**Message from the UN RC/HC**

Christine N. Umutoni, UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator

The beginning of 2016 marked the onset of the new development agenda, the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will spearhead development for the next fifteen years. The Government of the State of Eritrea (GoSE) has endorsed and committed to these goals, asserting that the SDGs are in line with the country’s development agenda, and these will be built into future programmes between the GoSE and the UN.

2016 has also seen preparations undertaken between the UN and the GoSE for the new Strategic Partnership Cooperation Framework (SPCF) that will cover the period 2017 - 2021. The SPCF is a programme document between the GoSE and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) that describes the collective actions and strategies of the United Nations to the achievement of national development. A consultative meeting between the UN and GoSE implementing partners was held in early May in Asmara and a draft version of the new joint framework is currently being discussed.

To enhance partnerships, the UN has also welcomed a number of missions this year including Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, who visited in January and was kindly hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Other missions include those from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Global Fund.

Further, the UN has established the Eritrea Development Partners Forum (EDPF) with the aim of strengthening development coordination and cooperation amongst partners in Eritrea. The first session of the EDPF took place in Asmara in May 2016. This year was also a milestone for UNDP as it turned 50 and UNICEF as it turned 70. One partner, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) also celebrated its 25th anniversary.

In this, the second issue of the UN in Eritrea newsletter, the UN shares news of its events this year including the UNDP at 50 celebrations in Zoba Anseba, the 22nd Remembrance of the Genocide in Rwanda and drug safety training convened in April by WHO and the Ministry of Health. This issue also highlights some of the projects the UN is implementing in 2016 in Eritrea, as well as community impact for example supporting livestock production in Eritrea, establishing early locust warning systems and UNICEF support to children by providing donkeys for transport to schools. Finally, April saw a celebratory moment for a group of 37 Somali refugees upon arrival in Slovakia, on their way to resettlement in the USA, after 16 years in Umkelu refugee camp near Massawa. The UN wishes them well as they transition and settle in their new lives.

As we progress through 2016, I encourage each one of us to reflect on the successes of the MDGs and to strive to achieve further success with the promotion and implementation of the SDGs in Eritrea. I would like to remind everyone once again that our aim is that “no one will be left behind.”

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**International Conference on Eritrean Studies held in Asmara**

27 July 2016, Asmara, Eritrea. Over 500 academics, policy-makers, journalists and diplomats from Eritrea and around the world attended the International Conference on Eritrean Studies (ICES), which was held in Asmara, Eritrea on 20-22 July 2016. The conference was jointly sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea and the United Nations Development Programme in Eritrea. This three-day international conference sought to expand international scholarship on Eritrea, strengthen academic links between Eritrean and international scholars as well as academic institutions, and increase the provision and dissemination of research and balanced information on Eritrea.

His Excellency Yemane Gebremeskel, Minister of Information for the State of Eritrea, opened the conference and highlighted the importance of the event in furthering research and scholarship on Eritrean studies. The ICES in Asmara was organized by the Eritrean National Commission for Higher Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Research and Documentation Centre and the Eritrean Strategic Studies Centre. Over three days, scholars and policy-makers presented research and policy papers on a wide range of cross-cutting themes including Eritrea’s foreign policy and regional relations, its post-independence national development, arts and culture, Eritrean history and archaeology and the origins and emergence of Eritrean nationalism.

After three days of intense deliberations, the UN’s Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Ms. Christine N. Umutoni, addressed the closing ceremony and congratulated the conference organisers for a successful event and thanked participants “for sharing their knowledge and fascinating perspectives on Eritrea”, which she said had “enriched our appreciation of the country”. She supported the idea that the ICES be held regularly and pledged the UN’s continued support.

His Excellency Osman Saleh, Minister of Foreign Affairs for the State of Eritrea, closed the conference with a final address in which he thanked scholars and applauded the intellectual range of papers presented and underlined the importance of academic research in order to reveal fact-based evidence. He concluded by announcing that the Government of the State of Eritrea would support further conferences and initiatives like the ICES.
On 21 and 22 January 2016, UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator and UNDP Representative in Eritrea and Africa I Division of UN Department of Political Affairs, convened a meeting between members of the UN Country Team in Eritrea and its HQ counterparts from New York and Geneva. The UN Development Group Regional Directors Focal Point for Eritrea also joined via VTC from Nairobi for the opening session. The two-day meeting was hosted by the UNDP in its Regional Hub in Istanbul.

