent priorities.

Although only negotiations and a political settlement can put an end to this appalling, man-made crisis, all parties to the fighting in Yemen must be repeatedly reminded to comply with international humanitarian law, taking constant care to spare civilians and civilian infrastructure, he said.

The coordinated effort by partners in all sectors is making an enormous difference, he added, but much more remains to be done. Among the other challenges faced, Mr. Lowcock cited the delay or blockage of humanitarian assistance or the movements of humanitarian staff – including for the cholera response by de facto authorities in Sana’a; commercial imports restrictions; the closure of Sana’a airport to commercial traffic; and salary arrears for health workers, teachers and water and sanitation staff that are accelerating the collapse of essential services.

“Overcoming each of these obstacles is within the reach of the international community,” said Mr. Lowcock.

In an interview with UN News, UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen Jamie McGoldrick said he met with Member States this week in New York and asked them to provided more funding.

Mr. McGoldrick also met with those involved in the conflict and reminded them of their obligations to abide by international humanitarian law.

“Enough is enough,” he said. “The suffering should not be the DNA of the people in that country.”
Some 700,000 suspected cases of cholera have hit Yemen, with the outbreak showing no signs of rescinding, the WHO has reported.

In its plan to tackle the disease, the organisation has planned to distribute vaccines to contain cholera and eradicate 90 per cent of cases by 2030.

“Once it’s out of the box, once it has spread, it’s very, very difficult to contain and we have a huge number of cases and deaths,” said Dominique Legros of the WHO’s department for pandemic and epidemic diseases.

“It spreads like a forest fire,” Legros continued.

The official account of cases cannot be verified, as many may transpire to have contracted acute watery diarrhoea instead.

Yemen has been in a state of civil war since 2014, when Iranian-backed Houthis overtook swathes of territory from north of Yemen to the capital, Sana’a.

A Saudi-led coalition entered the civil war to reinstate President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi’s governance and push back military advancements by the Houthi group.

Impoverished Yemen is enduring a brutal civil war, dire humanitarian crisis and an uncontrollable cholera outbreak.

According to UN officials, more than 10,000 people have been killed in the war, while more than 11 per cent of the country’s population has been displaced.
Yemen: From 'Arabia Felix' to 'death in the time of cholera'

By: **Anjali Sen** UNFPA Representative in Yemen.

In an era of medical advances and scientific breakthroughs, how is it possible that someone dies every hour in Yemen from cholera? Preventing its spread is easier said than done, but we must try harder.

Imagine being nine-months pregnant with your first baby, happy but anxious at the life-changing event that awaits you. Now imagine that instead of preparing your baby’s new clothes and bedding, your sole objective is to stay alive to be able to bring the baby into the world.

Cholera is most common in places with poor sanitation, overcrowding, war and famine. All these are now everyday characteristics of life in Yemen, today the scene of conflict, displacement, food insecurity and the breakdown of health and sanitation systems.

By way of comparison, cholera was prevalent in the US in the 1800s, before modern water and sewage treatment systems eliminated its spread by contaminated water. Only about 10 cases of cholera are reported each year in the US and half of these are acquired abroad.

The cholera crisis in Yemen – currently the worst in the world – comes as a fatal addition to the hardships that Yemeni men and women are facing, with suspected cases of acute, watery diarrhoea increasing by an average of 5,000 every day, and nearly one person dying every hour, according to the United Nations.

**Curbing the monster**

Samia is one of an estimated 1.1 million malnourished pregnant women in Yemen, with a body immunity that has dropped as a result of the lack of adequate nutrients intake and a level of anxiety that has spiked with the conflict.

Samia, who was scared, tired, underfed and with no access to proper hygiene, was therefore an easy target for cholera. Pregnant and breastfeeding women are especially vulnerable to malnutrition, and those weakened by the nutrition crisis are more prone to infections, including cholera. Pregnant women who contract cholera have a higher risk of developing dangerous or even fatal complications.

So what can be done to curb this monster? First we, humanitarian actors, must all recognise that pregnant and lactating women need to be prioritised during our humanitarian response. We should ensure they have adequate medical care throughout their pregnancy, good nutritious food, and most important, the possibility to keep a decent level of hygiene and cleanliness.

Does this sound too easy? It is. But unfortunately it becomes a difficult mission in situations of acute crisis, such as in Yemen.

