

Fact Sheet

The UN: Making a Positive Impact Around the World

The United Nations and its family of agencies are engaged in a vast array of day-to-day work that dramatically improves people's lives around the world. Across the globe, this is done usually with little fanfare or media attention. The UN's work regularly includes: providing education and immunization to children; promoting human rights and democracy; supplying emergency relief to victims of natural and manmade disasters; combating terrorism; fighting hunger and poverty; offering protection to refugees and victims of conflict; safeguarding the environment; promoting the advancement of women; and clearing landmines.

UN agencies are operating on the frontlines of some of the most challenging humanitarian crises around the world and are helping to support development worldwide. For example, UNICEF supplies vaccines to more than 40% of the world's children; the UN World Food Program annually ships 5.1 million tons of food to 113 million of the world's hungry, including school lunch programs in 72 countries; the UN Development Program supports, on average, one free and democratic election every two weeks somewhere in the world. More examples of the UN's vital work across the globe, listed by category, are detailed below.

Humanitarian Assistance

- In 2007, the UN's refugee agency, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), provided food, shelter, medical aid, and education to more than 25 million people, mostly women and children, which is the highest number ever.
- In **Georgia**, UN humanitarian relief began arriving just four days after the outbreak of hostilities, as UNHCR began chartering airlifts to provide supplies like tents, jerry cans, blankets, and kitchen sets to tens of thousands of displaced persons. The UN World Food Program (WFP) has distributed staples like flour, oil, beans, salt, sugar, bread, and high-energy biscuits to over 115,000 people, with more deliveries scheduled for the coming days.
- The UN's humanitarian and reconstruction projects in **Afghanistan** have been vital in helping the country emerge from years of war and underdevelopment. UN agencies have helped over 5 million refugees return to their homes; provided food and shelter for over 9 million people and basic health kits to 7 million; and built thousands of new schools, enrolling 6 million children.
- The UN has taken the lead in coordinating the international community's response to the vast refugee crisis spawned by the **Iraq** war, which has displaced nearly 2.8 million people internally and over 2 million outside the country, mostly in neighboring Jordan and Syria. UN humanitarian agencies have provided food assistance to 1.1 million malnourished children and their family members; 350,000 pregnant and new mothers; and over 6,400 tuberculosis patients.
- In 2006, despite attacks on humanitarian aid workers, the **WFP fed over 6.1 million people in southern Sudan, Darfur and eastern Chad**. The UN provided water, shelter, health care, and other necessities, thereby reducing deaths among the internally displaced by two-thirds in three years.

- The UN coordinated international humanitarian response to the **2005 South Asia earthquake**. WFP mobilized to deliver food aid to over 1 million of the most vulnerable victims - 400,000 of them living in tents in hard-to-reach, high-altitude areas. WFP provided supplementary feeding programs for 150,000 children under the age of five in collaboration with UNICEF. UNHCR provided well over 2,000 tons of basic survival supplies (tents, blankets, plastic sheets) to more than 3 million people while the World Health Organization (WHO) provided medicine, surgical equipment and medical kits to hundreds of thousands of victims and established hospitals and medical networks to provide relief throughout the winter.
- The UN led the international humanitarian response to the **2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami**. Within 48 hours of the tsunami, the UN was on the ground to provide food, shelter, clean drinking water and life-saving vaccinations to millions of affected people in the 12 countries hit hardest. UNICEF helped more than 6 million women and children with nutrition, sanitation, vaccination and education, while 2.24 million people avoided starvation thanks to the most complex operation in WFP's history.

