

Amid 'alarming rise' in obesity, UN study finds one in three European adolescents overweight

17 May 2017 – Citing eating habits, physical activity and sedentary behaviours, the United Nations health agency launched a new publication today at the European Congress on Obesity in Portugal which revealed a rising number of obese adolescents in many countries across Europe.

Despite sustained efforts to tackle childhood obesity, one in three adolescents is still estimated to be overweight or obese in Europe, with the highest rates found in southern European and Mediterranean countries, said Dr. Zsuzsanna Jakab, Regional Director for Europe of the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)).

Noting with particular concern that the epidemic is on the rise in eastern European countries, where historically rates have been lower, she called for ambitious policy action to reach the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) target to halt the increase in childhood obesity. Governments must target efforts and break this harmful cycle from childhood into adolescence and beyond.

The latest WHO study on [Adolescent obesity and related behaviours: trends and inequalities in the WHO European Region, 2002-2014](#) points to evidence suggesting that up to one in three boys and one in five girls aged six to nine is now obese.

Childhood obesity is considered one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century, according to the study. Globally, around one in 10 young people aged five to 17 is overweight or obese with rapidly increasing levels in recent years.

According to the publication, the primary causes of overweight and obesity can be traced to energy-related behaviours physical activity, sedentary behaviour, eating behaviour and sleep which contribute to an energy imbalance between calorie intake and energy expenditure.

While trends have previously been reported on separately, this study compiles together the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) data on obesity and obesity-related behaviours reviewing the latest evidence and studying the range and complexity of influences on childhood obesity.

The health consequences of excess body weight are well documented. As the report points out, obesity increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, hypertension, sleep apnoea and cardiovascular disease. It also diminishes adolescents' quality of life and is related to various emotional and behavioural problems.

Additionally, the chronic nature of obesity can limit social mobility and perpetuates an intergenerational cycle of poverty and ill health. Many inequalities in obesity and related behaviours exist, with young people from lower socioeconomic groups generally reporting worse outcomes.

The study also notes that longitudinal studies have found that obesity early in life relates to less educational attainment and lower incomes in adulthood – even after differences in childhood socioeconomic position (SEP) are controlled. Furthermore, low SEP in childhood increases the risk for becoming obese in adulthood over and above the impact of adult SEP on obesity.

– Most young people will not outgrow the condition: about four in every five adolescents who become obese will continue to have weight problems as adults, the study underscores.

The HBSC survey is a WHO collaborative cross-national study that monitors the health behaviours, health outcomes and social environments of boys and girls aged 11, 13 and 15 years every four years.

[Secretary-General Guterres praises a united Europe as ‘fundamental pillar’ of strong UN](#)

17 May 2017 – [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today stressed that the European Union’s contribution is absolutely essential for the United Nations, from support to peacekeeping to protecting human rights, solving conflicts, advancing the agenda for sustainable development and fighting climate change.

– A strong and united Europe is an absolutely fundamental pillar of a strong and effective United Nations, Mr. Guterres told the plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

– The European Union (EU) is clearly the most successful project of peace sustainability in the world, he added, expressing his gratitude and appreciation for the EU’s commitment to multilateralism and its contributions to development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

Addressing a number of issues, including Syria, migration, globalization and the need to preserve cultural diversity, the Secretary-General laid out his reform priorities to ensure the UN is closer to the aspirations of the people it is serving.

Mr. Guterres also stressed the need for Governments, local authorities, civil society and religious authorities to foster social cohesion, inclusivity and tolerance.

According to his spokesperson, the Secretary-General also gave a [press conference](#) alongside European Parliament President Antonio Tajani during which he stressed the need for a united Europe to support the search for global solutions, as no issue today can be solved without global efforts.

On his way to Strasbourg, the Secretary-General had met with new French President Emmanuel Macron. They discussed peace and security issues, as well as issues related to sustainable development and climate change. The UN chief said he looked forward to working with the French President on all pressing issues, noting France's key role as a pillar of multilateralism, the spokesperson said.

[As four countries face famine, world 'must step up now' says top UN food security forum](#)

17 May 2017 – With famine looming in four countries, the United Nations-backed Committee on World Food Security ([CFS](#)) stressed today the need to rally support for both immediate relief to people at risk and for longer-term initiatives.

Governments, civic groups and businesses need to rally support for both immediate relief to people in countries at risk of famine and longer-term initiatives that will allow them to recover and restore their livelihoods, Ambassador Amira Gornass, Chair of the CFS, [said](#) today in Rome.

Famine has been declared in some counties of South Sudan, and the number of people close to sliding from emergency to disaster is perilously high in north-eastern Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen, according to the Food and Agricultural Organization ([FAO](#)) and other UN agencies.

The risk of famine in all four countries where some 30 million people are uncertain as to where their next meal will come from or rely on humanitarian assistance is mostly induced by conflict, which has disrupted food production, blocked aid and commodities from accessing vulnerable communities and driven food prices beyond what people can afford.

I urge you to take action now to relieve the impending suffering and to prevent further damage to livelihoods, Ms. Gornass stated in a letter to CFS Members and stakeholders, as well as the international community at large, to step-up their response to the crises in the four countries.

Reiterating calls made by Secretary-General, António Guterres, the Ambassador wrote: The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the primary

mechanism for the coordination of humanitarian assistance, emergency and relief responses, can meet immediate needs if adequately funded.”

