

Millions of People Threatened as Funds for Humanitarian Aid Fall to Record Low

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At a time when trillions of dollars are being wasted annually on weapons, high luxury and wasteful consumption as well gigantic projects of highly suspect usefulness, the most urgently needed funds to save human lives, including those of children, in humanitarian crisis situations are just not available.

It is difficult to believe, but the hard fact is that the much needed funds for humanitarian assistance of critical importance are falling short to the extent of about 90 per cent or so.

In its update published on May 31, 2024 (Global Humanitarian Overview or GHO) the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has stated that population in need of humanitarian assistance at world level in year 2024 is 308 million. However keeping in view the fund constraints OCHA is targeting only 187 million people needing humanitarian assistance in 71 countries. For this OCHA needs funds amounting to 48.6 billion dollars in 2024. However up to May 2024 it had received only 7.8 billion dollars. Hence the gap was about 40.6 billion dollars (48.6 minus 7.8).

By the end of June the amount raised had risen to about 9 billion dollars. In other words only about 18 per cent of funds needed were available, leaving a gap of about 82 per cent.

However while examining this number please keep in mind that OCHA is targeting only 187 million people out of the 308 people in need. If all the people in need are considered, then the available funds would equal only 10 per cent of what is needed, or perhaps even less.

This is an amazing reflection of the kind of world we are living in, where over a thousand billion dollars are being thoughtlessly, in fact cruelly, spent on prolonging horrible wars and weapon-piles but a hundred billion dollars cannot be spared for saving highly endangered human lives, including children and expectant or breastfeeding mothers, in the worst affected humanitarian crisis areas.

Of course there is spending other than the one mobilized by OCHA or outside its network on humanitarian assistance, but then there are also many other people needing help due to extreme hunger, deprivation and insecurity who are left out in the OCHA estimate. Even if all data are included, the conclusion is inescapable that the overwhelming majority of the people who need urgent humanitarian help are not getting this, or else what they are getting falls far short of their needs.

In addition whatever little help is available is not being distributed equally. Urgent needs of millions of people are being neglected to a horrible extent. This includes people of several countries like Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, Myanmar and Afghanistan which are not on the

priority lists of main donor countries.

The conditions are so alarming in several places that several refugees and displaced people, who have been denied help needed to survive, are returning to home places amidst continuing conditions of high insecurity and may be killed.

Clearly there is very urgent need for raising humanitarian aid funds at least to the levels targeted by OCHA, while remembering that these are only modest targets and are not adequate for meeting humanitarian needs. Next year higher targets should be set and these should be met. In addition there is great urgency of ending various conflicts as early as possible. The number of conflicts has increased in recent times and higher numbers of people are caught in them. Conflicts are also getting more prolonged than before and possibilities of peace agreements for ending wars and conflicts have been significantly reduced. This is a very important cause of the increasing number of people needing humanitarian assistance. In addition, apart from the shortage of funding, conflicts also create conditions in which it becomes more difficult to take relief to people caught in conflicts.

Even after several conflicts end, in view of the devastation caused by them, need for humanitarian assistance in these regions will continue. Hence clearly two of the world's biggest priorities should be to bring very early peace in various conflict zones and to raise the funds needed to provide humanitarian assistance in adequate ways.

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