Health

- Every year, the World Health Organization (WHO) investigates 200 to 250 disease outbreaks. In 2003, **WHO helped stop the spread of SARS before it could reach and infected tens of thousands of people**. WHO is currently coordinating the global response to human avian influenza and monitoring the threat of a possible world-wide pandemic.
- WHO, in partnership with civil society organizations, has **vaccinated more than 500 million children in more than 60 countries helping reduce measles deaths by 68% globally and 91% in Africa** (compared to 2000).
- At the recent High-Level Summit on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) during the UN General Assembly, \$3 billion in new commitments were made to combat Malaria in order to help meet **the UN's goal of achieving near zero preventable malaria deaths by 2015 and to meet the Secretary-General's call for universal malaria control coverage by the end of 2010**.
- **WHO eradicated smallpox in 1980, becoming the only entity to ever eliminate a major world-wide disease**.
- WHO and UNICEF, in partnership with Rotary International and the Centers for Disease Control have virtually eliminated Polio. In 2006, due to the UN-led effort, polio was officially eliminated in Egypt and Niger, reducing the number of nations with active polio cases to four. **Since 1988, the number of polio cases reported each year has declined more than 99%**.
- Over the last 30 years, UNICEF and WHO have been responsible for **increasing the rate of vaccination** of preventable diseases from 5% to 75% worldwide.

Peace and Security

- The United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations has over 130,000 troops and personnel deployed to 19 political and peacekeeping missions, **making it the second largest deployed military in the world**. It directly impacts the lives of more than 200 million people and indirectly affects over a billion people, for a total cost (for July 2008 – June 2009) of \$7 billion (of which the U.S. pays 26%). These forces deploy to prevent the outbreak of conflict, assist in implementing peace agreements, stabilize conflict areas after a ceasefire, and help nations transition to stable governments. UN peacekeepers come from 120 countries and serve in some of the world's most volatile areas of conflict.

- Since 1945, the UN has participated in the implementation of 172 peaceful settlements that have ended regional conflicts, and enabled people in more than 45 countries to take part in free and fair elections. These include agreements concluding the Iran-Iraq war, Sudan's 20-year civil war, and ending the civil wars in El Salvador and Guatemala.
- The UN has played a key role in **organizing Afghanistan's first democratic elections**, helping register 10.5 million voters, 41% of whom were women. The UN's political mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has already begun preparing for the elections of 2009-2010, providing technical assistance, aiding the voter registration process, and coordinating donors' contributions.
- **The UN Assistance Mission in Iraq** (UNAMI) organized the historic January 2005 elections, and is currently, through the request of the Iraqi government, aiding in preparations for upcoming provincial elections, including by devising a plan of how to deal with the disputed oil-rich city of Kirkuk.
- The **Democratic Republic of the Congo** (DRC) held three successful elections in 2006, the first ones since 1946, thanks largely to the work of the UN. With only 300 miles of paved roads, the UN helped register 9 million Congolese and educated the public on how to vote.
- **In Liberia**, a mere two years after the end of the brutal civil war that consumed the country for fourteen years, Liberians headed to the polls to democratically elect a new president. 75% of the 1.35 million registered voters cast their ballots in the first round of elections, a remarkable voter turnout by any standards. In the months preceding elections, the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) provided extensive technical, logistical and advisory support to the National Elections Commission, while at the same time assisting in infrastructure development, resettlement of refugees, police training, reintegration of former combatants, and ensuring safety at the polls.

Non-Proliferation

- The **International Atomic Energy Agency** is the center of international cooperation in the nuclear field, monitoring nuclear safeguard agreements in more than 150 states. In October 2005, the IAEA and Director General Mohamed ElBaradei were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to prevent nuclear energy from being used for military purposes.
- In 2006, **North Korea** (DPRK) conducted a series of missile tests and a limited underground nuclear explosion. In response, the UN Security Council passed resolutions imposing a series of economic and commercial sanctions against the country to prevent the import or export of funds or goods that could fuel Pyongyang's missile or weapons of mass destruction programs. North Korea subsequently agreed to return to the six-party talks and eventually agreed to shut down their nuclear facilities in exchange for fuel aid and steps towards the normalization of relations with the United States and Japan.
- In 2003, **the IAEA verification efforts unmasked Libya's hidden nuclear weapons program**; Libya has since actively cooperated with IAEA to renounce the program.

Counter Terrorism

- In the wake of September 11, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1373, which criminalizes terrorism-related activities, requires every country to freeze the financial assets of terrorists and their supporters, and forbids providing funding and safe haven to terrorists. The Counter Terrorism Committee, created at the same time, meticulously assesses the financial legislation of all 192 UN member states to increase the ability of member states to combat terrorism.