The meeting was warmly welcomed by the Deputy Secretary-General, whose message to the meeting was read by Ms. Ayaka Suzuki, Officer-in-Charge of Africa I Division of DPA: "I learned with great appreciation about this meeting bringing together the UNCT and UN Headquarters to discuss and strategize on the UN System's engagement with Eritrea." The Deputy Secretary-General encouraged and commended the spirit of cooperation, which enables the UN to meaningfully contribute to the Government's efforts of advancing the well-being of people of Eritrea …by drawing on the full breadth of the Organization's mandates: political, developmental, humanitarian and human rights.

The meeting is an example of the UN 'delivering as one', and was a culmination of a three year process of ensuring system coherence in a complex country and regional context. This was acknowledged by Christine N. Umutoni, UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Eritrea who noted that "while the peace and development challenges in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea regions continue to multiply, the UN System has grown more able to respond to our requests to ensure that we are able to support the Government in responding to the needs of its people." Highlighting prevention as a key recommendation of the 2015 report of the High Level Panel on Peace Operations, the participants committed to working with all partners and countries in the region to prevent an escalation of conflicts in the Horn of Africa and contribute to resolving the existing conflicts in this volatile region.

The participants reflected on the ongoing dialogue and engagement between the UN system and the Government of the State of Eritrea in the context of the 2013-2016 Strategic Partnership Cooperation Framework and discussed how best to support the forthcoming 2017-2021 Cooperation Framework. Mr. Suleiman Braimoh, UNICEF Representative in Asmara highlighted the "need to continue dialogue as partners" to ensure that our engagement meets the country's priorities as well as priorities of the UN System of peace, development and human dignity.
The United Nations in Eritrea organized an event on 25th April 2016 in Eritrea’s capital, Asmara to mark the 22nd commemoration of the Genocide in Rwanda. The event was attended by Government officials, the cycling “Team Rwanda”, members of the diplomatic community, UN staff, the media and friends of Rwanda. A Kwibuka (remembrance) short film, “Remember, Unite, Renew” was shown, and thereafter guests observed a moment of silence.

The 2016 global commemoration is under the theme “Fighting Genocide Ideology”. While presenting her speech, the UN Resident/ Humanitarian Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Ms. Christine N. Umutoni said that this year’s theme reminded us that by fighting the genocide ideology and preserving the history of the genocide, we are fighting impunity, thus guarding against recurrence of genocide. “One of the main reasons why we have a UN International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda, is because each and every one of us has an important responsibility, not only to ensure peace in our time, but for our children and successive generations.”

Ms. Umutoni also read the message by the UN Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-moon, which was issued on the International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda, 7th April 2016. In his Message, Mr. Ki-moon said that this day is about remembering all who perished in the genocide and renew our resolve to prevent such atrocities from ever being repeated anywhere in the world. At the same time, he cautioned that genocide is not a single event but a process that takes time and preparation, and that history has repeatedly demonstrated that no part of the world is immune. In his message, Mr. Ki-moon also advised that everyone must promote inclusion, dialogue and the rule of law to establish peaceful and just societies.

“For Eritrea, commemoration of the Rwanda Genocide brings very strong memories. Although we were not in Rwanda during the genocide, we were there immediately afterwards and witnessed the devastation.” Said Mr. Yemane Gebreab, Head of Political Affairs (PFDJ). He underlined the importance of keeping alive the memory of the Rwanda Genocide, all other genocides and mass atrocities in the world.

The Master of Ceremonies, Mr. Clever Maputseni, drew attention to the role of youth and sports in national unity and invited Coach Jonathan Boyer and Mr. Obed Ruvogera from cycling “Team Rwanda” to share their experiences. Coach Boyer said that Team Rwanda was not just about sports. “It has to do with reconciliation and bringing peace to the nation through our riders. Sports brings people together and is a good tool for unity. I witnessed evidence of this team breaking down barriers and bringing reconciliation and healing to every single one of our riders who has faced tragedy in their lives.”

