

World population set to grow another 2.2 billion by 2050: UN survey

The world's population is set to grow by 2.2 billion between now and 2050, the UN said on Wednesday, and more than half of that growth – 1.3 billion – is likely to be in sub-Saharan Africa, where women's rights are hampered by limited access to healthcare and education, along with "entrenched gender discrimination".

Monica Ferro, Director of the [UN Population Fund \(UNFPA\)](#) in Geneva, said the trend globally is towards smaller families, indicating that more people are making choices about exactly how many children they want, or can afford to raise.

Despite the gradual transition to lower fertility rates, which began in Europe in the late 19th century, no country can claim that all their citizens enjoy reproductive rights at all times, Ms Ferro told journalists at a press briefing. "No matter if it is a high fertility-rate country or low fertility-rate country, in both of them, you will find individuals and couples who say they don't have the number of children they want. They either have too many or too few."

In 43 countries, women have more than 4 children

According to UNFPA's [State of World Population 2018](#), there are 43 countries where women have more than four or more children, and 38 of these are in Africa.

In all but five East African countries, fewer than half of all women surveyed, said they would prefer not to have any more children.

If UNFPA's predictions are correct, Africa's share of the world population will grow from 17 per cent in 2017, to 26 per cent in 2050.

Staying with the African continent, fertility rates are "significantly lower" in cities than in rural areas, the report indicates. In Ethiopia, for example, women have around 2.1 children in cities, whereas they have around five in the rest of the country.

Bigger families in conflict zones

Underlining the link between conflict and insecurity with bigger families, the UNFPA data also shows that Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Timor-Leste and Yemen have higher fertility rates than the overall average of 2.5 children per woman.

The UNFPA official urged all countries to implement a range of policies and programmes that would increase the "reproductive choices" of their

populations.

Every year, 300,000 women die during pregnancy or childbirth because they have no choices in maternal healthcare; every day, thousands of girls are forced into child and early marriage and are victims of female genital mutilation. They have no choices. –
Monica Ferro, Chief, UNFPA Geneva

“In developing countries, 671 million women have chosen to use modern contraception,” Ms Ferro said. “But at the same time, we know that 250 million in the developing world want to control their fertility, and lack access to modern contraceptive methods.”

Prioritizing quality maternal healthcare for all is key, according to the UN report, which highlights the need for access to modern contraceptives, better sex education, and an emphasis on changing male stereotyping of women.

Couples who want to have more children should also be helped to do so, Ms Ferro said, explaining that economic barriers which preventing this from happening could be better addressed, through measures such as affordable child care.

France and Norway had seen their birth rates pick up after taking such steps in recent decades, the UNFPA official said.

Nonetheless, many developing countries lack the resources or political security they require to improve reproductive health and rights for all.

They “are struggling hard to meet the demand for education, the demand for jobs, the demand for even having healthcare services that are accessible to everyone,” Ms Ferro said. “What the report tries to show is that in these countries, the unmet need for family planning is typically very high.”

Reproductive rights have improved ‘substantially’

In the nearly 25 years since the landmark International Conference on Population and Development was endorsed by 179 Governments, people’s reproductive rights have “substantially improved around the world”, Ms Ferro said.

She noted that States agreed then that it was important for couples and individuals to decide the number, spacing and timing of their children, and that such decisions were made free from discrimination, coercion or violence.

A similar commitment is reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals agenda, agreed by the international community in 2015.

Nonetheless, hundreds of thousands of women continue to suffer from the failure to implement this programme of action, the UNFPA official insisted.

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have no choices in maternal healthcare; every day, thousands of girls are forced into child and early marriage and are victims of female genital mutilation. They have no choices.”

[UN Chief says ending poverty ‘a question of justice’ on International Day](#)

Highlighting that for the United Nations, eliminating poverty in all its forms remains one of the greatest global challenges and priorities, UN [Secretary-General Antonio Guterres](#) stressed the fundamental connection between eradicating poverty and upholding equal rights for all.

“Let us remember that ending poverty is not a matter of charity but a question of justice,” the UN Chief said in his message commemorating the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

He said that since the day was first marked 25 years ago, “nearly one billion people have escaped poverty, thanks to political leadership, inclusive economic development and international cooperation.”

He cited that 700 million people are still being left behind and are unable to meet their basic daily needs.

