

UN: Climate change undercutting work to end poverty, hunger

Hunger is growing and the world is not on track to end extreme poverty by 2030 and meet other United Nations' (UN) goals, mainly because progress is being undermined by the impact of climate change and increasing inequality, a UN report said.

The report on progress toward achieving the 17 UN goals noted achievements in some areas, including a 49 percent fall in child mortality between 2000 and 2017 as well as electricity now reaching nearly 90 percent of the world's population.

But Liu Zhenmin, the UN undersecretary general for economic and social affairs, said that despite some advances, "monumental challenges remain."

He said at a news conference the most urgent area for action is climate change, which "may impact the progress made over the last several decades" in reducing poverty and improving life for millions of people around the world.

According to the report, biodiversity loss is happening at an accelerated rate, and "the risk of species extinction has worsened by almost 10 percent over the last 25 years." Global temperatures have risen, ocean acidity has increased 26 percent since pre-industrial times and "investment in fossil fuels continues to be higher than investment in climate activities," it said.

Liu said the report also shows "inequality is rising and too many people are left behind."

He said that "is another big challenge for the world."

The first of the 17 goals adopted by world leaders in 2015 is to eliminate extreme poverty — people living on less than \$1.90 a day — and the second goal is to end hunger, achieve food security and promote sustainable agriculture. According to the report, neither goal is likely to be achieved by 2030.

While the number of people living in extreme poverty declined to 8.6 percent of the world's population in 2018, the report said the pace is slowing and projections suggest that six

percent of people will still be living in extreme poverty by 2030 if current trends continue.

Francesca Perucci, chief statistician in the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, said an estimated 736 million people are still living in extreme poverty globally, including 413 million in sub-Saharan Africa.

"Extreme poverty today is concentrated and overwhelmingly affects rural populations," the report said.

"Increasingly, it is exacerbated by violent conflicts and climate change."

production, a key factor in increasing hunger.

According to the report, the number of people going hungry has increased since 2014.

"An estimated 821 million people were undernourished in 2017," up from 784 million in 2015 and the same number as in 2010, it said.

The worst hit region is sub-Saharan Africa, where the number of undernourished people increased from 195 million in 2014 to 237 million in 2017, the report said.

reading and mathematics in 2015."

The report said women represent 39 percent of the workforce but hold only 27 percent of managerial positions. It said 785 million people had no access to clean drinking water in 2017 while 673 million lacked good sanitation systems, the majority of them in Southern Asia.

Perucci said 80 percent of people worldwide are online, but only 45 percent of those living in developing countries and just 20 percent in the least developed countries have access



MANISH SWARUP/AP

While Liu said there has been "good progress" on 16 of the UN goals, he said that "there's been no good progress" on ending hunger, which he called "a tragedy for the international community."

He said the most direct impact of climate change is on agricultural

On education, it warned that proficiency in reading and mathematics is "shockingly" low.

"Globally, an estimated 617 million children and adolescents of primary and lower secondary school age — more than 55 percent of the global total — lacked minimum proficiency in

to the Internet.

"It is abundantly clear that a much deeper, faster and more ambitious response is needed to unleash the social and economic transformation needed to achieve our 2030 goals," UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said in the report's forward.

Australia promises national vote on recognition of indigenous people

ROHAN THOMSON/AAP
Minister for Indigenous Australians Ken Wyatt speaks at the National Press Club in Canberra, Australia, on July 10, 2019.

Australia will hold a national vote within three years on whether to include recognition of indigenous people in its Constitution, the government said on Wednesday, an issue that has spurred decades of often heated debate.

Australia has struggled to reconcile with descendants of its first inhabitants, who arrived on the continent about 50,000 years before British colonists but are not recognized in the national Constitution, Reuters reported.

However, with public support on the issue growing, Minister for Indigenous Australians Ken Wyatt promised a referendum before 2022.

"I will develop and bring forward a consensus option for constitutional recognition to be put to a referendum during the current parliamentary term," Wyatt said in a speech in Canberra.

Australians must return to the polls by 2022 after Prime Minister Scott Morrison's conservative coalition government was returned in a "miracle" election win in May.

However, to meet the timetable Wyatt will need to facilitate an agreement between the government and indigenous leaders, who have

demanding a bigger voice in the running of the country.

Indigenous leaders proposed in 2017 establishing an advisory body comprised of elected indigenous Australians enshrined in the Constitution. The government rejected the proposal, insisting it would create a de facto third chamber in parliament.

The government has come under growing pressure since then to revisit the issue, with several corporate giants insisting that meaningful recognition is the only way to bridge the divide in Australia's population.

"A first nation's voice to parliament is a meaningful step toward reconciliation," BHP Chief Executive Officer Andrew Mackenzie said earlier this year.