Mr. Obed Ruvogera was 15 years old when the genocide happened. He saw dreadful things and lived in the forest for three months. “While racing, you are like an ambassador, when you meet people they don’t ask you how is racing? They ask you, how is Rwanda? Today we do not identify ourselves as Tutsi, Hutu or Twa, we are one Rwanda. We are using sports to change history. About the genocide, we say….. never again.”

Led by Ms. Umutoni, the guests lit candles in memory of the victims of the 1994 Rwanda genocide. To conclude, Ambassador Zemende Teckle, Commissioner of Culture and Sports in Eritrea, thanked the guests and closed the Kwibuka 22 event.
The road to the village of Himbirti on the outskirts of Asmara passes through numerous traditional Eritrean village homes built of stone. In one of these homes, sits 13-year old Benhur Ermias, quiet and observant, this gentle young boy listens attentively as questions are posed to him. Benhur is both slightly physically and mentally disabled, a condition he was born with and one for which he takes medication.

Over steaming cups of spiced tea and home-baked bread, the family speaks openly about the difficulties that Benhur has faced. Among these challenges was the difficulty he had going to school. Without any other means of transport, Benhur would be assisted by his father on the one-hour-long walk to the Fre Tsama Elementary School. The journey, in the baking sun and on uneven roads, was a difficult and time-consuming daily exercise.

Help arrived through the support of UNICEF and the Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare. With funding from the Swiss National Committee of UNICEF, the Donkey for School programme was established in 2010. The programme works to support disabled children, who are among the most vulnerable members of society, to be able to go to schools that are otherwise inaccessible owing to their disabilities.

Despite the challenges, this determined young boy attends a mainstream school which he enjoys and, according to his father, “he never misses.”

Beaming, his proud mother Selam, informs that Benhur was placed 7th in his 4th Grade class last year. This is a notable accolade when considering he attends a school that does not cater specifically for children with disabilities. Listening to his parents, it is clear that Ermias is in a home filled with love and support.

His father, Ermias Yacob is a former school teacher who is currently unemployed and money is scarce for the family. Having the donkey has been a great asset to the family as Benhur now has a means of getting to school in far less time and in greater comfort. Furthermore, when not taking Ermias to school, the donkey is used by the family to fetch water. It is clear that the provision of a donkey to this family in December 2014 has contributed to this academic success. From a one-hour difficult walk, Benhur now has a far easier ten-minute commute to his much-loved school.

Watching Benhur riding his donkey to school, it is clear that through a combination of compassion and innovation, the Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare and UNICEF are able to make education a reality for those who would otherwise not have this fundamental opportunity.

About the Project:

In Eritrea, there are an estimated 23,205 children with disabilities, and less than 10 per cent have access to education. Since the inception of the project in 2010, 1800 donkeys and accessories were provided as a form of social reintegration measure for disabled and vulnerable children.
The East African Advanced Course on Pharmacovigilance was held in Asmara, Eritrea from 10th to 16th April 2016 under the theme “Developing Proactive Pharmacovigilance and Risk Management Strategies in East Africa”. This course brought together 81 participants from 10 African countries acting in their individual capacities as experts and/or stakeholders in pharmacovigilance (PV) in Africa and six countries from Asia, USA and Europe.

On Monday 11th April, H. E. Amina Nurhussien, Honorable Minister of Health, in her opening speech to which senior government and Peoples Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) officials and Ambassadors were present, said that Eritrea is proud to host such an important course that gives priority to the health of the public. The Eritrean Pharmacovigilance Centre is among the functional and successful Pharmacovigilance Centers in Africa.

For the past few years the Eritrean Pharmacovigilance Center has been working with different strategies to harmonize the Pharmacovigilance program, enhance the detection and reporting rate of drug related problems and improve quality management systems. As a result, Eritrea has been rated among the top reporting countries in Africa with high completeness grading of the individual case safety reports submitted to the global database. Her Excellency the Honorable Minister highlighted also that Adverse Drug Reactions (ADRs) have become the main cause for morbidity and mortality in developing countries due to the lack of a drug regulatory system. In view of this, she expressed gratefulness for organizing this timely course that will help countries in the region and beyond to develop institutional capacity for monitoring and finding a common understanding for mitigating medication errors; and control falsified and substandard medicines.

