

Cutting greenhouse gases, reducing disaster risk, vital for sustainable development – UN envoy

11 October 2017 – A new United Nations report has underscored the importance of a “risk-informed” approach to sustainable development and called for integrating global agreements on disaster risk reduction and climate change into national socio-economic planning.

Presenting the report’s findings Monday to the General Assembly’s main economic and financial body ([Second Committee](#)) Robert Glasser the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction said that the failure to include such risks in investments have resulted in rapidly rising disaster-related costs.

In his [briefing](#), Mr. Glasser noted that over the past two decades, more than 1.35 million lives and in excess of \$2.5 trillion have been lost to disasters.

“In the light of this disturbing picture,” he said, “delivering on the promise of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development will only be possible if we cut greenhouse gases as rapidly as possible in line with the [Paris Agreement](#) and reduce climate and disaster risk in accordance with the ambitious global targets agreed [...] in the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#).”

The report, [Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030](#), also warned that the developing world remains at particular risk from disasters, which have resulted in annual average loss of more than 20 per cent equivalent of social expenditure.

According to the report, by 2050, urban populations exposed to hurricanes will increase from 310 million today to 680 million. Urban assets vulnerable to sea level rise and flooding could reach \$35 trillion by 2070 – 10 times more than the current levels.

To overcome the challenges, the report urged, UN Member States to prioritize and resource the development of inclusive national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020, as a key element of efforts to reduce climate risk and disaster risk more broadly.

It also called on them to identify and seize opportunities to coherently incorporate the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement into social and economic planning and investments within the context of the 2030 Agenda.

The report comes ahead of the [International Day for Disaster Reduction](#), to be marked this Friday. The 2017 theme of the International Day, *Home Safe Home: Reducing Exposure, Reducing Displacement*, seeks to raise global awareness

about effective actions, policies and practices taken to reduce exposure to disaster risk at the community level, thereby contributing to saving homes and livelihoods.

[‘EmPOWER’ girls before, during and after crises, UN says on International Day of the Girl Child](#)

11 October 2017 – The world’s 1.1 billion girls are a source of power, energy, and creativity – and the millions of girls in emergencies are no exception, the United Nations said on the [International Day of the Girl Child](#), which kicks off a year-long effort to draw global attention to and action on the challenges and opportunities girls face before, during, and after crises.

“Because of entrenched gender inequalities, disasters and conflict can make [a bad situation even worse for girls](#),” said UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem, in a statement marking the International Day, which this year is on the theme, ‘EmPOWER Girls: Before, during and after crises.’

“They and their families, struggling to survive, are left with few choices, leaving girls even more vulnerable to child marriage, sexual- and gender-based violence, including trafficking, rape and sexual slavery,” she added.

According to the Organization’s main entity on gender issues, [UN Women](#), due to growing conflict, instability and inequality in 2017, 128.6 million people are expected to need humanitarian assistance, and more than three-quarters of those forced to flee are women and children.

“No society will flourish and no peace agreement will be lasting without [empowering girls in peacebuilding and reconstruction](#),” said Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)). “It is time to put this imperative at the heart of all of our efforts in addressing fragility, conflict and violence.”

Our special photo story on the International Day examines the challenges girls face during emergencies and highlights the critical role they play in building a better future for themselves and their communities.



Since 2012, the UN has observed 11 October as the International Day of the Girl Child to highlight and address the challenges girls face, while promoting their empowerment and the fulfilment of their human rights. The internally displaced girls photographed here are sitting in a UNICEF school

tent in Police Rah informal settlement near Herat city, Afghanistan. Credit: UNHCR/Jim Huylebroek



In her message, Irina Bokova, the Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, noted that this year's observance of the Day comes during turbulent times, with the world facing the rising challenges of forced displacement, climate change and violent extremism. The girl pictured here was driven from her home in Chad, along with her family, by Boko Haram militants. Photo: UNICEF/Sokhin



This year's theme aims to spur global attention and action to the challenges and opportunities girls face before, during, and after crises. Together, women and girls account for more than 75 per cent of the refugees and displaced persons at risk from war, famine, persecution and natural disaster. The girls pictured here are in Syria's Tariq Al-Bab neighbourhood, where UN agencies are distributing relief items. Photo: UNHCR/Bassam Diab



Women and girls are also vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation, during conflicts and in refugee camps. The two girls peering through a reed fence were photographed at a site for displaced people in Damaturu, Nigeria. Photo: OCHA/Otto Bakano



