




UN Newsletter

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World Humanitarian Day 2011 – celebrating people helping people



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UNCG Press conference to mark World Humanitarian day 2011 at Hilton Hotel, Nairobi ©UNIC,2011

In order to acknowledge the brave and invaluable work of humanitarian workers, the United Nations Communication Group in Kenya (UNCG-K) organized a press briefing in Nairobi on 19 August 2011 on the occasion of World Humanitarian Day.

The press briefing was addressed by various top UN officials, the Kenya Red Cross Society Secretary-General Abbas Gullet and Oxfam's Acting Regional Director Philippa Crosland-Taylor.

Presenting the UN Secretary-General's message, John Ging, Director of

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Upcoming Events

- 1 October- International Day of Older Persons
- 2 October- International Day of Non-Violence
- 3 October- World Habitat Day
- 5 October-World Teachers' Day
- Second Thursday October- World Sight Day
- 9 October- World Post Day
- 10 October- World Mental Health Day
- Second Wednesday in October International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction
- 15 October- International Day of Rural Women
- 16 October- World Food Day
- 17 October- International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
- 20 October- World Statistics Day
- 24 October- UN Day
- 24 October-World Development Information Day
- 27 October- World Day for Audio Visual Heritage
- October- UN 4U Educational Outreach

Operations at the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA), said that the Day was meant to focus on the sacrifice aid workers made to help fellow human beings.

“This is also a day to examine our own lives and consider what more we can do to help - to reach out to people enduring conflict, disaster and hardship. Let those we honour today inspire us to start our own journey to make the world a better place and bring our human family more closely together”.

Kenya Red Cross chief, Abbas Gullet, acknowledged that heroes and heroines of this world made a difference in people’s lives everyday. Pointing at the current drought situation in the country, he asked

Kenyans to say enough to food aid, “if we come together, we can reverse this crisis”. Mr. Gullet challenged Government planners and policy makers to use scientific knowledge and information pro-actively to address the situation long term. He appreciated the support of UN agencies, Kenyans and other stakeholders in averting the current humanitarian situation in the country.

Acting UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Olivia Yambi applauded the women and children who continue to show resilience during the current crisis, saying that drought was a recurrent phenomenon that should be addressed responsibly. “One human being suffering is one too many”, she emphasized.

Ms Crosland-Taylor said Oxfam is reaching only a portion of those in need of humanitarian assistance in the country adding that drought should be managed properly. “We keep saying and seeing this, now is the time to emphasise that it is not about humanitarian support, long term plans should be in place”.

In 2008 the United Nations General Assembly designated 19 August as World Humanitarian Day, the date on which a brutal terrorist attack on UN headquarters in Baghdad in 2003 killed 22 people, including UN envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello. The day honours those who have lost their lives in humanitarian service and those who continue to bring assistance and relief to millions.

UNFPA Executive Director visits Kenya to highlight maternal health and protection needs of women affected by drought



Dr. Osotimehin meets Somali refugees at the Hagadera refugee camp in Kenya
© UNFPA, 2011

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), visited Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya recently to underscore the urgent needs of women affected by the famine in the Horn of Africa.

During his visit, he underlined

to partners, government officials and stakeholders the importance of addressing the urgent needs of pregnant and lactating women. He also emphasized the need for prevention of sexual violence and treatment of its survivors among refugees and host populations.

Health facilities in the affected regions suffer from shortages of medical supplies and trained health-care providers. The main gaps in the provision of reproductive health care include overstretched resources and lack of medical supplies and equipment.

Through local partners in Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia and Djibouti, UNFPA is providing supplies, including reproductive health care kits, to hospitals, primary health-care facilities and communities. Emergency reproductive health kits have been distributed in Dadaab refugee camps and host communities, targeting approximately 615,000 people. Clean delivery kits are distributed to the most vulnerable pregnant women among affected communities to ensure clean and safe deliveries. The Fund has also trained midwives and other health workers and provided them with the necessary medical supplies for improved quality care. Over 20,000 hygiene kits are also being provided to most vulnerable women and girls in the region to cover their unique needs and maintain their dignity.

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So far, 12.4 million people have been affected by severe drought in the Horn of Africa. In Somalia, the drought resulted in 3.7 million internally displaced people. The world's largest refugee camp, Dadaab in Kenya, has seen its population soar close to 500,000.

Given the high levels of malnutrition and mortality, combined with the likelihood of increasing prices and a harsh dry season, Dr. Osotimehin noted that the situation was likely to deteriorate over the coming months.

