

Zika could end up costing Latin America and the Caribbean up to \$18 billion, UN reports finds

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In addition to the impact on public health, the tangible impact of the Zika outbreak, such as on gross domestic product (GDP), could cost the Latin American and the Caribbean region as much as \$18 billion between 2015 and 2017, a new United Nations report has revealed.

The report [*Socio-economic impact assessment of Zika virus in Latin America and the Caribbean*](#), prepared by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), has a particular focus on Brazil, Colombia and Suriname – the 11 countries that first reported the outbreak in October-November 2015.

Highlighting the far-reaching impact of [Zika virus](#) would go beyond tangible losses such as to the GDP and could potentially impact the implementation of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, Jessica Faieta, the UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of its Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, said:

“The consequences of the virus can undermine decades of social development, hard-earned health gains and slow progress towards [achieving] the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”

The assessment also clearly showed that the impact of the virus was felt the most in poorer countries.

While larger economies such as Brazil could bear the greatest absolute burden, but the most severe impacts are likely to be felt in the poorest countries such as Haiti.

“Zika reminds us that all countries and peoples remain vulnerable to emerging infectious diseases, and that a disease that primarily affects poorer populations has wide-ranging social and economic implications for entire communities,” added Magdy Martínez-Solimán, the UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of its Bureau for Policy and Programme Support.

SEE RELATED: [Vigilance against Zika virus should ‘remain high,’ UN health agency’s new guidance](#)

The impact assessment also highlighted the need to strengthen regional and national preparedness and response strategies which also involve communities and have particular focus on the needs of vulnerable groups such as girls, women and persons with disabilities.

The Zika virus has highlighted, once again, the critical role that communities and local health workers play during health emergencies, said IFRC Regional Director for the Americas Walter Cotte highlighting that community engagement strengthens local partnerships, resilience and reduces stigma.

We must continue to promote coordination at all levels and strengthen the Red Cross' role as an auxiliary to public authorities.

[Cost of renewables fell in 2016, lowering global investment in clean energy – UN](#)

6 April 2017 – The world added record levels of renewable energy capacity in 2016, even as investment in clean energy fell, the United Nations Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)) today reported.

[Ever-cheaper clean tech](#) provides a real opportunity for investors to get more for less, said UNEP executive Director Erik Solheim. This is exactly the kind of situation, where the needs of profit and people meet, that will drive the shift to a better world for all.

The report, [Global Trends in Renewable Energy Investment 2017](#), found that wind, solar, biomass and waste-to-energy, geothermal, small hydro and marine sources added 138.5 gigawatts to global power capacity in 2016, up from 127.5 gigawatts added the year before. According to the press release, this difference is roughly equals to the energy created from the world's 16 largest existing power producing facilities combined.

Another key finding is the decreasing cost of clean energy, as compared with traditional fuels. For example, the average dollar capital expenditure per megawatt for solar photovoltaics and wind dropped by over 10 per cent.

This meant that investors got more bang for their buck, according to UN Environment, which published today's report along with the Frankfurt School-UNEP Collaborating Centre and the Bloomberg New Energy Finance.

Investment in renewables capacity was roughly double that in fossil fuel generation, the UN programme said.

While the capacity from renewables was equivalent to 55 per cent of all new power, the highest to date, total investment was \$241.6 billion, the lowest since 2013.



Global new investment in renewable energy. Volume adjusts for re-invested equity. Total values include estimates for undisclosed deals. Developed country volumes are based on OECD countries excluding Mexico, Chile, and Turkey. Source: UN Environment, Bloomberg New Energy Finance

The authors noted drops in investment among developing countries, including in China where investment had been rising the past 11 years. Investment in offshore windmills in China, however, peaked at \$4.1 billion.

Meanwhile, in Europe, investment rose, led by the United Kingdom and Germany. The continent's investment in renewables overall rose three per cent to \$59.8 billion.

The most hopeful sign last year for the future greening of the global electricity system was a succession of winning bids for solar and wind, in auctions around the world, according to the report. Records were set for solar power in Chile and onshore wind in Morocco.