This advanced course was organized in partnership with the Ministry of Health and WHO. In this respect, Dr. Josephine Namboze, WHO Representative to Eritrea, in her remarks at the opening of the course expressed her confidence that the meeting would give new vigour to pharmacovigilance in Eritrea and the region. Eliciting the importance of Pharmacovigilance, she underscored the prominence of integrating it into other public health programs and investing significant effort towards improving communication with health care professionals, patients and the communities at large to convey accurate information about medicines and how to optimize drug safety.

On Sunday 10th April, 2016 a pre-course meeting was facilitated with the participants to assess and tailor the scope and depth of the topics and to optimize the expected needs of the audience. Guided and facilitated by internationally renowned and qualified experts and key note speakers from WHO and other educators, the course objectives set for the week were successfully achieved.

The one week meeting also held a half day symposium titled “Way forward for accelerating Pharmacovigilance Harmonization in East and Horn of Africa: Challenges and Opportunities”. After very lively discussions in the presence of the Minister of Health of Eritrea, Hon. Mrs. Amina Nurhussien and the WHO Country Representative for Eritrea, Dr Josephine Namboze, the satellite symposium came out with six summarized action points aiming for a Pan-African harmonization of pharmacovigilance.

At the end of the course, participating countries present expressed their pleasure and satisfaction at the professional content of the meeting and at the generous and friendly hospitality of the Eritrean Ministry of Health.
ASMARA, Eritrea, 2nd May (UNHCR) – A group of 37 Somali refugees arrived in Slovakia from Eritrea on 14th April on their way for eventual resettlement in the United States, with the help of UNHCR, the Office of Refugee Affairs (ORA) and the International Organization of Migration (IOM). The group takes the total of Somali refugees relocated this year to 281. They include 132 to Australia, 58 to Slovakia and 54 to Canada.

Among them were 52-year-old Shukri Abdi Quasim, his wife and four children, who fled to Eritrea 19 years ago from the town of Luuq, in the Somali province of Gedo, to escape ethnic and clan conflict. They had been living in refugee camps since their arrival.

Shukri and his family were among the first Somalis to arrive in Eritrea the 1990s, most of them from southern Somalia. The family belongs to the Marehan sub-clan of the Darod clan.

Finding permanent solutions for the Somalis in Eritrea has been a priority for UNHCR, as has been improving conditions and promoting self-reliance in Umkulu Camp. Small-scale livelihood schemes have been implemented over the years to help sustain the refugees.

Basic services provided are food, primary health care, education, water and sanitation. Livelihood projects have ranged from animal husbandry to small businesses, computer skills training and other small ventures.

Shukri was first interviewed as a potential resettlement candidate in 2008. At the time, more than 3,400 refugees were assessed. They had been in the camp for more than 20 years on average. Shukri and his family were among the lucky few chosen for inclusion in the latest group for resettlement. All the families being resettled from Eritrea undergo cultural orientation classes in the camp before arriving in Asmara for departure. There they complete medical screening and emigration procedures.

After receiving international travel documents provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross, Shukri and his family entered Slovakia with six-month visas issued by the Slovak embassy in Nairobi. They are awaiting a final interview with a U.S. consular official and further medical checks, before their destination in the United States is determined.

Although their final destination was still uncertain, Shukri remained optimistic. "I am not afraid," he said. "I know that everything will be just fine."
The celebrations for UNDP@50 took place in Anseba, one of the six regions of Eritrea on the 5th and 6th of May 2016. The event was planned in partnership with Zoba Anseba administration, the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the Ministry of Land, Water and Environment (MoLWE).

The event highlighted partnerships for development. In attendance were Government officials, representatives from the diplomatic missions in Eritrea (China, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, USA, and the European Union), representatives from the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS), Habero community, UN officials and Media.