Dr. Osotimehin called on the international community to urgently address the unique needs of pregnant women, those in labour and mothers whose families' survival are particularly at risk. When a woman suffers from hunger and exhaustion, her children's survival is even more at risk. Experts estimate that eliminating malnutrition among mothers can reduce disabilities among their infants by almost one third.

The UNFPA Executive Director also called for immediate support towards

life-saving services to survivors of sexual violence. This included medical treatment and psychosocial support. Further, he sought for the international community to maintain and improve its effort to prevent cholera and measles outbreaks in the region. He said that prevention and awareness programmes should specifically target women as they are usually the primary caregivers for children.

Reaching out to the worst drought-affected populations in Kenya



Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos meets with host communities in Dadaab during her recent visit in August 2011 © UN/OCHA, 2011

Drought conditions have led to rapid depletion of pasture and water for livestock, increased migration of livestock, and eroded food security, particularly among pastoralists in north and north-eastern Kenya. The food beneficiary population has increased from 2.4 million people to 3.75 million according to the Long Rains Assessment conducted in August 2011.

In this regard, priorities for Kenya for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) have been focused since July 2011, on ensuring that coordinated humanitarian assistance reaches the populations most affected by the current drought in

the country. In the months of July and August, OCHA increased its presence in Dadaab in North Eastern Kenya to support humanitarian response to the Kenyan population affected by the drought and the increased number of refugees from Somalia, where drought, combined with conflict, has led to some areas slipping into famine. Dadaab, the biggest refugee camp in the world, has in the last twenty years since it was established, grown to host more refugees than its intended capacity. Due to the drought in Somalia, the refugee influx into Kenya increased by more than 50 per cent to a daily influx of 1,500 people, with a total of 440,000 refugees by the end of August 2011.

While addressing this increase, the Government of Kenya and the humanitarian community has also been faced with meeting the humanitarian impacts of the current drought on the Kenyan host communities, a majority of whom are pastoralists, severely affected by the drought. The North and North East of Kenya have been negatively impacted by the current drought leaving communities in these fragile ecological environments experiencing acute humanitarian needs. OCHA's increased presence in Dadaab, Turkana and Marsabit is supporting the coordination of the humanitarian response through Government structures and local partners.

With more humanitarian organizations coming to respond to the drought and some to the refugee influx, the goal is to ensure an adequately coordinated response to both host communities and border areas. OCHA's approach is to promote a holistic view of the problem and have a coordinated response, linked to longer term solutions to the chronic problems in these areas.

In recognition of the increased frequency of drought episodes and growing levels of vulnerability in drought prone areas, humanitarian partners in Kenya have made considerable efforts to integrate a longer-term perspective in humanitarian programmes. OCHA is working to ensure that the majority of drought affected populations are accessible for humanitarian assistance.

IOM to set up support structures to boost the livelihoods of pastoralist communities affected by drought in Northern Kenya.



The prevailing drought and famine in north-eastern Kenya has driven communities from as far as Wajir to the outskirts of Dadaab. Asylum seekers from Somalia are also in desperate need of transportation and medical assistance © IOM, 2011 / Mary Muriithi

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) on 28 August 2011 started initiatives to assist indigenous communities in Dadaab to access basic needs in the aftermath of the drought that has hit the Horn of Africa.

The prevailing drought in north-eastern Kenya has driven communities from as far as Wajir to the outskirts of Dadaab where they hope to access cheaper markets, water facilities and food. Some of these communities are leaving under stress, next to the host community homes.

Many hundreds of goats and sheep will be replaced by camels, better able to resist drought and provide milk for families. The cattle are in a very poor condition and cannot even be slaughtered for meat as they are too decimated. Water storage facilities will be provided to host communities as currently they share troughs with their livestock. During the next six months, the Organization also plans to rehabilitate or construct water pans, tanks and kiosks in the area.

IOM and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) have been working in collaborative efforts

to boost the livelihood coping mechanisms for pastoralists in Northern Kenya. IOM's partnership with FAO stems initially from participation in the Agriculture and Livestock Sector Working Group (ALSWG), which is chaired by FAO and the Government of Kenya (Ministries of Livestock and Agriculture).

IOM's rationale in the ALSWG is governed by the principle that majority of the food stricken families in Kenya, which are predominantly mobile populations- the pastoralists, and many of whom form the host community to refugees, are in the arid and semi-arid areas. Thus the IOM- FAO partnership projects aim to contribute to stabilize the situation in climate change and conflict affected pastoralist and host communities to enable vulnerable populations to build up sustainable livelihoods.

FAO will provide technical support to IOM and other identified implementing partners to coordinate livelihoods recovery and development with a specific focus on both the crop and livestock sub-sectors.

