

Health

Climate change, conflict blamed

'Global hunger rises for the first time in decade'

PARIS, Sept 18, (Agencies): Hunger is on the increase across the globe once again after a decade of declines, a UN report said Friday, thanks in part to climate change aggravating severe weather and conflicts.

The slowdown in global growth in recent years, which led to a collapse in the prices of numerous commodities, also had a negative impact on the ability of people in many countries to feed themselves, it said.

Some 815 million people, or 11 percent of the world's population, were chronically undernourished in 2016, according to the annual UN report, The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World.

"The increase — 38 million more people than the previous year — is largely due to the proliferation of violent conflicts and climate-related shocks," said the report.

It said severe weather, "in part linked to climate change", reduced the availability of food in many countries and contributed to a rise in food insecurity.

Scientists are loath to attribute any particular weather event to climate change, but believe the increase in temperature is increasing the severity of storms and droughts.

But the report also points to a link between climate change and conflict.

It "singles out conflict — increasingly compounded by climate change — as one of the key drivers behind the resurgence of hunger and many forms of malnutrition" said a joint statement by the UN agencies which drafted the report.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) prepared the report.

Conflict

"The concurrence of conflict and climate-related natural disasters is likely to increase with climate change, as climate change not only magnifies problems of food insecurity and nutrition, but can also contribute to a further downward spiral into conflict, protracted crisis and continued fragility," said the report.

It listed nine conflict and climate related shocks associated with

food crises in 2016, including in Syria and South Sudan, where over 53 million people were considered to be "food insecure".

The report also noted that slowdown in global growth has had a negative impact on people's ability to get enough to eat.

"Economic slowdowns in countries highly dependent on oil and other primary commodity export revenues have also had an impact on food availability and/or reduced people's ability to access food," said the report.

The UN agencies found that malnutrition had slowed the growth of 155 million children under the age of five, which also has an impact on long-term health and educational attainment.

Nearly 52 million were affected by wasting — being underweight for their height.

The report also found at the same time an increase in overweight young children, to 41 million.

Trends

"These trends are a consequence not only of conflict and climate change but also of sweeping changes in dietary habits as well as economic slowdowns," said the report.

In an annual report on the state of food security, the UN said 815 million people were chronically undernourished last year, 38 million more than the previous year. While the number is still below the 900 million hungry people registered in 2000, the UN warned that the increase "is cause for great concern."

Sixty percent of the world's chronically hungry people were in areas experiencing man-made conflict.

"This is a shame. This is an indictment of humanity," said the head of the World Food Program, David Beasley.

The UN has said some 20 million people face possible famine in parts of South Sudan, northeast Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen. Overall, 11 percent of the world's population was hungry last year.

The heads of major UN agencies warned that without concerted action, the ambitious goal set by world governments to end hunger and prevent malnutrition by 2030 will not be reached.

"This has set off alarm bells we cannot afford to ignore," the UN leaders said.



Creating wooden boxes and fishing nets were some of the crafts of Kuwaiti men in the past.

(Ghazy Qafaf — KUNA)

Jamaica's Violet Brown dies at 117, Japan woman now oldest

Staying fit: Japan's elderly hits record

TOKYO, Sept 18, (Agencies): Swinging dumbbells and chewing gum, several elderly Japanese gathered at a shrine in downtown Tokyo on Monday in sweltering temperatures, belying their age and importance in one of the world's most rapidly ageing societies.

The event to mark Respect for the Aged Day in Japan drew over 200 people in an exercise meant to increase their body strength and balance.

The exercise was more than just symbolic, as the number of people aged 65 and above has risen to a record high of 27.7 percent of Japan's population, government figures showed.

Significantly, those in this age category who still work has also hit a record, highlighting efforts by the public and private sectors to keep more elderly in the workforce longer to battle labour shortages.

The government estimates, released on Monday, are a stark reminder of the challenges posed by years of a declining birthrate,

Germany at 21.5 percent, and France at 19.7 percent.

Official figures showed 35.14 million Japanese people were 65 or older, with 7.7 million of them holding down jobs. The number of people aged 90 or above also topped two million for the first time.

Natsu Naruse, a participant in the exercise who recently turned 100 years old, encapsulated Japan's challenge.

"I think my children would have trouble", if I lived longer, she said.

Also:

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic: The world's oldest person has died in Jamaica. Violet Brown was 117 years and 189 days old.

Prime Minister Andrew Holness expressed his condolences in a Facebook post, calling her "an inspiring woman".

The woman known as "Aunt V" died Friday at a local hospital, where she had been treated for heart arrhythmia and dehydration.

With her death, the Gerontology

Research Group lists **Nabi Tajima of Japan** as the oldest surviving person. She was born on Aug 4, 1900.

Brown was born **Violet Moss** — or **Mosse**: Both spellings were sometimes used — on March 10, 1900, and spent much of her life cutting sugar cane near her home in the **Duanvale** district in western **Jamaica**.

A biography posted on the website of a foundation named in her honor said she was baptized at age 13 at the Trittonvale Baptist Church and remained a member throughout her life, long serving as organist. She credited her longevity to hard work and her Christian faith.

Her husband **Augustus Brown** died in 1997 and the eldest of her six children died in April at age 97.

In an interview this year with The Associated Press, Brown said she was surprised but grateful to have lived so long.

"This is what God has given me, so I have to take it", she said.



In this April 16, 2017 file photo, the world's oldest person Violet Brown poses for a photo at her home in Duavale, Jamaica. (AP)

which is now at 1.45 births per woman. Many economists say a developed country needs a birthrate slightly above 2.0 to prevent its population from shrinking.

Japan has been struggling with a declining workforce for decades, and its elderly ratio is the highest among Group of Seven nations, followed by Italy at 23.0 percent,

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