

[UNICEF urges wealthy countries to encourage more breastfeeding](#)

Babies in wealthy countries are five times more likely to miss out on breastfeeding than those in the least-developed, the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) said on Thursday, explaining that this gap could be addressed by better support for working mothers, and regulating sales of infant formula.

Some [7.6 million babies](#) across the world are not breastfed each year despite clear evidence that it can save lives, and protect babies and mothers against deadly diseases.

Evidence suggests breastfeeding also boosts brain development and improves educational outcomes, UNICEF said in a new study, published on Thursday.

In high-income countries, 21 per cent of babies are not breastfed at all, while in low- and-middle-income countries, the figure on average is only four per cent.

Mothers in wealthier countries often lack support for breastfeeding at home or workplace.

"Breastfeeding is the best gift a mother, rich or poor, can give her child, as well as herself," said Shahida Azfar, UNICEF's acting Deputy Executive Director. "As we celebrate Mother's Day, we must give the world's mothers the support they need to breastfeed."

According to the study, [99 per cent](#) of babies in Bhutan, Madagascar and Peru are breastfed at least once. But this rate is only 55 per cent in Ireland, 74 per cent in the United States and 77 per cent in Spain.

The US alone accounts for more than one-third of the 2.6 million babies in high-income countries who were never breastfed.

Even within low-and-middle-income countries, babies from the poorest families are more likely to be breastfed for a longer period of time, than those from wealthier families.

Factors leading to higher breastfeeding rates vary around the world, say UNICEF. India and Vietnam have put in place strong policies to protect and promote breastfeeding. Turkmenistan has high rates of mothers giving birth in hospitals where maternal services are prioritized – officially designated by UNICEF as [baby-friendly hospitals](#). Almost all mothers in New Zealand and Sri Lanka give birth at a baby-friendly facility.

Additionally, cultural and social norms play a decisive role, including varying levels of support from fathers, families, employers and communities at large.

Through its [Every Child ALIVE](#) campaign, UNICEF urges governments, the private sector and civil society to increase funding and awareness to raise breastfeeding rates from birth, through the age of two.

The agency also outlines other factors which can effect breastfeeding rates, such as introducing strong legal measures to regulate the marketing of infant formula and other breastmilk substitutes; enacting paid family leave and putting in place workplace breastfeeding policies, including paid breaks for new mothers.

[New UN agency guidelines aim to sustain forest benefits for future generations](#)

New guidelines designed to give poor and isolated communities more of a say in how tropical forests are used and preserved around the world were published on Thursday, by the Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)).

The FAO is the lead United Nations agency on the sustainable use of forests, and the voluntary guidelines refer to so-called forest concessions; laws and policies that allow local communities and private individuals or businesses to use forested land in return for payment or services.

The aim is to make these concessions “[more transparent, accountable and beneficial](#) to some of the poorest communities in the world”, said the agency.

It is hoped that by adopting the guidelines, countries in tropical regions will be able to curb abuse of forest land due to poor management; corruption and bribery; tenure disputes, and the harassment of local communities.

“If well managed, forest concessions can have multiple socio-economic and environmental benefits and increase the value of standing forests for present and future generations,” said Eva Muller, the head of Forestry Policy and Resources Division at FAO.

“All in all, they can improve the lives of rural communities in some of the poorest and most isolated parts of the world.”

If well managed, forest concessions can have multiple socio-economic and environmental benefits and increase the value of standing forests for present and future generations – *Eva Muller, senior FAO official*

Forest concessions at work

When well managed, forest concessions can curb deforestation and reduce forest degradation. They can also reduce carbon footprint and combat climate change, while increasing employment opportunities and services in local communities.

Proper concessions also add to local and national revenues, which can in turn be invested in development, health and services.

A good example is the Borneo Initiative, a foundation established in 2008, which has provided financial and technical assistance to concession-holders linking them to a professional network of experts to guide them through the process. It has already led to an increase of more than 2 million hectares of natural forest across Indonesia.