Due to entrenched gender inequalities, disasters and conflict can make a bad situation even worse for girls, says Dr. Natalia Kanem, the Executive Director of the UN Population Fund ([UNFPA](#)). Seen here are women in Les Cayes, Haiti, awaiting relief assistance after a hurricane. Photo: MINUSTAH/Logan Abassi



They and their families are left with few choices, leaving girls even more vulnerable to child marriage, trafficking, rape and sexual slavery. The girl seen here is from Yemen, where incidents of gender-based violence have increased by more than 63 per cent since the conflict escalated, according to UNFPA. Photo: Giles Clarke/OCHA



Despite the challenges, many girls manage to play a critical role in their homes and communities, even in crises, where they are often the first responders who care for their families. Protecting and promoting their rights, health, and well-being is therefore an essential element of crisis preparedness, effective response and recovery, UNFPA stresses. The girls above play on the ground floor of a partially destroyed home in Gaza city. Photo: UNICEF



UNFPA supports the development of more inclusive health, education, and empowerment programmes that are age- and gender-responsive, often girl-led, and enhance the voices of girls at the community level. The girl students pictured here are attending a conference on 'Financing the Future: Education 2030' at the UN in New York. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

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[UN launches innovative plan to significantly cut new HIV infections](#)

11 October 2017 – Despite a 50 per cent drop in AIDS-related deaths since the peak of the epidemic, new HIV infection declines among adults are lagging, prompting the United Nations to launch a 10-point plan that lays out immediate, concrete steps countries can take to accelerate progress.

As part of global efforts to end AIDS as a public health threat, the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS ([UNAIDS](#)), the UN Population Fund ([UNFPA](#)) and other partners launched on Tuesday the [HIV prevention 2020](#) road map at the first meeting of the Global HIV Prevention Coalition to reduce new HIV infections by 75 per cent by 2020.

“Scaling up treatment alone [will not end AIDS](#),” said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS, in a statement.

“We need more energy and action put into HIV prevention – stronger leadership, increased investment and community engagement to ensure that everyone, particularly people at higher risk of HIV, can protect themselves against the virus,” he added.

While new HIV infections among children have fallen by 47 per cent since 2010, new HIV infections among adults have declined by only 11 per cent.

In 2016, in the [UN Political Declaration on Ending AIDS](#), countries committed to reduce new HIV infections by 75 per cent – from 2.2 million in 2010 to 500,000 in 2020. The new road map will fast-track countries to achieve this target.

“In many places, lack of access to education, lack of agency and lack of autonomy over their own bodies keep adolescent girls from claiming their human rights,” UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem added.

“And the poorest girls have the least power to decide whether, when or whom to marry and whether, when or how often to become pregnant. This lack of

power makes each one of these girls extremely vulnerable to HIV infection, sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancy,” underscored Dr. Kanem.

The HIV prevention 2020 road map contains a 10-point action plan that lays out immediate, concrete steps for countries to accelerate progress, such as conducting up-to-date analysis to assess where maximum impact opportunities lie; developing guidance to identify gaps and actions for rapid scale-up; and addressing legal and policy barriers to reach the people most affected by HIV, including young people and key populations.

It identifies factors that have hindered progress, including political leadership gaps, punitive laws and a lack of HIV prevention services in humanitarian settings, and highlights the importance of community engagement to advocate for service delivery and accountability.

“UNAIDS is urging commitment and leadership for measurable results,” said Mr Sidibé. “Leadership to address sensitive political issues and leadership in mobilizing adequate funding of HIV prevention programmes.”

Cutting new infections by 75 per cent will require a focus on HIV prevention, combined with scaled-up HIV testing and treatment. A location-population-based method for efficient planning and programming along with a people-centred approach for those at higher HIV risk will be critical.

Concerted efforts will be needed, including to reach adolescent girls, young women and their male partners; to increase the availability and uptake of condoms; and to ensure that preventative medicines are available to people at higher risk of HIV.

The road map encourages countries to develop a 100-day plan for immediate actions, including setting national targets, reviewing progress made, reassessing national prevention programmes and taking immediate remedial action.

Attacks against Rohingya ‘a ploy’ to drive them away; prevent their return – UN rights chief

11 October 2017 – Brutal, well-organized, coordinated and systematic attacks have been carried out against the minority Muslim Rohingya community in Myanmar, with the intention of not just driving them away but also preventing their return, a new United Nations human rights report has revealed.

Based on on-the-ground interviews in Cox’s Bazar, in Bangladesh, where

hundreds of thousands of Rohingya have sought refuge, the report also [draws attention](#) to a strategy to “instil deep and widespread fear and trauma – physical, emotional and psychological” among the Rohingya population.

