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Shotlist

2. Wide shot, Press Room III, UN Geneva, podium speakers sitting wide apart in line with social distancing measures.
3. SOUNDbite (EN) Jens Laerke, spokesperson, OCHA: “We are seeing a huge increase in the number of starving people which could reach some 270 million by the end of the year. The plan has a $500 million envelope for famine prevention.”
5. SOUNDbite (EN) Elisabeth Byrs, spokesperson, WFP: “We must all act now; if not, we would be dangerously short-sighted. The cost of inaction against the food security and other consequences of the pandemic will grow exponentially unless the right combination of relief and recovery assistance is implemented quickly and at scale.”
6. Close-up, journalist’s hands typing on laptop, in profile, Press Room III, UN Geneva.
7. SOUNDbite (EN) Elisabeth Byrs, spokesperson, WFP: “These countries are concentrated in Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa and of course in also in Asia, Afghanistan Bangladesh, the Middle East - Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen - and of course, Latin America.”
9. SOUNDbite (EN) Marixie Mercado, spokesperson, UNICEF: “Projections issued by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in May showed that 6,000 children could die from preventable causes every day over the next six months as a direct and indirect result of COVID-
19-related disruptions in essential services.”

10. Medium-wide shot, podium speakers sitting spaced apart in line with social distancing measures, Press Room III, UN Geneva.

11. SOUNDBITE (EN) Shabia Mantoo, UNHCR: “With coronavirus now present in every country, including those that host large numbers of refugee and displaced populations, the world’s 79.5 million refugees and forcibly displaced people are among the most exposed and vulnerable to the virus.”

12. Medium-wide shot, tables with chairs propped against them to prevent use for seating, journalists sitting wide apart in rear of shot, Press Room III, UN Geneva.

13. SOUNDBITE (EN) Jens Laerke, spokesperson, OCHA: “Rich countries are wisely protecting their own economies and people with enormous relief packages, but it is dangerously short-sighted not to invest to protect the world's most vulnerable people as well. The risk is otherwise, that we are going to see multiple new crises, on the back of the COVID-19.”

14. Medium shot, journalists to rear of shot, sitting wide apart, chairs propped up against tables in foreground to prevent use, Press Room III, UN Geneva.


Story

Starvation, death from disease and violence can be stopped with $10.3 billion appeal: UN agencies

A huge increase in the number of people facing starvation because of the COVID-19 crisis is only one of the many problems UN humanitarians are concerned about because of the pandemic, they said on Friday.

The alert over acute food insecurity from Africa to Asia and Latin America, along with dangerously low levels of vaccination among children and a startling rise in gender-based violence linked to coronavirus lockdowns have all been flagged by the Organization’s agencies.

In a bid to alleviate people’s suffering in 63 vulnerable countries, the UN has appealed for $10.3 billion from the international community to fund the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19.

Originally launched in March as a $2 billion appeal, agencies have received just over $1.7 billion to date.

“We are seeing a huge increase in the number of starving people which could reach some 270 million by the end of the year. The plan has a $500 million envelope for famine prevention,” said Jens Laerke, spokesperson for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Echoing the urgency of providing help without delay, World Food Programme (WFP) spokesperson Elisabeth Byrs, spokesperson insisted that COVID-19 is tightening its grip on much of the developing world, wreaking havoc not only people’s lives but also on their livelihoods.

“We must all act now,” she said. “If not, we would be dangerously short-sighted. The cost of inaction against the food security and other consequences of the pandemic will grow exponentially unless the right combination of relief and recovery assistance is implemented quickly and at scale.”

Of the $10.3 billion appeal – the world body’s biggest to date – WFP’s needs account for $4.9 billion, plus a $500 million special provision for famine prevention, in recognition of the severity of food insecurity threatening the world.

Low-income countries facing the biggest problems “are concentrated in Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa and of course in also in Asia, Afghanistan Bangladesh, the Middle East - Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen - and of course, Latin America,” Ms. Byrs added.

The UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), meanwhile, highlighted data showing how the new coronavirus is affecting children in ways that will have lasting or irreversible impact.

Its updated global coronavirus appeal is now $1.9 billion, up from $1.6 in May, covering 155 countries and territories including the 63 countries in the Global Humanitarian Response Plan.

Citing projections from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in May, UNICEF spokesperson Marixie Mercado said that “6,000 children could die from preventable causes every day over the next six months as a direct and indirect result of COVID-19-related disruptions in essential services”.

The first four months of 2020 had already shown “a substantial drop” in the number of children receiving three doses of the vaccine against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (DTP3), the UNICEF spokesperson continued. “This is the first time in 28 years that the world could see a reduction in DTP3 coverage, which is the marker for immunization coverage.”

At least 30 measles vaccination campaigns “were or are at risk” of being cancelled, according to UNICEF.
Ms. Mercado also cited latest UN estimates showing that close to 1.2 billion students in 150 countries are still affected by school closures.

“Apart from causing mental and psychological distress, the school closures risk hardening already inherent inequalities in access to learning, and to deepen the global learning crisis,” UNICEF said in a statement. “The children already furthest behind, the children most in need of learning, will bear the brunt.”

Highlighting a disturbing global correlation between lockdown measures and domestic abuse, Ms. Mercado also noted that data indicated for every three months the restrictions continue, there could be an additional 15 million extra cases of gender-based violence (GBV).

In its latest report on the problem, 35 out of 68 countries reported an increase in GBV, such as intimate partner violence against women or adolescent girls or online harassment or bullying of adolescent girls.

From the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, spokesperson Shabia Mantoo, underscored the threat faced by people uprooted by violence and natural disaster.

“With coronavirus now present in every country, including those that host large numbers of refugee and displaced populations, the world’s 79.5 million refugees and forcibly displaced people are among the most exposed and vulnerable to the virus.”

The agencies’ comments follow an appeal from UN relief chief on Thursday who called on the world’s leading industrial nations, the G20, to step up support for the appeal.

“The pandemic and associated global recession are about to wreak havoc in fragile and low-income countries”, Mark Lowcock said. “The response of wealthy nations so far has been grossly inadequate and dangerously short-sighted. Failure to act now will leave the virus free to circle round the globe, undo decades of development and create a generation’s worth of tragic and exportable problems.”

Adding that “it doesn’t have to be like this”, Mr. Lowcock insisted that the problem “can be fixed with money from wealthy nations and fresh thinking from the shareholders of international financial institutions and supporters of UN agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, and NGOs”.