The field visits were an opportunity to showcase UNDP in action through project site tours and engagement with communities. One of the projects, the ‘Youth employment skills project’ is a nationwide project that has been empowering youth by equipping them with skills for work. The visit in Keren included a tour of the metal workshop, the wood workshop, display of finished products such as furniture (cupboards and tables) from the woodwork trainees; house fittings (doors and windows) from the metalwork trainees; and furnishings (flower pots and water jars) from the pottery class. Graduate trainees also gave personal testimonies on how the training has changed their lives. The project is implemented by NUEYS and is supported by the Governments of Norway and Japan.

The same evening guests toured Hamelmalo sub-region, one of the two sub-regions where the “Climate change adaptation programme is implemented. A water dam was constructed in Gebsi village and provides water for small scale irrigation projects. Every household also received a cow, 25 chickens and 2 beehives.

The following day participants visited the “Climate change adaptation programme in Habero sub-region, which is located 58 kilometres away from Keren town. The project is supported by the Adaptation Fund (AF) and implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Anseba region. The community benefits from a Minimum Integrated Agricultural Package (MIAP) that includes: Construction of water harvesting facilities along River Anseba, soil erosion control, drought-resistant and early maturing crops, livelihood support systems, community-based early warning system and strengthening of agricultural extension services. During the visit the National Greening Day was also observed by planting trees.

The Minister for Agriculture, H.E. Arefaine Berhe commended the achievements of the projects. “This community not only had food security issues but nutrition as well. The project has boosted livelihoods through the MIAP.” The Minister for Land, Water and Environment, H.E. Tesfai Gebreselassie said the project has addressed the social, economic and environment aspects of development in the region.

One of the guests, the British Ambassador to Eritrea, H.E. Mr. David Ward said that he had witnessed how the communities were dealing with the challenges of climate change and how young people were tackling unemployment issues. “We have seen examples of true resilience and I am already impressed. I wish UNDP a happy 50th anniversary.”
Eritrea is one of the East African countries where desert locusts are a common threat, with almost annual outbreaks leaving the country vulnerable to food insecurity. As a result, the Ministry of Agriculture partnered with FAO and other regional organizations to fight these outbreaks and secure food production and nutrition for farming communities. While controlling locust movements may not be possible, the project is harnessing the power of data science to detect the fluctuations and trajectory of locusts and trigger early response warnings.

FAO, through its Desert Locust Information Service, has been monitoring and forecasting possible threats to food production and to this respect implemented in Eritrea the eLocust3 system. The tool allows national locust officers to record field observations made during survey and control operations and transmit the data to the National Locust Centre in real-time via satellite. This data is the foundation of FAO’s global early warning system. Ministry staff were also trained to use the system to forecast, monitor and evaluate locust movements.

The desert locust, a pest similar to a grasshopper, breeds in the deserts of North Africa and the Near East. Under optimal weather and ecological conditions such as good rains, warm temperatures and green vegetation, they can increase rapidly in numbers and form enormous swarms that can devastate a farmer’s field in a matter of hours.

Because Eritrea is strategically positioned at the gateway to the Horn of Africa, a shared commitment to fighting locust outbreaks has been reached by countries in the region. The Government of Eritrea has prioritized pest control and moved to preventive measures working closely with FAO.

The implementation of eLocust3 is assisting the government to assess the movement and breeding of locusts as part of early warning mechanisms in regions throughout the country. The system uses a small antenna on the vehicle roof to connect to a satellite so that data collected in the field can be transmitted rapidly to the Desert Locust Unit based at the Ministry of Agriculture in Asmara. The data consists of detailed information about the habitat, ecology, weather, locusts, control and safety measures. A recent locust survey confirmed that in January 2016, the number of desert locusts along the 1,200 km Red Sea coastline was at normal levels. Tedros Sium, head of the Desert Locust Unit in the Ministry of Agriculture, said the survey was conducted on the coastal plains between Karora in the north to the port city of Massawa.

