Preventative yellow fever vaccination campaign reaches over 8 million people, WHO

The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and the UN Children’s Agency (UNICEF) launched from 10-29 March a large-scale yellow fever vaccination campaign reaching over 8 million people between 9 months and 60 years in Blue Nile, Sennar and El Gezira states. The campaign had initially targeted over 8.3 million people in the three states.

The campaign was critical in Sudan’s ongoing work to protect all populations against yellow fever epidemics, in alignment with the global Eliminate Yellow Fever Epidemics (EYE) Strategy. Sudan plans to complement the yellow fever mass campaigns—of which this was the third to final—and ensure long-term protection with the introduction of yellow fever vaccinations into routine immunizations in the coming months.

“We acknowledge the commitment of the health authorities in Sudan to avail cash and fuel during this economic crisis to ensure that Sudanese people, especially children, are protected with a quality vaccine, which would contribute to health security and making the world safer,” said Dr. Naeema Al Gasseer, WHO Representative in Sudan. “Yellow fever vaccine is the most important tool we have to prevent yellow fever outbreaks. The vaccine will be freely available to any eligible person and will provide life-long protection against the disease. While protecting yourself against mosquito bites is important to reduce the risk of many diseases, only vaccination can eliminate the risk of yellow fever outbreaks,” she added.

Yellow fever is a viral disease that is transmitted by female Aedes Aegypti mosquitoes. Its infection can cause fatal illness, including jaundice and death, and can spread rapidly locally and internationally, especially in densely populated areas like cities. However, the disease can be prevented by a single dose of a highly effective and safe vaccine.

Sudan is at high risk of the spread of yellow fever disease due to a combination of climate and ecology, and because there are still
areas where people have low immunity to the disease. Recent years have seen global changes in the epidemiology of yellow fever, with outbreaks occurring in areas that were not previously assessed as high risk.

“We are observing a changing nature of yellow fever disease dynamics. It is very important that every eligible person in this campaign receives the vaccine to protect themselves, their families and their communities,” said Professor Dr Babkir Kabaloo, Undersecretary of the Federal Ministry of Health in Sudan. “The current campaign represents one of the final phases in the ministry’s efforts to protect the entire nation against yellow fever. This phase of the campaign covered Blue Nile, El Gezira, and Sennar states. In coming months, the remaining states of Khartoum, Northern and River Nile will also be covered, completing the protection of the entire Sudan population,” he added.

Sudan health authorities and partners are working to introduce yellow fever vaccine in the national immunization schedule soon. This will help ensure the protection of all population against this fatal but preventable disease.

CERF provides $26.4 million to respond to life-saving humanitarian needs in Sudan

The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) released US$26.4 million to respond to urgent life-saving humanitarian needs in Sudan. This includes funds for food security and livelihoods, nutrition, health, as well as water, sanitation and hygiene sectors, targeting an estimated 805,000 people in 19 prioritized localities across seven states over six months. Protection assistance will be mainstreamed across all sectors and sector lead agencies and partners will incorporate into their programming the specific needs of women, children and other vulnerable groups affected by the worsening economic situation and food insecurity. This CERF allocation will support:

1) Provision of emergency agricultural and livestock inputs and targeted training to improve small-scale agro-pastoral production for 98,000 food insecure families (570,000 people);

2) Nutrition screening and treatment of severe and moderate acute malnutrition among children and pregnant and lactating women, including though inpatient treatment of cases with complications, supplementary feeding, and infant and young child feeding counselling of caregivers;

3) Provision of essential primary and critically underfunded primary healthcare services, including maternal, child and reproductive health services, benefitting some 320,000 people through distribution of medical supplies and equipment for 65 health facilities across targeted localities. Training of local healthcare professionals and community health volunteers, and integrated mobile health services with health promotion outreach and referrals;

4) Provision of safe drinking water and essential sanitation and hygiene services to 805,000 people through emergency rehabilitation and construction of water points and latrines, water quality testing, distribution of hygiene kits, hygiene promotion and waste management campaigns, and vector control activities

This CERF allocation will be complemented by the ongoing Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SHF) Standard Allocation of $21 million, which will jointly target the prioritized localities.
ensuring strategic synergies with the CERF funds. While CERF will focus on pipeline commodities, SHF will be allocated more to service delivery to vulnerable populations.

