

NEWS BULLETIN

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GLOBAL

UNITED NATIONS - When it comes to population growth, the United Nations has three primary projections. The medium projection, the one most commonly used, has world population reaching 9.2 billion by 2050. The high one reaches 10.5 billion. The low projection, which assumes that the world will quickly move below replacement-level fertility, has population peaking at eight billion in 2042 and then declining. If the goal is to eradicate poverty, hunger, and illiteracy, then we have little choice but to strive for the lower projection. Slowing world population growth means ensuring that all women who want to plan their families have access to family planning information and services. Unfortunately, this is currently not the case for 215 million women, 59 percent of whom live in sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian subcontinent.

HEALTH - The suspension of aid by donor countries to the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria could have repercussions in countries planning for the long-term care of stricken patients, according to the fund's executive director.

DEVELOPMENT - At the upcoming Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) summit, to be held on the tropical Chinese island of Hainan Apr. 14, discussion will focus not only on deepening economic ties among members, but will also likely touch on global political events, including the crisis in the Middle East and North Africa. But China insists the club has no political agenda.

HUMANITARIAN AID POLICY - The UN commissioned the report as part of a shift in security policy towards navigating how to continue programming in highly insecure environments, rather than defining aid cut-off thresholds. "The more critical a programme is to people's survival and well-being, the greater amount of risk may be accepted". Despite numerous reports highlighting the problem, national staff security continues to be under-served by international NGOs, says the report. Many field operatives still receive less training than managers based in headquarters. "There is often very little investment in national staff, and even less in local NGOs. "It leads us to an ethical and strategic question: Are humanitarian organizations risk-averse with their own international staff, and risk-happy with local contractors and NGOs?" To realize these, and other changes, an attitude shift is required among many aid agencies, and security risk management must be part of any and all programme planning and costing, particularly in insecure areas.

AFRICA

Human Rights - Gays across Africa find themselves living under siege in a discriminatory political climate that appears broadly indifferent to a rash of violent attacks against gays. Politicians in several African countries, including Malawi and Senegal, are lashing out at gays and pushing legislation to prosecute them, while women in the gay community in South Africa find themselves battling the scourge of corrective rape.

ASIA & PACIFIC

AFGHANISTAN - Eliminated in the relatively secure northern and central provinces, polio persists in the insecure southern and eastern provinces, according to the Ministry of Public Health and the UN World Health Organization (WHO).

INDONESIA - Led by countries like Indonesia, 48 developing nations are rolling out a range of pledges to voluntarily cut their respective emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) by 2020, the year climate scientists say the earth's rising temperature should peak by if an environmental catastrophe is to be avoided. Indonesian negotiators confirmed during a UN climate change conference here that Jakarta is prepared to cut its GHG emissions by 26 percent on its own accord. But that is not all: the world's most populous Muslim country is prepared to increase emissions cuts to 41 percent if it receives development assistance that industrialised nations have committed to providing.

MIDDLE EAST

LIBYA - Al Hawari hospital may be the most modern medical centre in the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi, but the large number of war wounded it has received in the last two months has stretched its limited resources.

YEMEN - More Horn of Africa immigrants despite unrest - The number of immigrants arriving in Yemen from the Horn of Africa since the beginning of 2011 has increased despite the current political turmoil, raising fears that the government may find it hard to provide for them.

LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

BRAZIL - The mechanisation of sugar cane harvesting, originally aimed at curbing the pollution caused by the burning of cane fields, has resulted in an added bonus: it has helped to improve soil quality, according to growers and technical experts in the southern state of São Paulo, where most of Brazil's sugar and ethanol is produced. Traditionally, sugar cane fields were set on fire before harvesting to burn off the dried leaves from the plants, making it quicker and easier for cane cutters to manually harvest the crop. Now that leafy "trash" stays in the soil, fertilising it, trapping moisture, and preventing erosion.

WFWO's Communications Team