“Our survey teams made a total of 416 stops and based on the data we collected and analysed, there are no impeding threats of locust outbreaks.” He added that only low-density copulating solitary adults and isolated maturing solitary adults were detected around the northern town of Mehimet. For this survey, three eLocust3 devices were used to collect and transmit the data. Sium further reiterated that the successful use of the eLocust3 devices for data collection is the result of training and technical support from FAO. The monthly costs of using eLocust3 are covered by the FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region (CRC). “The device provides a cost-effective mechanism that complements traditional data collection and surveillance methods,” he added.

Keith Cressman, Senior Agricultural Officer at FAO, commended the effective management and use of the eLocust3 tool in Eritrea and encouraged other countries in the region to follow suit: “Of the 416 data recorded on the devices, there was not a single error,” said Cressman. In 2014, FAO provided 14 eLocust3 devices and initiated a comprehensive and sustainable training programme to create national master trainers. National field staff were also trained on various aspects of monitoring desert locusts to improve their traditional surveys, reporting and information exchanges by FAO/CRC. The desert locust breeding season in Eritrea lasts from June to September along the western border, while the winter breeding season lasts from October to March on the Red Sea coastal plains in the East. The implementation of the early warning system is a tremendous achievement in the fight against locust plagues not only for Eritrea but also for the region.
Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Kyung-wha Kang visits Eritrea

Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, visited Eritrea from 24 to 27 January 2016. She welcomed the growing opportunities for engagement between the Government and United Nations partners and collaboration in implementing the Strategic Partnership Cooperation Framework (SPCF) 2013-2016. Thanking the authorities for their warm welcome and hospitality, ASG Kang reiterated the readiness of United Nations development and humanitarian actors to work together with the Government towards the speedy conclusion of the SPCF for 2017-2021.

During her visit, ASG Kang met with H.E. Mr. Osman Saleh, Minister for Foreign Affairs; Mr. Yemane Gebreab, Head of Political Affairs of the People’s Front for Democracy and Justice; H.E. Mr. Yemane Gebremeskel, Minister for Information; H.E. Mr. Arfaine Berhe, Minister of Agriculture; H.E. Ms. Amna Nurhusein, Minister of Health; H.E. Mr. Semere Russom, Minister of Education; and H.E. Mr. Kahsay Gerehiwet, Minister of Labour and Human Welfare. She also met with humanitarian, development and donor representatives. The discussions focused on the role of the United Nations and international actors in support of Government endeavours to meet basic needs and build the resilience of the most vulnerable communities in the country.

Together with the Minister of Health, H.E. Ms. Amna Nurhusein, Ms. Kang visited Serejeka and Gashashm in the Maekel region, where she saw Government-led nutrition and basic health programmes that help thousands of children and mothers with the support of UN agencies.

“Programmes that provide supplementary feeding, immunization and nutrition surveillance are vital to reducing malnutrition and building resilience,” said ASG Kang. “Eritrea has made significant progress in improving child and maternal health, and I urge partners to continue supporting national and international efforts.”

CERF Projects targets 550,000 beneficiaries in five regions

Five United Nations agencies and their government implementing partners have provided seeds, animal feed, small ruminants, nutrition supplies and outreach immunization services targeting approximately 550,000 beneficiaries in five regions as well as food and other supplies to refugees at Umkulu Refugee Camp.

The programmes were funded from a US$ 3 million grant allocated to Eritrea by the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for implementation between October 2015 and June 2016 in Southern Red Sea, Northern Red Sea, Gash Barka, Debub and Anseba regions.

All recent CERF interventions have been closely aligned with the Strategic Partnership Cooperation Framework (2013-2016). Since 2006, partners in Eritrea have received US$37.2 million in total from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). The funds have largely been directed towards programmes in nutrition, health, food security, and water, sanitation and hygiene sectors.
UNFPA

Celebration of World Population Day 2016

UNFPA Eritrea celebrated World Population Day 2016 on the 11th of July 2016 in the UN compound under the theme “Investing in teenage girls”. The event brought together UN staff and representatives of implementing partners. Dr. Reginald Chima, UNFPA Representative a.i. opened the event by welcoming all the participants and reading the message of the UNFPA Executive Director, Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin and emphasizing on the right of teenage girls to choose their destiny. He iterated on the fact that each and every one of us has the responsibility to support them to make the right decision and fulfill their potential fully. The next agenda on the programme was a short video show that reflects the problems that young girls are facing related to early marriage and unwanted pregnancies and their consequences. Following that was cutting of the cake where IPs, young girls and Heads of Agencies were invited. As a way of improving UNFPA’s visibility, different UNFPA T-shirts and umbrellas were distributed to participants.

