



News Bulletin

■GLOBAL

UNITED NATIONS - Countries and militia groups that continue to use child soldiers must face stricter punishments, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon argues in his new annual report on the issue to the Security Council. Ban drew particular attention to a list of violators appearing for the first time in the report of entities that have been repeatedly named for recruiting child soldiers over the past five years.

HEALTH - The number of children under 5 who die is dropping by about 2% annually thanks to more effective public health strategies aimed at conditions such as malaria, HIV/AIDS and waterborne illnesses, according to a study. Over the past 20 years, the overall number of annual deaths within the age group has decreased from 11.9 million to 7.7 million.

■AFRICA

NIGER - The food crisis in Niger has forced hundreds of people to cross the border into neighbouring Nigeria, according to local reports. Officials and residents of the northern Nigerian state of Katsina said on Friday that many women and children have been arriving in the region over the past two months because they were beginning to starve in their home country. Displaced people are reportedly seeking shelter with local families, begging for food from door to door and trying to make money by selling water or tea. The United Nations estimates that the food crisis is affecting around 10 million people in the Sahel region, of which 7.8 million are in Niger. The country's transitional government launched a food distribution operation on the weekend for almost 1.5 million people.

■ASIA

INDIA - Authorities in India's Bihar state are ready to pilot a program that uses mobile phone technology to battle some forms of government corruption in the public health care system. Medical workers will be able to register bank accounts through their cell phones to help avoid demands from local managers for portions of peoples' salaries. India has more than 520 million mobile phone subscribers - 165 million of them in rural markets where traditional banks have few branches.

MYANMAR - Two years after the destruction caused by Cyclone Nargis created a rare opening for foreign assistance into Myanmar, aid workers say they still face numerous operating challenges.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA - An estimated 20,000 people in remote parts of East Sepik Province, northwestern Papua New Guinea, have been affected by floods - the worst in 40 years - along the Sepik River since late March, but residents have been able to sustain themselves with minimum levels of outside support thanks to traditional coping mechanisms.

SRI LANKA - Early monsoon floods in Sri Lanka have killed at least 24 people and affected more than 524,000 others. The country's disaster management centre said the worst-hit district was Gampaha, where more than 12,500 people and 3,600 families were displaced. The rains have affected south, west and central areas of Sri Lanka, damaging or destroying more than 1,500 homes.

THAILAND - Bangkok residents took to the streets to help city workers clean the Thai capital after authorities intervened militarily to end two months of paralyzing anti-government protests. While the immediate crisis has ended, Thai society remains bitterly divided along the political and socio-economic lines that sparked unrest, and protest leaders seem disinclined to respond positively to the government's talk of reconciliation.

■LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

BOLIVIA - The Bolivian government negotiated with native groups to head off major marches and roadblocks aimed at demanding protection of indigenous land rights and conservation of the environment in their territories.

HAITI - Microfinance efforts tied to literacy and finance training are helping Haiti's entrepreneurial earthquake survivors provide for their families in a manner lenders hope will prove sustainable. Microcredit supporters believe the process will help reinvigorate Haitian commerce, which is traditionally powered by self-employment.

WFWO's Communications Team