



### In the headlines:

- Iraq launches UN-supported action plan to save the lives of mothers and newborns
- Investing in women key to sustainable peace in DR Congo and Nigeria – UN deputy chief
- Smugglers throw hundreds of African migrants off boats headed to Yemen – UN
- Over 500,000 children in Libya need aid; UNICEF urges political solution to years-long crisis
- UN agency begins moving hunger-relief assistance to Nigeria's troubled northeast

## Iraq launches UN-supported action plan to save the lives of mothers and newborns

**10 August** – Decades of conflict and under-investment have placed a huge strain on Iraq's healthcare system – with pregnant women and their babies paying for it with their lives, according to three United Nations agencies.

“Although progress has been made to lower maternal mortality rates, there has been slow headway in reducing the mortality rates for children under five,” said the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organization (WHO) and UN Population Fund (UNFPA) in a joint statement.

“Newborn babies are particularly vulnerable because of poor birth practices, inadequate referral mechanisms and inefficient neonatal care, particularly in remote areas,” they added.

With the support of UNICEF, the Ministry of Health launched the Every Newborn Action Plan (ENAP), which was developed jointly with UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA. The ENAP is an evidence based strategy to invest in, and improve the quality of maternal and newborn care.

According to the agencies, breastfeeding, neonatal resuscitation, kangaroo mother care for preterm babies, and the prevention and treatment of infections will help prevent these infant deaths.

“Providing high quality care before and after birth not only saves lives, it is also an investment to ensure Iraqi children have the best start in life and meet their full potential,” said Peter Hawkins, UNICEF's Representative in Iraq.

“WHO and other partners will work to support the Government of Iraq through the Ministry of Health to achieve equitable universal health coverage, including the provision of comprehensive services for every woman and newborn in Iraq in order



Health workers supported by UNICEF and the Directorate of Health visit a newborn and her mother in their shelter in Debaga displacement camp in Erbil Governorate, Kurdistan Region of Iraq (September 2016). Photo: UNICEF/UN032140/Mackenzie

to contribute to the substantial reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity,” added in Musani Altaf, WHO Representative in Iraq.

Ramanathan Balakrishnan, UNFPA's Representative in Iraq, added: “Neonatal mortality contributes significantly to child mortality in Iraq. UNFPA is proud to have played a part in the formulation of the Newborn Action Plan and commits to support the Ministry of Health in its implementation.”

## Investing in women key to sustainable peace in DR Congo and Nigeria – UN deputy chief



UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed addresses Security Council meeting on ‘peace and security in Africa.’ UN Photo/Manuel Elias

**10 August** – Investing in women and girls must be central to global efforts towards sustainable peace and development in both Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the United Nations deputy chief said today.

“Both have dismayingly low levels of women's political participation and are experiencing conflicts marked by extremely high levels of sexual- and gender-based violence,” said Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed as she updated the Security Council on her recent trip to the two African countries.

The trip, from 19 to 27 July, was “the first of its kind” because it focused entirely on the role of women in peace, security and development, she said.

The joint AU-UN high-level mission was undertaken by four African women, namely Ms. Mohammed, the UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, and the African Union (AU) Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, Bineta Diop.

The mission's goal was to advance peace by advancing the equality, empowerment and well-being of women, which is in line with the Secretary-General's vision and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

In both countries, Ms. Mohammed noted, the mission met with Heads of State, ministers, donors, diplomats, faith leaders, parliamentarian and the respective UN mission and country teams, spending the lion's share of time with the women and girls most affected by conflicts, including through visits to camps for internally displaced persons.

While each country is unique, the situations share some commonalities, she said, noting that sexual violence is widespread in the DRC, and abductions, forced marriage and the use of women as suicide bombers have taken a terrible toll in northern Nigeria, where in the camps sexual exploitation, including in the form of “sex for food” is a new and alarming trend.

“The international community needs to better understand the role of women in development and peace building alongside the gender dimensions of conflict if our responses are to be effective,” she said.

Turning to country-specific matters, the UN deputy chief said that the mission was touched by the meeting with the schoolgirls, who were abducted in Nigeria's Chibok and then released, after years in captivity, by the Boko Haram group.

“Their remarkable strength as survivors rather than victims is inspiring. Many are receiving education and psychosocial support to prepare them for reintegration,” Ms. Mohammed said, noting that thousands of other young women who have been subjected to sexual violence and affected by conflict in other ways are still to receive adequate support.

### *Beyond theoretical debate, humanitarian-development nexus requires tangible resources*

In the DRC, the mission emphasized the need to respect and implement the 31 December agreement, which provided a clear

path towards democratic elections, she noted.

At the time of her visit, Ms. Mohammed said the electoral commission had registered more than 80 per cent of voters. That number now stands at more than 90 per cent. Of those registered, 48 per cent are women, placing the country in the same bracket as more established democracies such as Solomon Islands and Paraguay.

The mission also met with women who have no choice but to cook with coal in their tents, at great risk to their health and that of their children.

“While we may debate the humanitarian-development nexus philosophically here in New York, without resources flowing to both sectors simultaneously and a real investment in early recovery, we can neither sustain peace nor prevent future gender based violence,” she said, encouraging donors to respond to the DRC’s reintegration challenges based on need alone.

## Smugglers throw hundreds of African migrants off boats headed to Yemen – UN

**10 August** – A total of 300 migrants have reportedly been forced from boats over the past two days by smugglers off the coast of Yemen – many feared dead or missing, the United Nations migration agency has reported.