On this International day for the Eradication of Poverty,” the UN Chief added, “let us commit to uphold the core pledge of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind—*UN Chief Antonio Guterres*

This year’s theme, [Coming together with those furthest behind to build an inclusive world of universal respect for human rights and dignity](#) underscores the connection between extreme poverty and human rights. Specifically, emphasizing that people living in poverty are disproportionately affected by many human rights violations.

Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions is embodied in [Goal 1](#) of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), which aims to foster social protection systems for all.

The UN will host the 25th [Commemoration](#) of the International Day at the headquarters in New York on Wednesday.

“On this International day for the Eradication of Poverty,” the UN Chief added, “let us commit to uphold the core pledge of the 2030 Agenda to leave

no one behind.”

[Nigeria: UN chief ‘appalled’ by killing of aid worker; calls for release of remaining hostages](#)

The United Nations Secretary-General strongly condemned on Tuesday the killing of an aid worker from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in north-east Nigeria. He said he was “appalled” by her death on Monday.

The aid worker, Hauwa Mohammed Liman, a 24-year-old midwife and nurse had been working in the town of Rann, near the border with Cameroon. She was abducted on 1 March, along with two other nurses, Saifura Hussaini Ahmed Khorsa and Alice Loksha, following an attack on the town by armed extremists, in which dozens were killed.

The Secretary-General expressed his deepest condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Ms. Liman and his solidarity with ICRC staff. “Those responsible for this killing must be brought to justice,” he stated.

Aerial view of the town of Rann, Borno State, Nigeria. 23 March 2018.
Credit: OCHA/Yasmina Guerda

Among the casualties of the 1 March attack in Rann, were [three UN aid workers](#): Emmanuel Yawe Sonter and Ibrahim Lawan who worked with the [International Organization for Migration](#) (IOM) and Dr. Izuogu Onyedikachi who worked with the [UN Children’s Fund](#) (UNICEF).

Saifura Hussaini Ahmed Khorsa, one of the other two abducted nurses, who also worked with ICRC, was killed a month ago after spending six and a half months in captivity, in what the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Nigeria [called](#) a “cowardly, heinous and despicable act”.

According to news reports, Alice Loksha, who worked with UNICEF in Rann, remains in the hands of the armed group who seems to have announced its intention to keep her “as a slave”.

Expressing “concern for the safety and well-being of the remaining hostages”, Mr. Guterres called “for their immediate release” and emphasized that “all parties to the conflict must protect aid workers who provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to the millions of people in need in north-east Nigeria”.

According to the UN humanitarian affairs office ([OCHA](#)) the international response in Rann is providing life-saving assistance – including food, safe water, shelter and medical care – to over 60,000 internally displaced persons, and millions in the rest of the north-east of the country. Close to 3,000 aid workers are present in the north-east, the majority of whom are Nigerian nationals.

The humanitarian crisis in Nigeria's north-east is one of the most severe in the world today, with 7.7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, 6.1 million of whom targeted for humanitarian assistance in 2018.

[UN 'stands in solidarity' with cyclone-hit India – Secretary-General Guterres](#)

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has expressed sadness at the loss of lives and devastation caused by Cyclone Titli in India and said that the Organization is ready to provide assistance.

In a [statement](#) issued by his office, Mr. Guterres said that the UN “stands in solidarity with the Government of India and is ready to support the response.”

The deadly storm made landfall in India's eastern Andhra Pradesh state, on 11 October, and continued north into the state of Odisha, disrupting road, telecommunications and power networks.

The damage was particularly extensive in Odisha's districts of Ganjam, Gajapati, and Rayagada, where millions have been affected. Thousands of homes are also reported to have been damaged in Andhra Pradesh.

According to media reports, at least 25 people have been killed, many more injured, and over 300,000 people evacuated to safer places.

In the statement, the UN chief also extended his condolences to the families of the victims and wished a speedy recovery to the injured.

World Food Day: here's what the UN is doing to fix 'intolerable' wrong of extreme hunger

"In our world of plenty, one person in nine does not have enough to eat", [said](#) United Nations chief [António Guterres](#) on Tuesday, marking [World Food Day](#). With this year's theme, "our actions are our future", the UN and its partners, held events and launched information campaigns worldwide, to amplify one message: achieving zero hunger by 2030 is possible, provided we "join forces".