“Everyone should do what they can to support the IASC and to mobilize the necessary resources to enable emergency and relief activities to continue,” she added.

While emergency relief is an immediate priority, plans for medium and longer-term assistance to support recovery and prevent future famines must be supported, the CFS Chair emphasized.

“The affected populations of these four countries need our help now. We, as the international community, need to act urgently and come together with effective actions,” she said.

In 2015 CFS approved the Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises that sets out concrete policy approaches that can build resilience. All stakeholders, public and private, should apply the principles and actions laid out in that document in the four countries and wherever there is a protracted crisis that threatens food security and nutrition.

“I am counting on you to respond in a way that will ensure that short-term relief is properly funded while medium and long-term measures are taken to build resilience and to eradicate hunger and malnutrition for good,” concluded Ambassador Gornass.

The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for all stakeholders to work together to ensure food security and nutrition for all.

[On day against homophobia, UN officials urge respect for sexual and gender diversity](#)

17 May 2017 – Marking the international day against homophobia, senior United Nations officials today called for respect for sexual and gender diversity and urged the protection of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people from discrimination and harm.

“Today, I am deeply concerned by the excessive trivialization of insults, sexist and homophobic remarks in the media, in everyday life, on social networks, even from political leaders,” [said](#) UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) Director-General Irina Bokova in her message for the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT), commemorated annually on 17 May.

She recalled the situation of homosexuals under the Nazi regime, interned in “re-education” camps, and killed. The UN was created to prevent such crimes from happening again, she stressed, noting that UNESCO is committed to protecting the rights of homosexual and transgender people by drawing across its mandate to advance education, the sciences, culture, communication and information.

“These are powerful tools to fight the prejudice, verbal violence and stigmatization that foreshadow physical violence and that violate the equality and inherent dignity of all. This work for reason and tolerance begins on the benches of school,” she said.

Research by the International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)) has found that workplace policies, often designed from a hetero-normative perspective, may fall short of addressing the issues and concerns of LGBTI workers. For example, LGBTI workers may be excluded from leave and benefit entitlements, such as parental leave, because their families do not fit traditional norms.

“In keeping with the principles of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, no LGBTI worker should be left behind. Today let us stand in solidarity for the rights of LGBTI workers and their families,” [said](#) ILO Director-General Guy Ryder.

Gender identity and sexual orientation can have an impact on a migrant’s journey, unfortunately often in a negative and even dangerous way, warns the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)).

VIDEO: There are an estimated 500,000 homeless youth in the US of which 40 percent are identified as LGBT. In this story of Kellen, enrolled in the Ali Forney Center, the largest community centre for LGBT homeless youth in the U.S. *Credit: United Nations*

“IOM has a zero tolerance policy for any type of homophobia, transphobia or biphobia and does not tolerate any abuses against migrants and host communities receiving assistance or protection from IOM,” [said](#) Director General William Lacy Swing.

A group of UN and international human rights experts [urged](#) States and other stakeholders to protect trans and gender diverse children and adolescents effectively from discrimination, exclusion, violence and stigma and to foster supportive family environments for trans and gender diverse people.

“We urge States worldwide to adopt a legal and policy framework, with comprehensive implementation measures, to protect the rights of trans and gender diverse youth, respectful of gender diversity, and to enable the realization of their fullest potential,” they said in a news release from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)).

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS ([UNAIDS](#)) said that its vision of zero discrimination and ending AIDS by 2030 will only become a reality if the response to HIV reaches everyone, including LGBTI people.

Many young gay and transgender people are rejected by their families, living on the streets, facing all types of discrimination and violence," said UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé. "This is not the path to healthy and productive societies. We must encourage inclusion and compassion and ensure that networks of support are in place, including access to essential health and social services."

The Day's theme this year is 'Love Makes a Family.'

[Big data can have a 'big impact' on achievement of Global Goals, UN says on IT Day](#)

17 May 2017 – Mastering and measuring 'big data' to map poverty from space or use mobile phones to track food security could boost evidence-based decision-making at local and global levels and drive the implementation of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the United Nations telecommunications agency said today.

"The theme for 2017 is [Big Data for Big Impact](#), which will explore the power of big data for development and examine the opportunities to convert unprecedented quantities of data into information that can drive development," said the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union, Houlin Zhao, in his [message](#) on the Day.

Mr. Zhao projects that the insight brought about by more focused data analysis will enable evidence-based decision-making at national, regional and international levels and help to advance the UN [2030 Agenda](#) and its corresponding Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The [World Telecommunication and Information Society Day](#) is celebrated annually on 17 May to help [raise awareness](#) of the possibilities that the use of the Internet and other information and communication technologies (ICT) can bring to societies and economies, as well as of ways to bridge the digital divide.

This year's commemoration also provides an occasion to take a closer look at the importance of governance and regulation, says Mr. Zhao, highlighting the implications for personal privacy and security given the future exponential growth in data and connectivity.

The ITU Secretary-General further states that activities undertaken by the ITU membership will contribute towards building momentum to embrace big data on a global scale and to seize new opportunities to address development challenges.

Recently ITU announced the top-90 winning Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D) initiatives from around the world competing for prestigious WSIS Prizes 2017, with over a million online votes casted for 345 nominated projects. The winners will be announced during ITU's World Summit on the Information Society Forum in June.