[At Security Council, new UN peacekeeping chief urges faster implementation of Mali peace deal](#)

6 April 2017 – The new United Nations peacekeeping chief today stressed the need for the parties to the conflict in Mali to redouble their efforts to accelerate the implementation of their 2015 peace agreement while expressing a concern about the volatile security situation in the landlocked West African country.

“In recent months, there has been positive progress in the implementation of the Peace Agreement,” Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix told the Security Council in his first briefing since succeeding Hervé Ladsous, earlier this month.

The briefing followed a joint visit to Mali about two weeks ago by Mr. Lacroix and Mr. Ladsous. They met with authorities, including President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, who has been seeking to unify the country after a rebellion, a coup and an insurgency.

The installation of the interim authorities in Taoudenni and Timbuktu by 13 April was announced yesterday.

“These developments illustrate the gradual return of State authority to northern Mali under the interim arrangements,” the new peacekeeping chief said, noting that the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission ([MINUSMA](#)) is making every effort to assist the achievement of

concrete results on the ground.

On the security front, the situation remains worrying, he said, citing the creation of a new alliance that brings together the most active terrorist groups in Mali, including Al Qaeda. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) slowly made its appearance in the Sahelian band.



Jean-Pierre Lacroix (left), Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, with Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop of Mali, at the Security Council meeting on the situation in Mali. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

“This convergence of threats is particularly worrying in a context where often the presence of the State is weak or sometimes non-existent and where the implementation of the Peace Agreement still has to translate into tangible results on the ground,” he said.

Mr. Lacroix also underscored the need to address the scourge of transnational organised crime and its impact on the peace efforts. On this particular aspect, he added, the Security Council has already expressed its intention to consider targeted sanctions against spoilers of peace.

“We believe it is time to consider establishing such a sanctions regime,” he said.

Given these political and security circumstances, MINUSMA continues to adjust its priorities and posture to provide the best support within its current mandate, he said, adding that his department will revert to the Council, before the Mission’s mandate expires on 30 June 2017, if any mandate adjustments are required.

[Strengthening the UN Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#)

6 April 2017 – Following his analysis of the report of the High-Level External Independent Review Panel on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by International Peacekeeping Forces in the Central African Republic, former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed Jane Holl Lute of the United States as Special Coordinator on improving the Organization’s response to sexual exploitation and abuse, in February 2016.

Almost a year later, on 6 January 2017, the current Secretary-General, António Guterres, asked Ms. Lute to lead a [high-level task force](#) to improve United Nations approach for preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse.

“The Secretary-General – even before formally taking office – made it very clear that he intends to be associated personally and continuously with all efforts to rid this Organization of this scourge,” said Ms. Lute, in an interview with UN News a few days before the publication of the Secretary-General’s [report](#), *Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: A New Approach*.

In the interview, Ms. Lute, echoes Secretary-General Guterres’ concern that “deep gender inequality is at the heart of what sexual exploitation and abuse is.”

VIDEO: Jane Holl Lute, Special Coordinator on improving the Organization’s response to Sexual exploitation and abuse, on improving United Nations response to sexual exploitation. *Credit: UN News*

A new UN strategy

“We have to do better and we have to do more”, stresses Ms. Lute, as she describes a new, four-fold UN strategy to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse.

Four-fold UN strategy:

- Focusing on the rights and dignity of victims
- Ending impunity for those guilty of crimes and abuses
- Reaching broadly to external experts and those affected
- Raising awareness and sharing best practices

In an effort to put victims first, Secretary-General Guterres announced that he intends to appoint a victims’ rights advocate at UN Headquarters, while calling on each of the four UN field missions that account for the highest numbers of incidents to appoint one on the ground as well.

The four peacekeeping missions are located in the Central African Republic, Haiti, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan.

‘Protectors should not become predators’ – Atul Khare, Head of UN Field Support

Atul Khare, head of the UN Department of Field Support – which deals with tackling sexual exploitation and abuse in UN peace operations – explains in a separate interview that measures are being taken in close cooperation with Member States to address this scourge in the field and provide essential assistance to victims. For example, immediate and urgent needs are covered by each mission’s budget, while the Department is working closely with Member States to conduct DNA tests to establish paternity and ensure recognition of the rights of mother and child.

