

NEWS BULLETIN

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GLOBAL

DEVELOPMENT - As global food prices continue their surge into record territory, observers fear a corresponding spike in global unrest, particularly in developing countries. Prices rose 2.2% in February over the prior month's record highs, and volatility in oil markets could push prices even higher in March, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization.

HEALTH - Polio is more difficult to eradicate than smallpox because the fragile vaccine is less powerful, its victims show few visible effects, and the virus is active in populous regions. Still, the 20-year effort to eradicate the virus has confined it to four areas of the world - northern Nigeria, northern India, southern Afghanistan and the Pakistani border regions.

AFRICA

African countries need to take steps to monitor and prevent the spread of drug-resistant HIV. This was the warning from researchers at the annual conference on retroviruses in Boston last week. Evidence presented to the conference showed that people who had never taken antiretroviral (ARV) medicine were increasingly being infected with HIV that was resistant to common ARVs.

SOMALIA - One in three people in Somalia needs humanitarian assistance as a severe water crisis, linked to the La Niña weather phenomenon, takes hold across much of the country after failed seasonal Deyr rains and amid continuing armed conflict. Prices of cereals and water in many areas have soared.

SWAZILAND - There are fewer poor people in Swaziland today than a decade ago, according to data from a new household economic survey. The government has hailed the report as proof that its poverty-reduction efforts are working, but social welfare organizations say the real reason is the high death rate among the poor.

TANZANIA - More than 17,430 males have been circumcised in efforts to battle the spread of HIV/Aids. The project was mooted after researchers established that circumcision protects against HIV transmission by up to 60 per cent.

ASIA & PACIFIC

INDIA is undertaking massive efforts to prevent a resurgence of polio as the country has been the source of the gravest outbreaks in recent years despite being close to eradicating the disease. Authorities have deployed health workers to places like train stations to immunize the children of impoverished migrants on the move in search of better economic opportunities. Anti-polio campaigners see eradication of polio in India as key to global efforts to wipe out the disease.

MYANMAR - Human rights abuses and counter-insurgency campaigns in Chin State, western Myanmar, are causing a "health catastrophe", says a new study, results which echo an earlier survey in the eastern state of Shan.

WFWO's Communications Team