Ambulances handed over to the Ministry of Health

As a continuation of the support that UNFPA provides to the Ministry of Health, the Eritrea Country Office handed over four ambulances in January 2016. Since the start of the 4th Country Programme (2013-2016), UNFPA has provided about 12 Ambulances. During the handing over ceremony, the Representative of UNFPA Eritrea Country Office Mr. Dan Odallo said that the provision of ambulances is expected to influence and increase in the percentage of births attended by skilled health professional and thereby decreasing maternal mortality and morbidity, especially in the hard to reach areas. Mr. Yemane Teadel, the Administration and Finance Director General of the Ministry of Health, on his part, confirmed that the support will significantly contribute to improved access for the general public and particularly pregnant women to health care facilities.

Eritrea Launches the Campaign to End Child Marriage

On June 11, 2016, the Government of the State of Eritrea launched the “End Child Marriage Campaign”. The national launch was coordinated by the Ministry of Health and other partners, including the Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare, the Ministry of Education, the National Union of Eritrean Women, and the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students. The launch was organized in partnership with the African Union Commission through the good offices of the Ministry of foreign Affairs, UNFPA and UNICEF. The launch was attended by senior Government and PFDJ officials, the AU Commissioner for Social Affairs, H.E. Dr. Mustaapha Sidiki Kaloko, UN family, members of the diplomatic corps, religious leaders, members of civil society and local communities, including children and youth. The AU launched the Campaign to End Child Marriage at continental level in Addis Ababa, on 29 May 2014, during the Conference of Ministers of Social Development. Following this, Eritrea has become the 12th African Countries to launch the campaign.
Livestock are the main source of livelihood for subsistence farmers in Eritrea, especially in arid regions of the country where crop cultivation is virtually non-existent. The dominant livestock production system is a traditional extensive system, which involves placing animals in free-range conditions for part or all of their production cycle. Seasonal migrations in the form of pastoral movements and transhumance—the movement of livestock from one grazing ground to another in a season—are quite common, but these movements can enable the spread of serious transboundary animal diseases among the animal populations. Such animal movements have led to cross-border spread of several Transboundary Animal Diseases (TADs), such as sheep and goat pox disease, Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Peste Des Petits Ruminants (PPR). Some of these TADs have become endemic, although they were considered exotic to Eritrea only a few years ago.

The control of TADs requires an effective surveillance system. With support provided by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), necessary diagnostic skills and facilities have been established in Eritrea and subsequently strengthened. The IAEA has not only supported the establishment of fully-equipped molecular and serology laboratories, instituted at Eritrea’s National Animal and Plant Health Laboratory (NAPHL) complex, but has also provided the necessary training to effectively operate the facilities. The equipment provided includes a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) diagnostic system, isothermal diagnostic system, several enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) kits and readers, as well as complementary accessories and reagents.

The project’s implementation has helped Eritrea to dramatically improve its surveillance of transboundary animal diseases. Today, through the Surveillance of Trade Sensitive Diseases (STSD) project funded and coordinated by the African Union-Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), animal disease surveillance is being conducted for selected major TADs and zoonotic diseases such as FMD, CBPP, PPR, rift valley fever (RVF), Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia (CBPP), etc. Furthermore, molecular diagnostics allow the rapid diagnosis for Newcastle disease in chickens and Rift valley fever in ruminants to allow for immediate control activities like vaccination. The NAPHL now processes approximately 14,400 samples annually.

The commendably strong commitment and ownership demonstrated by the Government of Eritrea is ensuring the sustainability of the project outcome, and the equipment is operating with minimal interruptions. It is particularly noteworthy that the Government has provided, and supports the operation of, a standby generator for the laboratory complex, given the acute power shortages faced by the country. It is also noteworthy that a solar photovoltaic system is being installed to power the complex.
Resident Agencies

Non-Resident Agencies