Another example is in Guatemala, where concessions are providing direct financial benefits to local communities and have generated more than 16,000 jobs, which in turn brings additional economic benefits.

Verification

The guidelines – formally entitled: “[Making forest concessions in the tropics work to achieve the 2030 Agenda](#)” – build on best practices from around the world, and are based on consultations with more than 300 technical experts from the public and private sectors, together with civil society representatives from Africa, the Asia-Pacific region and Latin America.

A self-assessment tool is one key recommendation, whereby concession-holders and local communities can verify if their agreements will encourage the sustainable use of forest land.

The guidelines were launched on the margins of the 13th session of the [UN Forum on Forests](#), which has been taking place this week at UN Headquarters in New York.

[Complex and deadly new threats mean UN missions must adapt, argue Force Commanders](#)

In their briefings, military chiefs from the UN peacekeeping operations in Darfur, Mali and South Sudan underscored that these obstacles have to be overcome, if UN missions are to implement their mandates; in line with the Dos Santos Cruz Report on casualties suffered by peacekeeping missions.

The retired Lieutenant General's report released in January, said the UN flag no longer offered "natural" protection to peacekeepers, and UN peacekeeping has pledged to develop an action plan to put its recommendations into practice.

Mali

"We owe it to our peacekeepers, both civilian and military, to implement the action plan, to change our mind-sets and to adapt – how we lead at all levels – to the new challenges we face," said Major General Jean-Paul Deconinck, the Force Commander at the UN Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali, MINUSMA.

The mission remains one of the most dangerous of all UN missions, where more than 160 uniformed and civilian peacekeeping personnel have lost their lives.

In addition to the threats posed by armed groups and terrorists, supplying remote outposts and dealing with harsh environments have severely challenged UN operations; underscoring the importance of comprehensive training, high-quality medical equipment, air-support and strong intelligence gathering and processing entities, said Maj. Gen. Deconinck.

The multidimensional nature of UN operations "must also include a regional approach to address the crisis through all the dimensions, in all countries of the Sahel region," he added.



UNAMID Photo/Albert Gonzalez Farran

UNAMID 'blue helmets' on patrol in north Darfur. While the security situation in the region has remained stable, the causes of the conflict and their related consequences have been largely unaddressed, leaving the potential for deterioration in the situation.

Darfur

Lieutenant General Leonard M. Ngondi, the Force Commander at the African Union-UN Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), stressed that the importance of peacekeeping missions as political tools for finding durable solutions to conflicts, could not be overemphasized.

Lessons learned from missions in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire show that good transition guarantee gains made are not in vain – *Lt. Gen. Leonard M. Ngondi, UNMISS Force Commander*

Challenges in Darfur, though different in nature than Mali, are also extremely complicated and must be addressed for the Mission to deliver on its mandate, he said.

These include restrictions on UNAMID's freedom of movement and cooperation on the part of the Sudanese government; dealing with armed groups operating outside the peace framework; helping ease inter-communal conflicts over natural resources; and dealing with rising crime and banditry together with the proliferation of weapons.

In increasing support for UNAMID, Lt. Gen. Ngondi urged the Security Council to consider adding a so-called "transition strategy" as part of the Missions' mandate.

"Lessons learned from missions in Liberia (UNMIL) and Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) show that good transition guarantee gains made are not in vain," he said.



UN Photo/Eric Kanalstein

A member of the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) clears the UN base outside Juba, South Sudan, of unexploded ordnance (UXO's) in the aftermath of heavy clashes. UXO are comprised of bombs, mortars, grenades or other devices that fail to detonate but remain volatile and can kill if touched or moved.

South Sudan

Force Commander at the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), Lt. Gen. Frank Mushyo Kamanzi, also spoke of the challenges faced by the mission in the world's youngest country that has spent much of its short history since 2011, mired in conflict, plunging the country into a humanitarian and economic crisis.

