UNOG Bi-weekly press briefing: Sudan - COVID 19 Humanitarian Impact OCHA

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Shotlist

1. Wide shot, UN Palais
2. SOUNDBITE (EN): Jens Laerke, Spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): “Seven COVID-19 cases, including two deaths, have been confirmed - all cases arrived from abroad and are receiving medical treatment in isolation centres in Khartoum.”
3. Wide shot: UN Palais
4. SOUNDBITE (EN): Jens Laerke, Spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): “Partners are planning to organize advanced food distribution of 2-3 months of rations at one time and delivering more Ready-to-Use Therapeutic food for malnourished children. This will limit the frequency of people gathering and the risk of spreading the coronavirus”.
5. Wide shot: UN Palais
6. SOUNDBITE (EN): Jens Laerke, Spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): “Also trainings and meetings on Gender Based Violence (GBV) have been suspended but individual counselling of survivors continue. UNFPA has warned that curfews and lockdown will make women more vulnerable to Gender Based Violence and domestic abuse”.
7. Wide shot: UN Palais
8. SOUNDBITE (EN): Jens Laerke, Spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): “Individual case management and individual counselling and referral for example to health facilities and what they call GBV, Gender Based Violence, confidential corner services so where women can speak confident to counselors that continues, of course all respecting the measures of distancing and hygiene around people meeting up the people.

9. Wide shot: UN Palais

10. SOUNDBITE (EN): Jens Laerke, Spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): “The issue of Gender Based Violence (GBV) is in Sudan, it is a problem like in unfortunately most other humanitarian crisis that we have. When a crisis tends to reach a peak, we also see GBV in a peak. We know, we have seen across the world, the alarm frankly has been raised by the increase of Gender Based Violence because of confinement at home. That is an issue”.

11. Wide shot: UN Palais
With COVID-19 cases confirmed in Sudan as two days ago, measures to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus in the country are now having an impact on humanitarian access, deliveries and services.

At a press conference at the United Nations in Geneva, the spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Jens Laerke said that “seven COVID-19 cases including two deaths have been confirmed - all cases arrived from abroad and are receiving medical treatment in isolation centres in Khartoum.”

In this new environment — with a 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew and the closure of schools for one month from mid-March as well as a reduction of staff in some key government offices —the United Nations and its NGO partners are now putting in place alternative plans to ensure the continuity of essential humanitarian aid.

There are 9.2 million people in Sudan who need assistance, including nearly 3 million refugees and internally displaced people.

“Partners are planning to organize advanced food distribution of 2-3 months of rations at one time and delivering more Ready-to-Use Therapeutic food for malnourished children”, explained Jens Laerke. “This will limit the frequency of people gathering and the risk of spreading the coronavirus”.

He also added that “trainings and meetings on Gender Based Violence (GBV) have been suspended but individual counselling of survivors continue. UNFPA has warned that curfews and lockdown will make women more vulnerable to Gender Based Violence and domestic abuse”.

There is limited information on the exact number of sexual and gender-based violence cases across Sudan. The risk of attacks is present across the country, however. Information available from a 2014 survey suggests that as many as 34 per cent of women aged 15-49 years are victims of domestic violence.

“The issue of Gender Based Violence (GBV) is in Sudan. It is a problem like in unfortunately most other humanitarian crisis that we have.”, Jens Laerke said. “When a crisis tends to reach a peak, we also see GBV in a peak. We know, we have seen across the world, the alarm frankly has been raised by the increase of Gender Based Violence because of confinement at home. That is an issue”.

Over 90 per cent of Sudan’s localities lack specialized GBV services such as clinical management of rape, specialized psychosocial support and counselling, and case management. Health centers are often the first point of call where people seek help, and they are inadequately equipped to support and suffer from lack of trained staff especially due to high turnover.

The OCHA spokesperson confirmed that some counseling services are still being provided.

“Individual case management and individual counselling and referral, for example to health facilities and what they call GBV - Gender Based Violence - confidential corner services where women can speak in confidence to counselors, (all) that continues. Of course, all respecting the measures of distancing and hygiene around people meeting up with people”.

New guidelines and procedures are being developed to make sure that health workers can continue to deliver immunization, nutritional supplements, and maintain infant and young child feeding programmes in this new reality.

In South Darfur, the State Ministry of Health has identified two isolation centres and is procuring thermal detectors and protective equipment. Awareness-raising campaigns are ongoing in South Darfur with public service campaigns carried out with posters and messages for radio and television.