



News Bulletin

■GLOBAL

AIDS CONFERENCE - The United Nations and the world's largest backer of programmes against HIV/AIDS say they fear wealthy donor nations may cut funding to fight the disease because of global recession. Patients and health workers in poor countries are also concerned about the impact on treatment. Speaking at the start of an international gathering of some 20,000 AIDS activists, scientists and HIV patients in Vienna, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon praised progress made against the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) that causes AIDS, but said this could be jeopardised if governments trimmed budgets. Bill Clinton and Bill Gates urged AIDS activists to squeeze value out of every cent of funds to fight HIV, saying they could not expect donors to give more in hard times unless it was carefully spent. Meanwhile, an underground epidemic in Eastern Europe and Central Asia is building at an alarming pace, fuelled by drug use, risky sex and severe social stigma that stops people asking for help, according to the United Nations. In brighter news, a gel containing a prescription drug can sharply reduce HIV infections in women, a study described as groundbreaking by the World Health Organisation shows.

CLIMATE CHANGE - Unless the world's poorest countries address climate change in their development plans, they could slip into resource shortages, worsening poverty and conflict over the next 20 years, a new report warns.

ENVIRONMENT - If world leaders fail to agree on new carbon gas emission targets, the clean development mechanism in the Kyoto Treaty may cease to function in 2013, the United Nations says. The mechanism allowed for wealthy and poor countries to trade emissions rights, in a bid to help developing countries meet Kyoto targets. Kyoto will expire in 2012.

POVERTY - A new measure of poverty that assesses a family's health, education and standard of living instead of looking at its income has revealed about 400 million more poor people worldwide than currently gauged. The Multidimensional Poverty Index, can help governments and development agencies tailor their policies according to which deprivations are most common in different population groups and make their efforts more effective, says one of the authors.

■AFRICA

D.R. CONGO - Troops are fighting Ugandan rebels in oil-rich eastern Congo, killing two dozen combatants and forcing thousands of civilians to flee, military and humanitarian sources say.

SUDAN - Rebels in Sudan's Darfur region and the United Nations will sign a deal in Geneva this week to protect children, an independent mediation group has said, in a move that appears aimed at stopping the use of child soldiers.

WEST AFRICA - Food shortages and high rates of malnutrition have long been a reality in the Sahel, but the understanding of malnutrition has drastically changed since the prolonged drought in the early 1970s.

■ASIA

CHINA - Southern China is bracing for its second powerful storm in less than a week, as the death toll from floods and landslides caused by torrential rain climbed beyond 700 with hundreds of others reported missing. Tropical storm Chanthu is expected to make landfall in Guangdong and Hainan provinces on Thursday, and may pick up force while over the South China Sea.

■MIDDLE EAST

IRAQ - A lack of funds from international donors in 2010 has hindered UN and NGO assistance programmes for the most vulnerable Iraqis, leaving many of the country's pressing humanitarian needs unaddressed, says a UN mid-year review report.

ISRAEL/OPT - Israel has received international praise for its decision to ease its crippling blockade on Gaza following the country's deadly assault on a humanitarian flotilla trying to bring desperately needed humanitarian aid to the coastal territory. But according to the UN and human rights organisations, the easing of the blockade is insufficient in meeting Gaza's needs.

■LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

HAITI - Residents of Gonaives are working to help plant trees and other flora in the hills around the city aimed at preventing floods as a result of hurricanes. Meteorologists have predicted an active hurricane season, and Haiti is still struggling to provide adequate shelter and protection for residents in the wake of the Jan. 12 earthquake.

WFWO's Communications Team