**CERF** is one of the fastest and most effective ways to ensure that urgently needed humanitarian assistance reaches people caught up in crises. Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2005 as the United Nations global emergency response fund, CERF enables humanitarian responders to deliver life-saving assistance whenever and wherever crises strike.

**Effect of fuel and cash shortages on humanitarian operations in Sudan**

Humanitarian operations in various parts of the country continue to be affected by fuel and cash shortages.

In Central Darfur, leaders of internally displaced persons (IDP) in Zalingei reported that their crops had wilted because they could not irrigate their farms as they are unable to run their water pumps due to diesel fuel shortages. The IDP leaders indicated that if the fuel shortage in Zalingei persists, they would lose their crop harvest and IDPs in Zalingei and Jebel Marra (about 244,000 people) will need both food and livelihood assistance. The current IDP caseload for WFP’s general food distributions (GFD) for Zalingei and Jebel Marra is currently about 186,300 people.

The Central Darfur State Ministry of Production and Economic Resources (SMoP & ER) carried out an assessment of winter cultivated land (irrigated farms) and the small farms, including IDP farms, around Zalingei IDP camps. SMoP & ER is currently working with the farmers union to register all small farmers and to ensure that farmers are able to access fuel supplies/allocations on a regular basis.

**Fuel shortages affect water supply in Hameedia IDP camp, Central Darfur**

IDP leaders in Hameedia IDP camp—which hosts about 50,000 people—in Zalingei, capital of Central Darfur State, reported shortages in the water supply in the camp since January due to shortages of diesel fuel needed to run the water pumping stations. About 50 per cent of the water supply in Hameedia IDP camp comes from fuel-operated water pumping stations; 48 per cent comes from three solar water pumping systems; and 2 per cent comes from eight hand pumps. Aid organizations operating in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector (WASH) are working with the government’s Water and Environmental Sanitation department (WES) to resolve the issue and ensure a sustainable fuel supply for all IDP camps in the state. Shortages to clean water can increase the risk of water-borne and poor hygiene related diseases.

**Fuel and cash shortages continue to impact refugee response, UNHCR**

Cash shortages, reported since November 2018, continue and are resulting in delays in the implementation of refugee assistance projects in all refugee locations—especially for procurement and monitoring activities—as well as in the implementation of cash-based interventions (CBI), according to UNHCR. The situation is compounded by rising inflation and ongoing fuel shortages. Water system functionality has been the hardest hit, with generators at pumping stations unable to run due to the lack of diesel fuel. As for CBIs,
UNHCR has been trying different delivery mechanisms to address the liquidity issue, including ATM and delivering cash.

**WFP facing funding shortages for cash-based food and nutrition interventions**

The World Food Programme (WFP) is facing severe funding shortages for its emergency cash transfer programmes, which benefits approximately 350,000 vulnerable IDPs and refugees, and is funded through June 2019. These shortages are affecting WFP’s ability to provide emergency food assistance and nutrition services to people affected by shocks—including IDPs and people affected by conflict and natural disasters. Despite commitments made at the Grand Bargain, donor earmarking and interest in supporting cash-based programming has resulted in funding gaps in essential activities, including emergency cash transfers and the prevention of moderate and acute malnutrition.

Without increased financial support for these activities, WFP will be forced to scale back cash programming, reduce coverage and transfer values, and will need to shift to the provision of in-kind food as a last resort. WFP has worked with several banks in Sudan to secure cash assistance for the most vulnerable, overcoming liquidity shortages in-country. Cash programming has the potential to address humanitarian and development needs in Sudan, empower affected populations, and support the recovery of local markets.