Indigenous Australians account for about 700,000 people in a total population of 23 million and have tracked near the bottom in almost every socio-economic indicator, suffering disproportionately high rates of suicide, alcohol abuse, domestic violence and imprisonment.

Denied the vote until the mid-1960s, they face a 10-year gap in life expectancy compared with other Australians and make up 27 percent of the prison population.

Indian workers toil at one of world's highest roads

Hundreds of miles from their homes, a group of laborers are toiling in a cold Indian Himalayan desert to repair some of the world's highest roads.

Stationed near Chang La pass which is perched at a height of 5,360 meters (17,590 feet), the 13 men, whose home is the low-lying eastern state of Jharkhand, have little experience of cold climates, AFP reported.

They have been hired for four months in the Tangtse district of Ladakh, where blizzards can rage throughout the year, to ensure that the key tourist route to the picturesque Nubra Valley and Pangong Lake is in good condition.

Their back-breaking stint will fetch them 40,000 rupees (\$572) each—a considerable sum in a country where more than 21 percent of the 1.3 billion population lived on less than two dollars a day in 2011.

"There is not much work there (back home). I don't find any work difficult," said Sunil Tutu, 30.

They toil six days a week, using only their bare hands, shovels and old sacks to move rocks and sand, with the help of local Ladakhi workers, some of them women.

Sundays are the only days they can do their laundry as well as bathe and shave.

Each morning the group hops on a truck to reach the work site after a breakfast of tea and bread. They return to their basic housing tents after sunset and have a meal of rice and lentils.

The tents do not have electricity and workers



XAVIER GALIANA/AP

rely on kerosene stoves to cook and heat up the icy water.

"If given a chance I will come back here again," said Sushil Tutu, 35.

"I like the road work... I like it anywhere." Another worker Rajshekhkar, 33, said the inhospitable conditions helped him save more for the future.

"Back home we are unable to save money, we eat and drink and the money gets over. The work is good (here). I like the snow and the mountains. I don't like the cold though."

Migration for work is common in rural India. According to the non-government Aajeevika Bureau agency, millions work in hazardous conditions with little legal or social protection.

India's unemployment rate has been worsening. In 2017-2018 it was 6.1 percent, the worst since the 1970s, posing a major challenge for newly reelected Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Disabled workers help Haitians who lost limbs in 2010 quake

Wilfrid Macena was a welder who built gas station tanks for a living when the devastating 2010 earthquake toppled a wall at the garage where he worked and crushed his right leg.

He was unable to reach a hospital for seven days and his knee became infected, forcing doctors to amputate most of his leg. The Associated Press reported.

Several weeks later, he came to an institution run by Haiti's Episcopal Church in downtown Port-au-Prince where a small group of disabled workers were fitting victims with prosthetics and received his first artificial leg.

"It's like I got a brand new life," he recalled, adding that one of the workers at St. Vincent's Center convinced him to join their team, assuring him that it was similar to welding.

In July 2010, six months after the earthquake, he built his first prosthetic — a job that took him three days.

Now, nine years and more than 3,000 prosthetics later, he's still at it, and it takes only four hours. Most of those have gone to people like him who lost a limb in the magnitude 7.0 earthquake estimated to have killed 300,000 or more.

"We're still seeing new patients," he said, adding that an elderly woman who lost both legs



DIEU NALIO CHERY/AP

In this June 4, 2019 photo, prosthetic technician Wilfrid Macena works in a workshop at the St. Vincent's Center where a small group of disabled workers fit those who have lost limbs with prosthetics.

in the earthquake recently came by the center.

"She wants to move, go to church."

The workers at St. Vincent's Center were all taught by 60-year-old Emmanuel Celi-

court, who is unable to speak and has been working at the center for decades. Overall, they have made some 8,000 prostheses since the quake, although now only about 15 percent of people seeking help are earthquake victims.

Macena said being an amputee helps him relate to patients and inspires confidence in them.

"People understand me better than someone who has two legs," said Macena, who is also captain of a soccer team and has taught athletes how to play with crutches.

He recently tended to Natasha Guillaume, a nine-year-old girl who needed a brace after she was pushed at school, fell and injured her leg. He helped lift her onto a bed fitted with a sheet of faded yellow flowers as she grimaced.

"I was crying at night because of the pain," she said, adding that she wants to be able to run again with her friends.

The center first began providing prostheses in the 1950s, sometimes at no cost depending on the needs of a person, said the Rev. Frantz Cole, spiritual director of the center that operates a school for disabled children, a medical clinic and a brace shop where the prostheses are made.

"We try to provide service mostly to those who have nothing," he said. "When someone gets amputated, he thinks that is the end of his life... But (a prosthesis) is like a new beginning for a patient."