In support of UNHCR, IOM is currently facilitating movement of vulnerable migrants from the congested Dagahaley outskirts to Ifo Extension camp. IOM is also setting up emergency shelters where the displaced Somalis can access better services and security.

FAO working to build farmers' resilience to drought in eastern Kenya

With the onset of the short rains less than two months away, FAO has been assisting vulnerable farmers in eastern Kenya to prepare their fields and to build water harvesting structures through a voucher-for-work project.

Most people in this drought-prone area are smallholder farmers and agropastoralists, dependent on rainfall for their crops. However, the failed 2010 short rains and the erratic 2011 long rains have resulted in major crop loss and depleted seed stocks.

In most cases, farmers have not had a decent harvest in two – even three – seasons, leaving them more food-insecure and cash strapped. High food, fuel and seed prices have added an additional strain, forcing families to eat fewer meals a day or to sell off their assets.

Through this project however, FAO is working closely with the Government of Kenya and local partners to provide over 5,000 vulnerable households in Mbeere, Mwingi and Kitui districts with the means to buy essential food items while at the same time building and rehabilitating vital infrastructure.

Farmers, working through Farmer Field and Life School groups are terracing at least one acre of their land so that fertile topsoil is not swept



Farmers working through an FAO voucher-for-work project in eastern Kenya, terracing their land in preparation for the October rains. © FAO/Thomas Hug

away by the rains. Likewise, they are constructing sand dams in dry riverbeds to capture and retain water – water that would otherwise be lost.

Farmers are given a voucher in exchange for each day's work. Half of the amount on the voucher can be redeemed for food at select local traders, while the other half is used to buy

building materials for the community sand dams.

It is through improved soil and water conservation methods – as well as the promotion of drought-tolerant crops – that FAO hopes to strengthen the resilience of these communities now so they are not completely blindfolded by drought in the future.

Singing all the way to the farm

As people in other parts of northwestern Kenya's Turkana region queue for food aid to help them through the drought, Nangor Lobongia is among several thousand smallholder farmers who have been able to harvest a reasonable crop of sorghum and maize.

Nangor is a member of the

Morulem Irrigation Scheme in Turkana East. For three years, the farmers had to depend on relief food after the scheme collapsed, first due to drought and then to floods, which destroyed irrigation channels and also left farms and villages submerged in water.

"I sing for joy as I harvest my crop," says Nangor, a widowed

mother of seven. "The last three years were very difficult, and for the first time, my family had to depend on aid. I thank God that the World Food Programme (WFP) helped us to rehabilitate our project and we can grow food again."

The work of digging out the clogged irrigation channels and mending other infrastructure was



Nangor Lobongia in her sorghum farm © WFP,2011

carried out by local farmers under the supervision of the Kenyan Ministry of Water and Irrigation, through the Turkana Rehabilitation Programme. WFP lent a crucial hand through its Food-for Assets (FFA) programme.

WFP provided the farmers with food and non-food items, including farm tools and seeds, as part of the rehabilitation of the project.

According to the chairman of the scheme, Phillip Esinyon, 18,000 people are benefiting.

At Kalobeyei in Turkana West, former pastoralist Sara Ekwuam is hosting several of her pastoralist relatives who have temporarily moved in with her after they heard she had a good harvest.

“Previously my family depended

on pastoralism but over time the rains became less and less, and we were unable to find pasture and water for our livestock. As a result we were forced to depend on relief,” said Sara.

With support from WFP, Sara and other farmers in Kalobeyei have constructed soil ‘bunds’ – artificial ponds that hold rainwater and keep crops growing even when there is little rainfall.

“Although we didn’t get a lot of rain, the water in the bunds was enough to grow this sorghum crop to maturity,” she said, pointing at her harvest. “I harvested 10 bags. I will sell 5 of them to buy other things that I need and keep the other 5.”

Turkana is one of the 15 districts where WFP is implementing FFA projects in partnership with the Kenyan Government. Through FFA, WFP works with communities to improve their resilience and help them build assets that will improve their food security. In arid districts of northern Kenya, these projects focus on rainwater harvesting, micro-irrigation, and soil- and water-conservation.

IYV+10 – UN Volunteer helping Nakuru families recover

The 2007/2008 post election violence in Kenya wreaked havoc in many parts of the country, displacing thousands of people and severely crippling livelihoods. As a response to this dire situation, the Government, through the Ministry of Special Programmes initiated the Livelihoods Recovery project, with the support of UNDP. Nakuru County, one of the hardest hit, has been a key beneficiary of this project.