**FAO/GIEWS highlights bumper harvest amid high food prices**

The 2018 cropping season has recorded a bumper harvest as a result of abundant and well-distributed seasonal rains and due to increased plantings encouraged by an early onset of seasonal rains, and by very high prevailing market prices, according to the latest issue of the Sudan Country Brief by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS). The findings of the Government-led annual Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission (CFSAM) indicate that the aggregate cereal production in Sudan is estimated at 8.2 million tonnes, 57 per cent up from the reduced 2017 output and 30 per cent above the previous five-year average.

**Record millet harvest in Darfur**

The most significant increase in planted and harvested area was recorded in the traditional rain-fed agricultural areas in Darfur, where security improvements allowed a substantial number of IDPs to return to their home areas and to engage in agricultural activities, according to the GIEWS/FAO report. In addition, the increased soil fertility of the fields left uncropped for several years benefited yields. As a result, the 2018 millet production reached a record of 2.3 million tonnes in Darfur, a key millet producing area accounting for more than 60 per cent of the average aggregated yearly output.

**Cereal Crop Calendar – FAO/GIEWS**

*Source: FAO*
Cereal prices high despite bumper harvest

Increasing prices of agricultural inputs and fuel, due to foreign currency shortages, devaluation of the local currency and high inflation have severely raised agricultural production costs, especially in semi-mechanized rainfed areas and in irrigated schemes. The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) of Sudan reported that the inflation rate reached almost 73 per cent in December, then sharply reduced to 43 per cent in January 2019 and was at 44 per cent in February 2019. FEWS NET reported in its February-September 2019 Food Security Outlook for Sudan that this decline in inflation rate is attributed to decreased food and beverage prices and is therefore considered highly debatable.

Table: Sudan Cereal Production – FAO/GIEWS

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tonnes</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorghum</td>
<td>4,776</td>
<td>3,863</td>
<td>4,953</td>
<td>28.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Millet</td>
<td>1,030</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>2,647</td>
<td>201.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,388</td>
<td>5,265</td>
<td>8,283</td>
<td>57.3</td>
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In addition, some large-scale traders are holding onto their stocks, as this is regarded as a more reliable form of saving than keeping sums of fast devaluing Sudanese Pounds and widespread shortage of cash, which is hindering consumer market purchases, GIEWS/FAO update reported. Despite the bumper cereal harvest, the availability of cereals in the market is low and except for limited declines in millet prices in January and February, prices of cereals continued the upward trend that began in late 2017. In February, prices of sorghum, millet and wheat grain were at near record to record levels in most monitored markets and up to twice their year-earlier values, the report said.

According to the results of the latest IPC analysis, from January to March 2019, about 5.76 million people were estimated to be severely food insecure (IPC Phase 3: “Crisis” and Phase 4: “Emergency”). The food insecure caseload remained firm between October and December 2018 during the harvesting period and the current post-harvest period, despite the bumper 2018 cereal production, as low market availability and high cereal prices are constraining food access for large segments of the population. There are major concerns, particularly for most vulnerable households in conflict-affected areas in Darfur and in Blue Nile and South Kordofan states and for newly food insecure people in urban and peri-urban areas of Khartoum State, according to GIEWS/FAO.

Over 846,000 South Sudanese refugees registered in Sudan

The number of South Sudanese refugees in Sudan stands at 847,923 people, of whom 8,835 arrived in 2019, reports the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in their 31 March update. As of end March, UNHCR and Sudan’s Commission of Refugees (COR) registered 407,583 refugees.