Currently, more than 815 million people do not have enough to eat. Some 155 million children under the age of five – 23 per cent – are chronically malnourished and stunted and may endure the effects of it for the rest of their lives. One in two infant deaths worldwide are caused by hunger.

"This is intolerable," said the Secretary-General. "Zero hunger is about joining forces," he stated, as he called for "stronger political will and more financial support... until everyone has enough and quality food".

Speakers at the [global World Food Day ceremony in Rome](#) echoed the UN chief's call to action to governments, companies, institutions and individuals.

"People frequently ask me if I really believe that it is possible to eradicate hunger by 2030. My answer is yes, I do," said José Graziano da Silva, the Director-General of the [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO), noting that his own country, Brazil, had been able to almost eliminate hunger in less than 10 years, from 11 per cent of the population in 2001, to about 2 per cent in 2010.

"The struggle against hunger urgently demands generous financing, the abolition of trade barriers and, above all, greater resilience in the face of climate change, economic crises and warfare," said Pope Francis in a [message](#) read on his behalf.

Since its very early years of existence, the UN has made tackling hunger and malnutrition one of its key priorities. Here are some of the ways the organization is contributing today to achieving zero hunger tomorrow:

1. Help small farmers produce more with less

Eighty per cent of the farmland in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia is managed by smallholders (up to 10 hectares). For years, FAO has been providing them with training, improved seed supplies, agricultural tools and fertilizer to ensure higher yields.

One key project has been the roll-out of the [farm business school](#) (FBS),

formerly called farm field school – a hands-on learning programme on the basics of farm business management, product commercialization, market awareness, and adaptation to climate change to increase resilience.

2. Provide emergency food rations in humanitarian crises

Following natural disasters, or in humanitarian crises created by conflict or health emergencies, the [World Food Programme](#) (WFP) delivers relief food items, often overcoming tremendous logistical challenges. [In 2017](#), 91 people received food assistance across 83 countries, and 18 million children received school meals across 60 countries.

One way people can support directly this effort is through the [Share The Meal](#) smartphone application, which has already enabled over 27.3 million meals to be “shared” with just one click in the Middle East, Bangladesh, Haiti, South Sudan and the Lake Chad region. As smartphone users outnumber hungry children by 20 to 1, the UN believes this has the potential to make a real difference.

3. End malnutrition

In parallel, to tackle nutrition deficiencies worldwide, the [UN Children’s Fund](#) (UNICEF) and the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) work hand-in-hand by: providing emergency care and therapeutic food to children and pregnant or lactating women in need; opening community-based treatment centres (CMAM); carrying out capacity building efforts in medical centres worldwide; and training mothers on best feeding practices.

4. Focus on local economic systems

In delivering assistance, the UN is careful to ensure that local economies are supported and fueled whenever possible. WFP has pledged to source 10 per cent of its food purchases from small farms. In humanitarian crises, assistance in the form of electronic cash transfers and food vouchers is essential to kickstart local economies. In addition, by easily recording and tracking transactions, this improves transparency and eliminates food distribution and storage costs.

In addition, WFP’s [Purchase For Progress](#) (P4P) initiative encourages national governments and the private sector to buy food in ways that benefit smallholders. Covering 35 countries, P4P has changed how more than 1 million small farmers interact with markets.

5. Develop vulnerability projections and analysis

WFP’s [Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping](#) (VAM) enables the UN to monitor food security situations and market fluctuations in countries across the world. This supports decision-making for programmes world-wide.

In addition, launched at the climate change conference in Paris in 2015, the

[UN's food insecurity and climate change vulnerability map](#) examines how climate change could increase hunger across the globe.

6. Empower rural women and girls

Women comprise an average of 43 per cent of the agricultural labour force of developing countries, and nearly 50 per cent in Eastern and Southeastern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

If women farmers had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20-30 percent, lifting 100-150 million people out of hunger. That is why the UN, across its various initiatives, places a [particular emphasis](#) on empowering rural women and girls, and providing skills training.

7. Raise awareness and galvanize change

Achieving Zero Hunger is the second of the ambitious 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by 193 Member States in 2015. To meet the various targets by 2030, the UN is [raising awareness](#) with governments, the private sector, individuals and farmers.

"We know what needs to be done," said FAO's Graziano da Silva. "And we have to act now."

You can listen to the entire speech of José Graziano da Silva, FAO's Director-General, at the global World Food Day ceremony in Rome on Tuesday [here](#):