Coordinated by UN Volunteer Margaret Oketch, under UNDP’s Disaster Risk Reduction unit, the project has seen several families in

Nakuru affected by the post election violence benefit through four key components and the support of various Government ministries. The programme covers nine districts in Nakuru County and includes entrepreneurship and business skills training, agriculture interventions, fish farming and psycho-social support.

Although she has been a UN Volunteer for only 18 months, Margaret has been able to support about 1,047 families to start farming through the Ministry of Agriculture. In addition, through the Fisheries Ministry, she has coordinated the training and

support for eight self-help groups to begin fish-farming. The groups have benefited from fish ponds, fingerlings and enough fish feed to last for a whole reproduction cycle. Some 624 women and youth have been trained in entrepreneurship skills in the County and over one third of these have gone ahead to start their own businesses.

Margaret is especially proud of the initiative that many of the respondents have had. She says:

“Although we are not supporting them with any money for capital, they have not sat on the training they received – they’ve gone ahead to start

their own businesses”, beaming as she shows a visiting UNDP team a shop opened by one of the beneficiaries at Giwa Resettlement Camp in Nakuru.

Elsewhere in the County, Margaret is working with farmers in Elburgon, Molo district, who have a reason to smile, after UNDP, in collaboration with the Ministry of Livestock, provided them with grade cows. A total of 12 heifers have been given so far, and within a span of three years, all the members in the groups will have benefited as the cows calve.

The UNDP Country Director, Maria-Threase Keating, while visiting the projects in the County on 4 August 2011, lauded the efforts that have been made to resettle the families and give them a sense of stability in restoring livelihoods:

“The more we give people access to resources and sustainable livelihoods, the less likely they are to get into conflict”, she said, while applauding the Government’s commitment to the



UN Volunteer Margaret Oketch (2nd left, standing) with some of the beneficiaries at the Giwa Camp in Nakuru, together with UNDP Country Director Maria-Threase Keating (3rd left standing) © UNV, 2011

process.

Margaret acknowledges that she has enjoyed being a UN Volunteer

so far and describes the feeling in a few words: “impact in the lives of people...”.

First National Forum on Non-Communicable Diseases held

Kenya held its first National Forum on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) on 23 August 2011 in Nairobi. The forum, officially inaugurated by Honourable Prime Minister Raila Odinga, was also attended by Health Ministers; Hon. Prof Peter Anyang Nyong’o, the Minister for Medical Services and Hon. Dr. James Gesami, the Assistant Minister for Public Health and Sanitation. Also in attendance were the Permanent Secretaries in both Health Ministries, and other high ranking government officials; various Ambassadors and High Commissioners, as well as the World Health Organization (WHO) Country Representative, Dr. Abdoulie Jack.

The four days forum, organized by both Ministries of Health with support from partners, in particular



Honourable Prime Minister Raila Odinga giving the keynote remarks at the official opening of the Forum in Nairobi © WHO, 2011

GIZ and WHO, took place from 23 to 26 August 2011. The main aim of the national forum was to review the current situation of prevention, diagnosis and treatment for NCDs in Kenya and the possibilities for international cooperation to strengthen national NCD prevention and control programmes. The forum also aimed to provide an opportunity to deliberate on key Kenyan positions pertaining to NCDs in light of the upcoming High level UN Summit to be held in New York in September, which will mainly focus on NCDs.

In his keynote remarks the Prime Minister commended the Health Ministries for their leadership in advancing the agenda of NCD prevention and control. He underlined the fact that the country was now realizing the burden of NCDs, which account for more than 50% of the

national mortality and approximately 55% of all hospital admissions.

The Prime Minister called on the global community to support funding mechanisms for the control and prevention of NCDs. He also urged the participants to come up with clear national commitments and directions, and to find a consensus on a multi-sectoral approach in tackling NCDs. Honourable Odinga called for the prioritization of more health education on the risk factors and prevention of NCDs.

Speaking at the same occasion, the Minister for Medical Services, Hon. Anyang' Nyong'o underlined the challenges of NCDs in the country, including the low investments in this area.

Dr. Abdoulie Jack, the WHO Representative stated the consequences of NCDs, responsible for over 60% of

all deaths worldwide. Dr. Jack urged the Government to help in reversing the NCDs epidemic and prevent unhealthy behaviors, which lie beyond the direct control of the Ministries of Health. "NCD prevention is therefore an all-government responsibility. Considerably, more gains can be achieved by influencing policies of non-health sectors than by health policies alone," noted Dr. Jack.