The majority of arrivals in 2019 have taken refuge in East Darfur, followed by West Kordofan, South Darfur, South Kordofan, and White Nile States. New refugee arrivals in East Darfur and West Kordofan are arriving from Aweil area in Northern Bahr el Ghazal State in South Sudan, citing violence, food insecurity and

1 Additional sources estimate that there are up to 1.3 million South Sudanese refugees in Sudan; however, this data requires verification, says UNHCR
2 The remaining 438,906 were registered by the Sudanese Directorate of Passports and Immigration (IPP).
a lack of livelihoods and health services as key drivers for them to cross the border into Sudan. New arrivals to South Kordofan are coming from South Sudan’s Upper Nile State also cite violence and a lack of livelihoods as their reasons for crossing. Inter-agency partners have planned for 50,000 new arrivals in Sudan by the end of the year.

**WFP introduces cash-based assistance program for refugees in East Darfur**

WFP has introduced its first cash-based food assistance programme for refugees in Sudan, through which 15,147 South Sudanese refugees (4,578 households) in Al Nimir and El Ferdous camps (East Darfur) received hybrid-multipurpose cash assistance. The programme provides beneficiaries with a monthly total of US$21 each, intended for food and non-food needs as well as accompanying in-kind cereal rations. The combined package of in-kind food and cash has reduced refugees’ need to sell their food rations to cover their other basic needs and dietary preferences, enhancing their self-reliance and dignity while improving nutrition, food security outcomes and access to other basic non-food items.

**Efforts to tackle GBV and sexual, reproductive health concerns in West and North Darfur**

Between 10-25 March, the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) and its implementing partners in North Darfur and West Darfur trained 60 social workers on gender-based violence (GBV) aspects and the provision of psychosocial and referral support to victims of GBV reaching 3,500 targeted community members through this training. During the training, 17 GBV-related cases were identified and referred to qualified care services. In addition, UNFPA established five confidential corners in El Fasher and Kutum in North Darfur; El-Geneina, Mornei and Sellea localities in West Darfur. Moreover, 25 clinical management of rape (CMR) kits were distributed to all primary and referral facilities to ensure the accessibility and availability of health services for GBV survivors. Twenty-five medical personnel received trainings on health system response and integration of the services to meet the needs of GBV victims.

These activities are part of efforts of UNFPA and its partners to provide GBV prevention and response services to survivors through integrated activities and wide coverage jointly with government and non-government organizations. The trainings on integrated, multi-sectorial approach to GBV survivors are part of the consolidated efforts of UNFPA and local partners to enhance resilience of the communities and health system in establishing GBV prevention and protection mechanisms at the level of system and societies. Increasing the involvement of the health sector is a step forward towards qualified services in eliminating of the health and psychosocial consequences of the sexual violence.
According to the most recent report by the UN Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), there are still gaps in the management of GBV cases, including the need for psychosocial support and community awareness-raising in Darfur. The SG’s report said that in Central Darfur, protection issues included killings, abductions, sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, robbery, assaults and harassment, in particular in the areas of Golo, Nertiti and Zalingei. A total of 16 incidents involving some 100 civilians were recorded, the report said. Sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, remains a serious concern for women in the greater Jebel Marra area, according to the SG’s report.

UNHAS flies to new destinations in Sudan

In 2019, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) in Sudan has introduced new and additional locations to ensure coverage across a range of areas. These new locations include Al Leit (North Darfur State), Dilling, Kadugli, Abu Jubaiha (South Kordofan State), Kassala (Kassala State) and Ed Damazine (Blue Nile State). UNHAS will also fly to Dalami and Talodi in South Kordofan upon request.

With a fleet of six airframes, which consist of three fixed-wing aircraft and three helicopters, UNHAS provides air services to humanitarian and development workers, enabling them access to the most remote and hard to reach places across the country.

In 2018, UNHAS Sudan transported 22,544 passengers, 86 metric tons of light cargo and carried out 12 medical and/or security evacuations. A total of 63 NGOs and 17 UN agencies benefited from its reliable and safe flights to 39 locations across the country to serve vulnerable populations who are in urgent need of assistance.

UNHAS was established in Sudan in 2004 with the aim of providing air services to the humanitarian, diplomatic and donor communities in the country. It is run by a steering committee comprised of representatives from UN agencies, NGOs and donors, but directly managed by WFP Sudan.