“The survivors told our colleagues on the beach that the smuggler pushed them into the sea when he saw some ‘authority types’ near the coast,” said Laurent de Boeck, the Yemen Chief of Mission of the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

“They also told us that the smuggler has already returned to Somalia to continue his business and pick up more migrants to bring to Yemen on the same route. This is shocking and inhumane. The suffering of migrants on this migration route is enormous. Too many young people pay smugglers with the false hope of a better future,” Mr. de Boeck added.

According to IOM, up to 180 migrants were reportedly thrown into the sea from a boat today by the smugglers. Five bodies have been recovered so far, and around 50 are reported missing.

This latest incident comes barely 24 hours after smugglers forced more than 120 Somali and Ethiopian migrants into the sea as they approached the coast of Shabwa, a Yemeni Governorate along the Arabian Sea, resulting in the drowning of around 50 migrants. The migrants had been hoping to reach countries in the Gulf via war-torn Yemen.

Shortly after yesterday’s tragedy, IOM staff found the shallow graves of 29 migrants on a beach in Shabwa, during a routine patrol. The dead had been quickly buried by those who survived the smuggler’s deadly actions. The approximate average age of the passengers on the boat was 16.

“The Secretary-General is heart-broken by this continuing tragedy,” his Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric told reporters at the daily briefing in New York.

“This is why he continues to stress that the international community must give priority to preventing and resolving a variety of situations which both generate mass movement and expose those already on the move to significant danger,” he added, underscoring the need to increase legal pathways for regular migration and offer credible alternatives to these dangerous crossings for people in need of international protection.

Since January of this year, IOM estimates that around 55,000 migrants left the Horn of Africa to come to Yemen, most with the aim of trying to find better opportunities in the Gulf countries. More than 30,000 of those migrants are under the age of



IOM staff assists Somali and Ethiopian migrants who were forced into the sea by smugglers. Photo: UN Migration Agency (IOM)

18 from Somalia and Ethiopia, while a third are estimated to be female.

This journey is especially hazardous during the current windy season in the Indian Ocean. Smugglers are active in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, offering fake promises to vulnerable migrants. IOM and its partners operate across the region to support these migrants and provide lifesaving assistance to those who find themselves abused or stranded along the route.

## Over 500,000 children in Libya need aid; UNICEF urges political solution to years-long crisis



UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, Geert Cappelaere, interacts with children at a UNICEF-supported Child Friendly Space in Tripoli, Libya. Photo: UNICEF/Kavanagh

**10 August** – Ongoing conflict and the breakdown of the economy have left more than a half million children in need of humanitarian aid in Libya, according to the United Nations children's agency.

“Six years since the crisis began in Libya, over 550,000 children need assistance because of political instability, on-going conflict, displacement, and economic collapse,” said Geert Cappelaere, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, in a statement following his first visit to the country.

“Heavy violence in some parts of the country has forced families to flee their homes. More than 80,000 children are internally displaced and migrant children in Libya are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, including in detention centres,” he added.

children's needs on the ground.

Since 2011, UNICEF has been expanding its assistance to respond to

Mr. Cappelaere pointed out that more than 1.3 million children were vaccinated against polio last year. UNICEF and partners, including national institutions, were able to maintain nearly universal immunization coverage even when violence was at its peak. UNICEF has partnered with 28 municipalities across Libya under the 'Together for Children' campaign to support children's basic rights.

“At a child-friendly space where children play, learn and receive psychosocial support, boys and girls spoke of their dreams of living in peace and prosperity. We have to support each and every child in Libya – especially the most vulnerable – to reach their full potential,” continued the senior UNICEF official.

In discussions with the authorities in Tripoli and Benghazi, UNICEF reaffirmed its commitment to provide all the support possible to reach children in need wherever they are in the country.

Mr. Cappelaere noted that in October, UNICEF plans to: have all its international staff operating full-time from Libya; scale up further assistance to reach 1.5 million girls and boys; and help strengthen national institutions and civil society.

UNICEF reiterated that the wellbeing of girls and boys in Libya should be a priority for authorities, civil society and the international community.

“In the interest of children, UNICEF is calling for an immediate political solution to the crisis and an end to the violence,” concluded Mr. Cappelaere.

## UN agency begins moving hunger-relief assistance to Nigeria's troubled northeast

**10 August** – The United Nations humanitarian agency fighting hunger has begun transporting food assistance to Nigeria's crisis-hit northeast, where people – displaced by Boko Haram violence and the fight against it – face the threat of famine.

The World Food Programme (WFP) has already begun moving the first batch of rice donated by the Government of Nigeria, which contributed 5,000 metric tons of rice and pledged a further 2,000 metric tons of millet.

“This donation once again testifies to the quality of relations between WFP and Nigeria,” said Ronald Sibanda, WFP's interim Country Director, in a news release, noting that the assistance will help feed nearly half a million internally displaced people in the country's conflict-ravaged northeast.



A mother with her children in Monguno, Borno state, northeast Nigeria. (file) Photo: OCHA

The United States will cover the associated costs of getting the donated rice to those displaced in the hardest-hit states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe, as part of its \$100 million contribution to WFP's Nigeria response.

Nigeria's crisis has spilled over borders, leaving millions in the broader Lake Chad Basin region uncertain of where their meal is coming from. Experts have warned that without sufficient and timely humanitarian assistance, northeast Nigeria risks tipping into famine.

Since launching operations last year, WFP has rapidly expanded its offer of food, nutrition and cash to reach more than a million people a month. Having overcome a funding challenge, it has set its target at 1.36 million people during the current pre-harvest lean season, the hungriest time of the year.