

Media Release

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World Humanitarian Day: At home on the frontline

[B-roll and interviews available here](#)

To mark World Humanitarian Day on 19 August, Save the Children is highlighting the challenges faced by three aid workers who against many odds are improving the lives of children and women in some of the toughest places on earth.

In 2017, the second deadliest year on record for humanitarian workers, new figures from the Aid Worker Security Database* reinforced the particular dangers aid workers face in carrying out their work – and it is aid workers drawn from their local communities who account for nine out of 10 of the victims of violent attacks.

As well as risking their lives, many of the local aid workers make enormous sacrifices to support children and families.

Dr Mariam Aldogani works on the frontline as a field coordinator in Yemen's port city of Hodeidah—her home.

“Sometimes during a field visit there is a military vehicle in front of us so I am saying, ‘oh my god please no airstrike now, please, please.’”

She says her motivation to relieve suffering keeps her going.

“Being a humanitarian worker is to be patient, work under stress, deal with difficulties and sometimes sacrifice family times. Yes, we have some difficulties but at the end we save lives.”

In South Sudan, which last year accounted for nearly 30 per cent of all major incidents against aid workers, globally, nurse Bosco Okello works tirelessly in a stabilisation centre to nurse severely malnourished children back to health.

“I look around at the situation in our country. We have no medical personnel, so many people are dying. I want to help the community.

“That is why I chose this job; to save lives, children's lives, women's lives.”

Child protection officer Ihab Khudair says he gave up a comfortable life in Istanbul to return to his hometown of Mosul, Iraq, to do what he could to help rebuild his scarred community.

He says while working to support children who have been badly injured in the war is the most difficult part of the job, there are moments of joy as well.

“When there is a family reunification, when children come back to their family—that day is something amazing to me.”

Save the Children's Humanitarian Director, Daniele Timarco, said:

“On World Humanitarian Day, we pay tribute to our local staff who often work in unimaginably challenging circumstances to ensure the most vulnerable children receive the life-saving support they need. The work they do is critical, and nobody is better equipped to respond in emergencies than those who know their communities best.

“Last year we saw an alarming spike in deadly violence targeting aid workers—139 people were killed, which is the second highest toll on record. Any violence against aid workers, whether national or international, is abhorrent—all measures must be taken to ensure they can carry out their work safely and humanitarian access must not be used by warring parties as a bargaining chip.

“Save the Children calls for all parties to conflict to respect international humanitarian law, and allow aid workers to carry out their lifesaving work.”

In 2017, Save the Children and our partners reached more than 49 million children in around 120 countries, often working in complex situations and in countries hit hard by war or natural disasters where children are especially vulnerable.

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Notes to editor:

* Aid Worker Security Report 2018 – Figures at a glance:

<https://aidworkersecurity.org/sites/default/files/AWSR%20Figures%202018.pdf>

About Save the Children

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In New Zealand and around the world, we work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, we are always among the first to respond and the last to leave. We ensure children's unique needs are met and their voices are heard. We deliver lasting results for millions of children, including those hardest to reach.

We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share.