It is established that cholera is often spread through contaminated food or water. The United Nations Population Fund is the UN agency that works on promoting reproductive health, including among pregnant women, by supporting midwives and mobile medical health clinics that can reach people in their own homes, and can screen and refer malnourished mothers and babies in areas that are difficult to reach.

Women therefore get the right nutrition counselling and advice on hygienic habits that can be sustained even in dire situations, in addition to receiving items such as soap and sanitary napkins. Women who know how to avoid getting cholera through basic steps and hygiene products will resist the disease.

**Back to basics**

It is mind-boggling that in the era of medical advances and daily scientific breakthroughs, we are faced with the challenge of ensuring people can wash their hands and cook their food safely. For preventing cholera is simple: washing hands in clean water, cooking food well and drinking plenty of clean water.

Women, who are often the most resilient people in times of crises, can play a critical role in controlling cholera’s spread because they are traditionally tasked with food preparation.
Announcement for a Competition to Design a Poster in Celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the Establishment of the UNESCO Office in Cairo

To mark the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the UNESCO Regional Office in Cairo, the Office invites art talents in the Arab region, including university and art school students, to participate in a competition for the design of a poster for this special occasion.

Technical requirements for the poster
Poster designs submitted under this competition must meet the following technical requirements:

The design should reflect UNESCO’s mission: "Building peace in the minds of men and women". For more information about UNESCO’s mission and areas of work, visit: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/introducing-unesco/.

- The design should reflect the character and identity of the Arab region.
- The design should include a special logo for the event that builds on UNESCO’s original logo, taking into consideration the logo guidelines available at the following link http://en.unesco.org/about-us/name_logo.
- The design should include the office’s name (“UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science in the Arab States”).
- The design should be colored, and have the following dimensions in portrait orientation: 21.5 cm wide x 28 cm long.

Participants in the competition are requested to complete the form provided in the annex and send it along with the poster design in “pdf” format to the following e-mail: cairo@unesco.org


Prize

The winner will be awarded a monetary prize of USD 1,000.

The name of the winner will be announced during the month of November 2017 and advertised on the website of the Office. The winning design will be printed on different promotional materials.

General Background
In celebration of the 70th anniversary for the establishment of the UNESCO Office in Cairo (1947), the Office will be organizing a cultural event in cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the National Commission for UNESCO in the Arab Republic of Egypt. The event will be attended by high-level officials, and is planned to be held during the first half of December 2017 at the new Office premises located in 6th of October City – Cairo, Egypt. The celebration holds a special significance, since the UNESCO Office in Cairo is one of the oldest field offices established by the organization worldwide and in the Arab region. It is also the first United Nations office to be established in the Arab region.

The UNESCO Office in Cairo serves as the Regional Bureau for Science in the Arab States and is the cluster office for Egypt, Sudan, and Libya in the fields of education, science, culture and communication. It is also the UNESCO representative office in Egypt. For more information on the activities of the UNESCO Cairo Office, please visit the website: http://www.unesco.org/new/ar/cairo/about-this-office.
The theme honours the spirit of **TOGETHER**, a global initiative that promotes respect, safety and dignity for everyone forced to flee their homes and those leaving in search of a better life. TOGETHER unites the organizations of the United Nations System, the 193 Member States of the United Nations, the private sector, civil society, academic institutions and individual citizens in a global partnership in support of diversity, non-discrimination and acceptance of refugees and migrants. It was initiated during the United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants on 19 September 2016.

“In times of insecurity, communities that look different become convenient scapegoats,” said United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres. “We must resist cynical efforts to divide communities and portray neighbours as ‘the other’. Discrimination diminishes us all. It prevents people — and societies — from achieving their full potential.” He added, “Together, let us stand up against bigotry and for human rights. Together, let us build bridges. Together, let us transform fear into hope.”

This year, the International Day of Peace focuses on engaging and mobilizing people throughout the world to show support for refugees and migrants. Its messages are shared with communities hosting refugees and migrants, as well as people concerned that refugees and migrants may bring physical and economic insecurity to their lives. The Day highlights solidarity with refugees and migrants and showcase the shared benefits of migration to economies and nations, while also acknowledging legitimate concerns of host communities. Ultimately, it is about bringing people together and reminding them of their common humanity. Young people have a vital role to play. For example, they can volunteer to welcome and help refugees and migrants in their communities. They can also extend the hand of friendship to young refugees and migrants who they might meet in their classrooms and neighbourhoods.