



News Bulletin

■GLOBAL

UNITED NATIONS - Poverty, corruption and violence are hobbling development efforts in Afghanistan, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights says in a report. Though the country received an estimated \$35 billion in economic aid between 2002 and 2009, a third of the population is destitute while international armed forces ignore blatant corruption in favor of security concerns, the report charges.

CLIMATE CHANGE - The greenhouse-gas emission cuts proposed by the 112 countries to sign on to the Copenhagen climate accord are insufficient, says Yvo de Boer, head of the United Nations Climate Change Secretariat. The accord calls for limiting global temperature rise to 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial era levels but leaves it up each individual country to determine its own commitment

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - The rise in the global demand for clean water has led to a record increase in fresh water processed from sea water. Global water shortages are driving the demand. Analysts Global Water Intelligence say around 9.5m cubic metres of fresh water a day is produced as a result of desalination or by reusing sewage water. This process is energy-intensive and has mainly been used by Gulf states. But the falling cost of technology means poorer countries such as India, Ghana and Algeria are using these techniques as rivers and dry up and rainfall becomes less predictable.

DEVELOPMENT - While agricultural research has made massive strides over the years in helping the world produce more food from the same amount of land, around one in six people, the 1.02 billion hungry, have not noticed. The populations of wealthier countries have abundant cheap food thanks to researchers' efforts and, no doubt, many more people in the developing world would be undernourished if states such as India, Mexico and the Philippines had not imported modern farming practices and technologies. These advances have not done enough, though, to help the rural poor, who account for three-quarters of the world's hungry, to feed themselves or escape from poverty.

■AFRICA

KENYA has set its sights on halving the prevalence of infant diarrhoeal disease - which kills dozens of children daily - within five years, using new treatments and by boosting preventive measures.

SOUTH AFRICA - Traditional healers extend healthcare - South Africa's traditional healing profession has often been mired in controversy over treating HIV/AIDS, with dodgy traditional remedies promoted as alternatives to antiretroviral (ARV) medication, and some groups of traditional healers being associated with AIDS denialists.

SOMALIA - UN agencies and health authorities in Somalia's self-declared republic of Somaliland have set up a taskforce to check the spread of acute watery diarrhoea, which has broken out in several regions, killing several children and infecting hundreds of people.

WEST AFRICA - Rice versus vegetables - Rice may still be a symbol of food security across Africa, but the cereal does little to boost nutrition, unlike vegetables, according to the India-based International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT).

■ASIA

AFGHANISTAN - About half of all young girls imprisoned in Afghanistan are charged with "moral crimes," often related to forced marriages, rape and attempts to escape abuse. In some cases, runaways are charged with kidnapping themselves. Tradition and societal demands leave girls as the group most at risk for abnormal judicial proceedings, according to rights advocates.

MONGOLIA - An estimated 4.5 million animals have died in Mongolia's severe winter. About one-quarter of Mongolia's 3 million people are nomads, while others also raise livestock in fixed settlements. Many go deeply in debt to buy and raise their herds, in hopes of making the money back by selling wool, meat and skins.

■MIDDLE EAST

SYRIA - Thousands of non-Iraqi and non-Palestinian refugees and asylum-seekers in Syria risk deportation and ill-treatment, and cannot get the help they need, according to refugee agencies.

■LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

CHILE's government will spend over \$2.5 billion to rebuild hundreds of thousands of homes destroyed or damaged by the massive earthquake on Feb. 27, President Sebastian Pinera has said. The programme includes subsidies for homes totally or partially damaged by the quake and ensuing tsunamis, which killed hundreds of people, wrecked roads and towns and pummelled the forestry, fishing and fruit industries in south-central Chile.

HAITI - Haiti is asking donors for \$4 billion to help it rebuild and modernize in the wake of its Jan. 12 earthquake. Many Haitian groups say they feel shut out of their government's plan for recovery which is being presented to donors, and they want to promote an alternative model of development. Haitians say their most pressing needs are jobs, schools and homes, according to a survey released by an international relief agency.

WFWO's Communications Team