Providing security and civilian protection in South Sudan has grown more complex having moved from a conflict between two parties to one in which the transitional Government "has the upper hand, but faces political and military opposition from multiple actors," said Lt. Gen. Mushyo.

"Protection of civilians remains our priority task and we continue to provide physical protection to over 209,000 internally displaced persons and UN agencies and other humanitarian actors who live and work within the five Protection of Civilian sites," he added, noting that over 40 per cent of UNMISS peacekeeping troops are dedicated to this task.

Underscoring the importance of a political solution to the crisis in the country, the UNMISS Force Commander called on the Security Council to encourage all parties in the country to work to that end, which he said "will in turn improve the prospects of the mission achieving its mandate."

[Honouring Second World War victims, UN chief calls neo-Nazism "a spreading cancer"](#)

Paying tribute to all victims of the [Second World War](#) – on whose ashes the United Nations was founded – Secretary-General António Guterres described this year's commemoration as more meaningful than any that has gone before.

"We see a world in which [conflict is proliferating](#), we see a world in which so many wars are taking place, and so I believe it is absolutely essential to remind us all of the lessons of the Second World War that, for the Soviet Union, was considered the Great Patriotic War," he said on Wednesday, speaking at the Second World War exhibit at UN Headquarters in New York.

He also highlighted the fact that it was the Soviet Union which had made "by far" the greatest sacrifice in terms of military effort and losses sustained during the war against Nazi Germany, until its unconditional surrender on 8 May 1945.

This is a cancer that is starting to spread again, and I think it is our duty to do everything possible to make sure that this horrible disease is cured. [Secretary-General António Guterres](#)

Recalling the “unimaginable, devastating destruction,” the UN chief said: “We absolutely need to make sure that in the world, these kind of events do not take place anymore.”

Mr. Guterres pointed out that Neo-Nazi messages have recently been resurfacing. He pointed to political movements that either claim neo-Nazi affiliation, or make use of its symbols and hateful language.

“This is a cancer that is starting to spread again, and I think it is our duty to do everything possible to make sure that this horrible disease is cured,” he said.

He said that the memory of those who sacrificed their lives in the Second World War should help us “to defeat any form of neo-Nazism in today’s time.”

Stipulating that the worst crime of all perpetrated by the Nazis was the Holocaust, he warned that “anti-Semitism and other forms of hatred” were “again proliferating in the world.”

“I sincerely hope that the lessons of this May victory, will help us defeat this resurgence of ideas and convictions that I thought had been buried for ever,” said the Secretary-General.

“It is our duty to do it”, because we cannot accept the return of these ideologies, he concluded.

[‘Uphold international humanitarian law’ UN chief tells parties to Yemen conflict](#)

Civil conflict deepened across the country in 2015, when a Saudi-led coalition intensified military operations against Houthi rebels who control the capital Sana’a.

Coalition airstrikes hit a government building in the densely-populated Tahrir district of the capital on Monday, reportedly killing six people, and rebels fired several missiles in the days that followed towards different targets in Saudi Arabia.

“The Secretary-General reminds all parties to the conflict that they must uphold international humanitarian law, including taking steps to protect

civilians,” said a statement issued on behalf of the Secretary-General, by his Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric.

“All potential violations of international humanitarian law should be thoroughly investigated and those responsible for violations must be held accountable,” added the statement.

Mr. Dujarric emphasized the Secretary-General’s appeal not to escalate the fighting further “as this adversely impacts the chances for peace.”

Since political unrest first began in Yemen in early 2011, the UN has been engaged in helping Yemenis to find a peaceful solution. However, fighting continues and the ensuing humanitarian crisis has only deepened in a country that was already one of the region’s poorest.

“A negotiated political settlement through inclusive intra-Yemeni dialogue is the only way to end the conflict and address the ongoing humanitarian crisis,” said the statement.