

Cost of feeding hungry world surging due to conflicts and instability – UN agency

20 July 2017 – Improved aid access, strengthened resilience and advances in food system networks could provide as much as \$3.5 billion in annual cost savings at a time when humanitarian needs are skyrocketing in multiple complex emergencies across the globe, a new United Nations study has found.

More than anything else, the world needs to wake up, and end these wars and these conflicts, so [we can make real progress in ending hunger](#), said David Beasley, the Executive Director of the UN World Food Programme in a news release today.

Around 800 million people – one in nine around the world – go to bed on an empty stomach. But man-made conflicts and other strife make it difficult to help those who need it most. Reducing these roadblocks would ease the path towards long-term solutions.

In its report, [World Food Assistance 2017: Taking Stock and Looking Ahead](#), WFP notes that its costs spiked by more than 140 per cent over a seven-year period – from \$2.2 billion in 2009 to \$5.3 billion in 2015.

The need for additional resources come amid significant changes to the international food assistance sector since 2009.

Within WFP, the share of assistance delivered as food declined from 54 per cent to less than 40 per cent. Conversely, the share of cash-based transfers surged from less than 1 per cent in 2009 to 20 per cent in 2016.

In this scenario, the WFP report argues that improvements such as more accessible and safe humanitarian access could reduce costs by almost \$1 billion each year.

Furthermore, if the roughly 80 countries where the UN agency operates were better able to cope with climate-related, political, and economic shocks, another \$2.2 billion annually could be saved.

And if food systems – the networks responsible for producing food, transforming it and ensuring that it reaches hungry people – could be improved in these countries, another \$440 million could be saved annually.

If solutions or improvements to these challenges were found, cost savings to WFP could be as high as US\$3.5 billion per year, noted the UN agency.

[Least developed countries face challenges in funding sustainable development – UN report](#)

19 July 2017 – Lack of funding is among the biggest challenges for the world's 47 least developed countries (LDCs) in their implementation of sustainable development targets, according to a United Nations report released today.

“While we continue to see mixed progress for this group of countries, there is tremendous potential to close the gaps and achieve momentum toward their investment needs,” said Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu, the newly-appointed High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, in a [press release](#). Under-Secretary-General ‘Utoikamanu urged these Governments to work with development partners, civil society and the private sector to alleviate poverty, cut inequality and save the environment.

Launching the 2017 edition of the [State of the Least Developed Countries](#) report at the UN Headquarters in New York, she noted that the LDCs are among the most vulnerable countries in the world with large segments of their population living in extreme poverty with few prospects to improve their situation.

This year's report, compiled by her office (UN-[OHRLLS](#)), focuses on the financing of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA), which charts out the vision and strategy for the sustainable development of LDCs through 2020, on the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), which were adopted by all countries in 2015 with a view to create a peaceful, inclusive world free of poverty by 2030.

Achieving the goals of IPoA complements efforts to achieve the [SDGs](#), she stressed.

However, due to large gaps in investment, including for sustainable energy and ICT, the report notes that access to all modes of financing needs to increase for LDCs.

The average gross domestic product (GDP) growth for LDCs remained low at 3.8 per cent in 2015, the lowest rate in the past two decades and well below the 7 per cent target set by the Istanbul Programme, according to the report.

The LDCs share of total trade continued to decline, from 1.09 per cent in 2014 to 0.97 per cent in 2015, making it difficult to reach the 2 per cent target.

Despite the significant challenges, the report also highlights progress in a few key areas including in the transport sector, and access to electricity, which rose from 32.3 per cent of the population in 2010 to 38.3 per cent in 2014.

In addition, a greater share of the total amounts of climate finance flowing from developed to developing countries needs to be allocated to LDCs, especially for adaptation projects that result in reduced vulnerability.

In June 2017, Equatorial Guinea graduated from the group, bringing the number of LDCs to 47. Nine LDCs reached the graduation thresholds in 2015, while several others aspire to graduate by 2020 or shortly thereafter.

[UN reports more people warned against tobacco use, but industry interference continues](#)

19 July 2017 – Despite measures protecting a majority of people from tobacco-related illness and death, the tobacco industry continues to hamper Government efforts to fully implement life and cost-saving interventions, the United Nations health agency today reported.