The Forum provided an opportunity for members of the media and public to raise questions and have inputs during an open discussion. In addition, a field trip to Kenyatta National and Aga Khan University Hospitals was organized for participants to familiarize themselves with the medical services offered by the referral hospitals in the areas of NCDs.

USA Graduate explores 'cooking from garbage' in Kibera



Women using the community cookers. (R) Mr. Henry Ndede and Ms. Emah Madegwa of UNEP, with Mr. Marshal Pang during his visit to the UN Headquarters, Gigiri. © UNEP,2011

Volunteerism as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary is "an act that is done out of one's free will without constraint or compulsion".

In August 2011, Mr. Marshal

Pang, a young man born and raised in Jinan, China, chose to volunteer with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Mr. Pang, a Bachelor of Science graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Madison,

USA, sought an opportunity to work with the Community Cooker project in Kibera, which is one of UNEP's most successful practical actions implemented in partnership with Planning Systems Services Ltd.

Located in Laini Saba of the Kibera informal settlements, the Community Cooker project has attracted international attention and recognition, winning awards from the World Architecture Festival. From October 14, 2011 until January 2012, the Community Cooker will be on display at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, through the Smithsonian Institute and Museums.

Since its inception in 2005, communities in Kibera have identified this cooker as the most practical approach in improving their surroundings. They use the cooker to clean the environment of heaps of rubbish to generate useful energy for cooking, baking and water-heating.

With a distinction in Mathematics,

Economics and Business Studies, Mr. Pang used this specialty and understanding to assess the financial feasibility and direct economic benefits of building community cookers. He was able to create a simple savings calculator tool to visualize the economic benefits and financial indicators for potential community cooker projects.

Mr. Pang says “this experience helped me have a better understanding of the energy industry in Kenya, and has provided me with an opportunity of working with teams from diverse backgrounds”. As he goes back to the USA, where he has secured a job as a Strategy Analyst at the Johnson Controls Inc., Mr. Pang hopes to share his experience of the community cooker at his new work place.

A recipient of the Leadership Certificate from the University of Wisconsin –Madison, for his involvement in various student organizations, Mr. Pang hopes that with the help of the Chinese Government and organizations such as UNEP, he can make a difference for the Chinese people. When he goes back to China, he envisions starting social enterprises using the expertise and networks acquired during his Kenyan experience.

Indeed, Mr. Pang was grateful to UNEP and the Community Cooker Foundation for having accorded him a unique opportunity through which he made his modest contribution in protecting the environment.

Second Africa Governance and Leadership Convention held

Second Africa Governance and Leadership Convention held The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – Kenya and the Kenya Institute of Management held the 2nd Africa Governance, Leadership and Management Convention in Mombasa from 2 to 5 August 2011. The convention was a roundtable of the private and public sectors on the continent and sought to raise awareness on issues of governance, leadership and its impact on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Africa. The theme was “Harnessing Business Growth and Human Development in the 21st Century in Africa: Claiming the Second Decade.”

Speaking during the convention Dr. Gettu the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa Director, reiterated the role that the MDGs have played in poverty reduction in Africa. He further called on African leaders to continue championing human development even beyond the year 2015. “Beyond 2015, the MDGs agenda should take into consideration developments in the post 1990s. This includes issues of climate change and the need to



Dr. Gettu converses with former Nigerian President Obasanjo at the convention

green human development; the jobless increase that is making growth non-inclusive and non-equitable; several shocks and vulnerabilities such as the frequent food and fuel price hikes and the global financial crisis. Addressing shocks and vulnerabilities and how to make national economies more resilient is very important in the post 2015

agenda.”

Other speakers at the conference included former presidents Olusegun Obasanjo, of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Thabo Mbeki, of South Africa, as well as Mr. Aeneas Chuma, the UNDP Kenya Resident Representative. The convention attracted leaders from governments,

private sector, International NGOs and the United Nations. The convention was conceived as a private sector driven initiative to generate dialogue among key private sector players, while at the same time giving the sector on the continent a forum in which it can collectively dialogue with public sector leaders and policy makers on pertinent issues in governance, leadership and management in Africa.

The Mombasa convention was built around the theme of Africa claiming the second decade of the 21st century. This theme of the meeting was encapsulated in the rather rhetorical question, 'Can Africa Claim the Next Decade?' It is to be recalled that at the start of the millennium, the continent was upbeat about the 21st century as Africa's century. Leading African statesmen like former Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo,

Thabo Mbeki and Abudulaye Wade of Senegal led the continent in the clarion call of the African Renaissance. They were joined by World Bank President James Wolfenson and IMF Chief Executive, Horst Kohler, to energize the continent in the hope that the 21st century belonged to Africa, provided that it did the right.