“The [UN human rights] team documented consistent accounts of the Myanmar security forces surrounding or entering villages or settlements, sometimes accompanied by Rakhine Buddhist individuals firing indiscriminately at Rohingya villagers, injuring some and killing other innocent victims, setting houses on fire, and announcing in other villages that the same would befall them if they did not comply with the order to immediately abandon their homes,” notes the report, issued today by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)).

It also cites testimony from witnesses that security forces committed extrajudicial and summary executions, rape and other forms of sexual violence, torture and attacks on places of worship.

Efforts [taken] to effectively erase all signs of memorable landmarks in the geography of the Rohingya landscape and memory in such a way that a return to their lands would yield nothing but a desolate and unrecognizable terrain

Specific attacks particularly targeted the educated in the Rohingya society such as teachers, business men, religious and community leaders – “people with influence” – in an effort to diminish Rohingya history, culture and knowledge, said OHCHR in a news release announcing the grim findings.

“Credible information indicates that the Myanmar security forces purposely destroyed the property of the Rohingyas, targeting their houses, fields, food-stocks, crops, livestock and even trees, to render the possibility of the Rohingya returning to normal lives and livelihoods in the future in northern Rakhine almost impossible,” it added.

UN rights chief urges authorities to end the ‘cruel’ security operation immediately

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, who described the Government operations in northern Rakhine state as “[a textbook example of ethnic cleansing](#),” also urged the Myanmar Government to immediately end its “cruel” security operation.

By denying the Rohingya population their political, civil, economic and cultural rights, including the right to citizenship, he said, the Government’s actions appear to be “a cynical ploy to forcibly transfer large numbers of people without possibility of return.”

More than 500,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh since the Myanmar security forces launched an operation in response to alleged attacks by militants on 25 August against 30 police posts and a regimental headquarters.

The report, however, suggests that the “clearance operations” started before that date – as early as the beginning of August.

UN agencies, meanwhile, are working to assist the hundreds of thousands in Cox's Bazar and other locations in Bangladesh where conditions for the refugees are extremely challenging, including little protection against the elements, limited food, water and sanitation facilities, and the risk of outbreak of disease.

Youth obesity increases 10-fold in four decades, UN-backed study reveals

11 October 2017 – The number of obese children and adolescents aged five to 19 years worldwide has risen tenfold in the past four decades, and if current trends continue, there will be more obese children and adolescents than those moderately or severely underweight by 2022, a United Nations-backed study shows.

These data highlight, remind and reinforce that overweight and obesity is a [global health crisis](#) today, and threatens to worsen in coming years unless we start taking drastic action," Fiona Bull, programme coordinator for surveillance and population-based prevention of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) at the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), said in a news release.

The study led by Imperial College London and WHO was published in *The Lancet*, ahead of World Obesity Day on Wednesday. It looked at body mass index (BMI) from weight and height measurements of nearly 130 million people, including 31.5 million youth aged five to 19.

Obesity rates in the world's children and adolescents increased from less than 1 per cent – equivalent to five million girls and six million boys – in 1975 to nearly 6 per cent, or 50 million girls, and nearly 8 per cent, or 74 million boys, in 2016.

Combined, the number of obese five to 19 year olds rose more than tenfold globally, from 11 million in 1975 to 124 million in 2016. An additional 213 million were overweight in 2016 but fell below the threshold for obesity.

These worrying trends reflect the impact of food marketing and policies across the globe, with healthy nutritious foods too expensive for poor families and communities," said lead author Majid Ezzati, professor of Imperial's School of Public Health.

He said that the trend predicts a generation of children and adolescents growing up obese and at greater risk of diseases, like diabetes, stressing the need to make healthy, nutritious food more available at home and school, especially in poor families and communities, as well as the need for regulations and taxes to protect children from unhealthy foods.

More youth will be obese than underweight by 2022

The authors say that if post-2000 trends continue, global levels of child and adolescent obesity will surpass those for moderately and severely underweight youth from the same age group by 2022. In 2016, the global number of moderately or severely underweight girls and boys was 75 million and 117 million respectively.

In conjunction with the study, WHO is publishing a summary of the plan that gives countries clear guidance on effective actions to curb childhood and adolescent obesity. WHO has also released guidelines calling on frontline healthcare workers to actively identify and manage children who are overweight or obese.

“Countries should aim particularly to reduce consumption of cheap, ultra-processed, calorie dense, nutrient poor foods. They should also reduce the time children spend on screen-based and sedentary leisure activities by promoting greater participation in physical activity through active recreation and sports,” Ms. Bull said.