“One-third of countries have comprehensive systems to monitor tobacco use. While this is up from one-quarter of countries monitoring tobacco use at recommended levels in 2007, Governments still need to do more to prioritize or finance this area of work,” according to the UN World Health Organization’s [WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic](#), which was launched today on side-lines of the UN High-level political forum on sustainable development in New York.

The report shows that some 4.7 billion people – more than 60 per cent of the population – are protected by at least one “best practice” tobacco control measure from the WHO’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC). These measures include no smoking areas and bans on advertising tobacco products, for example.

In the foreword to the report, the head of WHO urged Governments to incorporate all the provisions of the WHO FCTC into their national tobacco control programmes and policies, and to fight against the illicit tobacco trade.

“Working together, countries can prevent millions of people from dying each year from preventable tobacco-related illness, and save billions of dollars a year in avoidable health-care expenditures and productivity losses,” said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General.

The report, funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies, noted that systematic monitoring of tobacco industry interference in government policymaking protects public health by shedding light on tobacco industry tactics.

Such tactics include “exaggerating the economic importance of the tobacco industry, discrediting proven science and using litigation to intimidate governments.”

Douglas Bettcher, director of WHO’s Department for the Prevention of Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs), said tobacco industry interference in government policy making represents “a deadly barrier to advancing health and development in many countries.

Controlling tobacco use is a key part of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development. The Agenda includes targets to strengthen national implementation of the WHO FCTC and a one-third reduction in premature deaths from NCDs, including heart and lung diseases, cancer and diabetes, according to a press release launching the report.

“The progress that’s been made worldwide – and documented throughout this report – shows that it is possible for countries to turn the tide,” said Michael R. Bloomberg, WHO Global Ambassador for Noncommunicable Diseases and founder of Bloomberg Philanthropies.

[More flexibility and mobility for UN peacekeepers in DR Congo – senior official says](#)

19 July 2017 – The United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is changing how it operates to become more flexible and mobile, the head of that mission today said, by focusing on rapid deployment of troops and air surveillance instead of fixed bases.

The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in DRC, Maman Sidikou, said the mission, known by its acronym MONUSCO, will close five fixed bases at the end of the month in the North-Kivu province.

“MONUSCO changes its mode of operations, as it continues to [to fulfil its mandate](#), that is, continuing to back Congolese authorities’ efforts for civilians’ protection,” said Mr. Sidikou.

The new operations are already underway in the Kasai province, where some 350 MONUSCO troops have been deployed.

The Mission is setting up an early warning system and improve its access to

people.

“To make the device more effective, it would be critical that communities swiftly transmit all security-related information to MONUSCO,” the Mission’s military authorities said.

In March, the UN Security Council extended the mandate of MONUSCO for another year, but lowered the approved number of military personnel and military observers from 19,815 and 760, respectively, to 16,215 and 660.

The Council tasked the Mission, with, among other responsibilities, ensuring effective and dynamic protection of civilians under threat of physical violence, including by preventing, deterring, and stopping all armed groups and local militias from inflicting violence on the populations.



Maman Sidikou, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, arriving in Oicha, North Kivu. Photo: UN Photo/ Abel Kavanagh

[UN chief welcomes Seoul’s proposal to reopen dialogue with Pyongyang](#)

19 July 2017 – [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today welcomed the move by the Republic of Korea to lower tensions on the Korean Peninsula, his spokesperson said.

“The Secretary-General welcomes the proposal by the Republic of Korea to reopen inter-Korean communication channels and encourages the leadership of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) to respond positively,” UN Deputy Spokesperson Farhan Haq told journalists in New York.

The comments follow Monday’s announcement by the Republic of Korea that its Defence Ministry had proposed to meet with DPRK representatives with the goal of ending hostilities.

“The absence of communication channels with the DPRK could be dangerous,” the spokesperson said in today’s press briefing, echoing the statement Mr. Guterres made on 28 April at the Ministerial-level Security Council meeting on non-proliferation.

At that time, Mr. Guterres said that “we need [to avoid miscalculation and misunderstanding](#) . We need to act now to prevent conflict and achieve sustainable peace.”

SEE ALSO: [Korean Peninsula: Conflict prevention ‘our collective priority’ but onus also on DPRK, says UN chief](#)

He urged DRPK to refrain from further testing, comply with relevant Security Council resolution, and explore the resumption of dialogue.

“This means reopening and strengthening communication channels, particularly military to military, to lower the risk of miscalculation or misunderstanding,” Mr. Guterres said in that speech.