Also, a trust fund to assist victims has been established in which Member States voluntarily contribute to improve the medical and psychosocial

assistance provided to victims in coordination with UN humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

VIDEO: Atul Khare pledges to eliminate the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse, including acts committed by peacekeeping forces under the UN mandate.
Credit: UN News

Preventive measures include mandatory training, sensitization, risk management and enhanced screening of all incoming personnel – be it military, police or civilian – for prior misconduct while serving with the UN. Response measures include deployment of immediate response teams to gather and preserve evidence, rapid investigations, immediate disciplinary measures such as repatriation of uniformed personnel when the perpetrator is known and suspension of payments, and pursuing criminal accountability with Member States, including imprisonment.

Protectors cannot be predators. Protectors cannot be somebody who is exploiting the people Atul Khare, head of the UN Department of Field Support

For Mr. Khare, the wrongdoings of some people should not tarnish the sacrifice of the more than 100,000 peacekeeping personnel, and their respective countries. “Protectors cannot be predators. Protectors cannot be somebody who is exploiting the people,” he says.

While greater collaboration has been provided by Member States, collective work is also undertaken in the sensitization of communities living close to UN bases, including through messages broadcast by UN radio stations on the ground.

More data on victims, allegations, investigations and accountability measures is also being provided through the recently redesigned [Conduct and Discipline website](#).

As a part of educational efforts, *No Excuse Cards* have been produced for UN system-wide use, which are to be carried by all UN personnel, including humanitarian and peacekeeping personnel, in the field.

An issue to be addressed across the Organization

Relating to the methodology of the response to sexual exploitation and abuse, Ms. Lute underlines the system-wide approach of the UN: “This is a problem that all of us have to address, system-wide. And we need to begin by thinking through: how can we become a global example of a standards-based organisation of best practice?” she notes. Related to this, she adds that the Secretary-General has revised the policy protecting whistle-blowers.

VIDEO: Jane Holl Lute, Special Coordinator, tells UN News about the

Secretary-General's new UN whistleblower protection policy. *Credit: UN News*

"The Secretary-General intends to re-connect each of us to the values and principles of this Organization: [to understand] why we signed up to begin with; what it means to work under a blue helmet or the blue flag or in association with the United Nations perhaps under a UN mandate, in every dimension," Ms. Lute concludes.

It is a response that the Secretary-General wishes to consolidate with all stakeholders, including Member States, civil society, and international NGOs. Notably, he has called for a high-level meeting on the subject this fall, on the margins of the next General Assembly.

[Sport is force of social empowerment and an engine for equality – UNESCO](#)

6 April 2017 – There is no more powerful platform for promoting shared values than sport, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), Irina Bokova, said in a message marking the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace.

"Sport is a passion shared by women and men across the world. It is a force for [physical well-being and social empowerment](#). It is an engine for equality, especially gender equality, for including everyone, especially the most disadvantaged," Ms Bokova said in her message on the Day.

Sport also promotes solidarity, respect, teamwork, responsibility, honesty, self-esteem and motivation, she said. However, despite the positive benefits, 3.2 million deaths are attributed to physical inactivity every year.

"This is why UNESCO has joined forces with the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) to combat sedentary lifestyles, starting with inclusive and equitable quality physical education at school," Ms Bokova said.

The Director-General also called for new commitment from all actors to ensuring public policies in fields of education, health, transport and urban planning work also with the private sector to develop legislation and national plans for sport.

"As the world takes forward the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, we must do everything to support sport to leave no one behind," she said, while commending the work of volunteers dedicated to supporting sport for peace and development around the world.

RELATED: [With more people sedentary, WHO urges everyone to get moving](#)

In November 2015, the UNESCO member States adopted the new [International Charter of Physical Education and Sport](#), the spirit of which was ensuring respect for the fundamental right to sport for all men and women without discrimination, Ms Bokova said. “Sport is a way to include everyone, including [refugees and migrants](#), to fight against stereotypes, to strengthen the foundations for peace in healthy society,” she added. In August 2013, the sixty-seventh session of the UN General Assembly decided to proclaim 6 April as the [International Day of Sport for Development and Peace](#).