



News Bulletin

■GLOBAL

UNITED NATIONS - The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization has called on policy makers to meet in Rome on 24 September to discuss a recent increase in food prices around the world. Russia's decision on Thursday to extend a ban on grain exports renewed fears of a new global food price crisis that could spark unrest. In Mozambique police were deployed on Monday across the capital Maputo to prevent new protests over rising food prices.

UNITED NATIONS - The United Nations AIDS has warned that a shortfall in funding is harming the development of a vaginal microbicide gel that could protect women from HIV infections. The US newspaper NYT reported that only 58 per cent of a 100 million US dollar appeal to fund research has been pledged. The money is not enough to pay for even one of two studies deemed necessary to confirm a successful South African trial of the gel, according to the report. In July news that the vaginal microbicide gel had significantly reduced the risk of HIV infections in women by 39 per cent after a three-year trial in South Africa was hailed as a breakthrough.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS - A new United Nations report reveals that Africa significantly lags behind the rest of the world in providing affordable broadband access to its population. The UN statistics revealing a global disparity in fixed broadband access and cost ahead of this month's review of the **Millennium Development Goals** in New York. It found that the Central African Republic has the most expensive fixed broadband connection in the world, costing nearly 40 times the country's average monthly income. Ethiopia, Malawi, Guinea and Niger were also among the top five most expensive countries for a fixed broadband connection. Affordable access to communications technology is one of the targets envisaged by the Millennium Development Goals.

HEALTH - A leading charity warned that misspending of public health funds is hampering the fight against child mortality in developing countries. A new report is published ahead of a United Nations summit later this month that will review progress towards achieving the **Millennium Development Goals**. The report claims that four million child deaths could be prevented by 2020 if public health spending was aimed at benefiting the poor rather than the rich in the 42 developing countries which account for 90 per cent of all under-five mortality. The report predicts that 75 per cent of the countries with the highest child mortality rates will fail to meet the UN's target by 2015.

WATER experts warned that increasingly unpredictable rainfall related to climate change is threatening agriculture and food security, especially in Africa and Asia. A new report urges policymakers and farmers to make agriculture less dependent on rainfall by diversifying sources of water. In sub-Saharan Africa 94 per cent of agriculture is still reliant on rainfall, according to the report. The researchers believe that up to 499 million people in Africa and India alone could benefit from improvements in agricultural water management. They also recommend that governments take an integrated approach to tackling the problem by combining large and small scale water storage systems, rather than relying on single solutions such as big dams.

■AFRICA

KENYA - Nomadic Kenyan women who test positive for HIV but live in remote areas far from the nearest health facility are missing out on the opportunity to prevent their children from becoming infected with the virus.

SOUTH AFRICA, home to the world's largest HIV treatment programme, is trying to pull off the most extensive global HIV testing campaign but the ambitious initiative is facing some daunting realities.

UGANDA - An online database of people separated from relatives by conflict or natural disasters can now be accessed by mobile phone, thanks to a joint venture between the UN, an NGO and two private sector companies.

■MIDDLE EAST

SYRIA - Iraqi refugee children in Syria are struggling to keep up at school, or are dropping out to seek paid work, according to the UN Children's Fund.

WFWO's Communications Team