

[New UN agriculture agency report underscores value of fishing in fight against global hunger](#)

The vital role that fishing and fish-farming play in supporting some of the poorest families across the world, came under the spotlight on Monday with the publication of the annual United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)) report on the global industry.

According to the latest [State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture](#) (SOFIA) report, nearly 60 million people worldwide – 14 per cent of them women – are directly employed in fisheries and the aquaculture sector.

“The fisheries sector is crucial in meeting FAO’s goal of a world without hunger and malnutrition, and its contribution to economic growth and the fight against poverty, is growing,” said José Graziano da Silva, FAO’s Director-General.

Fish account for about 17 per cent of animal protein consumed around the world, providing around 3.2 billion people on earth with nearly 20 per cent of their animal protein needs.

Moreover, fish represent a highly nutritious food that is especially helpful in counteracting important deficiencies in dietary intake.

The report indicates that global fish production will continue to grow over the next ten years even though the amount of fish being captured in the wild has levelled off and aquaculture is slowing down.

The fisheries sector is crucial in meeting FAO’s goal of a world without hunger and malnutrition – *FAO chief, José Graziano da Silva*

By 2030, it’s estimated that fish production will grow to 201 million tonnes; an 18 per cent increase over the current production level of 171 million tonnes.

Global trends can mask the large contribution fish often make as part of the basic diet in poorer countries, however. For example, in countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, Gambia, Sri Lanka and some small island development states, fish make up fifty per cent or more, of people’s protein intake.

“The sector is not without its challenges, however, including the need to reduce the percentage of fish stocks fished beyond biological sustainability,” Mr. da Silva continued.

In 2016, 90.9 million tonnes of fish were captured in the wild – a slight

decrease of two million from 2015 – and aquaculture production (which entails farming aquatic organisms as well as managing ocean habitats and wild populations), reached 80 million tonnes, providing 53 per cent of all fish consumed by humans as food.

According to this latest FAO report, the amount of crustaceans, mollusks and other aquatic animals being consumed, is just over double the amount per person, back in the 1960s. FAO attributes this to increased aquaculture production, a sector that expanded rapidly during the 1980s and 1990s.

“Since 1961 the annual global growth in fish consumption has been twice as high as population growth,” said Mr. da Silva, highlighting again the importance of this to combating world hunger.

But FAO said that future growth across the industry will require continued progress in strengthening fisheries management regimes, reducing loss and waste, and tackling problems like illegal fishing, pollution of aquatic environments, and climate change, the report added.

Efforts to reduce the amount of fish being discarded at sea or thrown out post-capture – for example by using discards and trimmings to produce fishmeal – will also help meet ongoing increases in demand for fish products, said FAO.

[Security Council urges countries to factor child protection into conflict prevention efforts](#)

Countries have been urged to mainstream child protection into the policies they introduce aimed at preventing conflict, in line with a Security Council resolution adopted on Monday.

The Council [met to debate](#) the latest UN [annual report](#) on Children and Armed Conflict which revealed that once again, the number of boys and girls affected by fighting has increased, with more than 21,000 violations documented during the past year.

Virginia Gamba, the UN expert [on the issue](#), said these abuses should remind countries that they need to work together to reverse the trend.

“We cannot further jeopardize our most precious resource through inaction, but must increase our efforts to develop preventive tools, utilize reintegration strategically to break cycles of violence and address the cross-border nature of violations through increased cooperation,” she said.

We cannot further jeopardize our most precious resource through inaction – *Virginia Gamba, UN Special Representative*

Besides being maimed or killed, children caught in combat also suffer when schools or hospitals are attacked. Some are even forced into fighting, or fall victim to rape and other forms of gender-based violence.

The head of the UN children's agency, [UNICEF](#), reported that one in four boys and girls globally has been impacted by conflict or disaster.

Henrietta Fore asked the 15 ambassadors to think about what will become of these children, both in the short and long term.



UN Photo/Loey Felipe

Henrietta H. Fore, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), addresses the Security Council meeting on children and armed conflict. July 9, 2018

"In his lifetime, a seven-year old Syrian child has never known a peaceful Syria. An Afghan teenager has never known a peaceful Afghanistan. And consider what the children of South Sudan have endured – and continue to endure – as they mark their country's seventh year of independence today," [she said](#).

"How can we prepare children to shape peaceful futures if they don't know what peace even looks like?"

Yenny Londoño, a former child combatant from Colombia, explained how human rights abuses are at the root of child recruitment. She said boys and girls forced to take up arms are denied access to education, health care, housing and security, among other rights.

Now a law student and expecting a baby, Ms. Londoño emphasized the need to

treat former child soldiers as victims, not criminals.

“I ask Governments not to see us as a problem but rather to give us the opportunity to show you our ability to be changemakers”, she said, speaking in Spanish. “That’s what we want to be: changemakers for society.”

[‘Laser-sharp focus’ needed to achieve Global Goals by 2030, UN political forum told](#)

Progress has been made on achieving global goals to end poverty and hunger but meeting the targets by the deadline of 2030 will require a laser-sharp focus and a true sense of urgency, a key United Nations forum on sustainable development heard on Monday.

“We have only 12 more years to fully realize this transformative agenda, but these goals are absolutely within our reach,” said Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General of Economic and Social Affairs, in his opening remarks.

“It will require policy makers’ unwavering attention, a laser-sharp focus on implementation of these goals, and a true sense of urgency,” he added.



Manuel Elias

Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General of Economic and Social Affairs, delivers his opening remarks at the High-level Political Forum on 9 July.

The UN [High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development \(HLPF\)](#), which will run through 18 July, brings together more than a thousand government, business and civil society leaders.

They will discuss progress already made by dozens of countries towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – adopted by 193 Member States in 2015 – in an effort to find out what is and what is not working, based on the UN Secretary-General’s annual [progress report](#).

“It has been three years since world leaders committed to end poverty and hunger, to protect our planet, to foster peaceful societies, and to unleash economic, social and technological progress –and in implementing this vision they committed to reach those furthest behind,” Mr. Liu said.

Many people are indeed living better lives than they were a decade ago, even

in regions facing the greatest development challenges. The proportion of the world's workers and their families now living below the extreme poverty line has declined significantly, from 27 per cent in 2000 to 9 per cent in 2017, he noted.

"However, drought and disasters linked to climate change, and surging conflicts in parts of the world, are hindering faster progress," he said.



Manuel Elias

Marie Chatardová, President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), presides over the High-level Political Forum on 9 July.

Marie Chatardová, President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), said that achieving the goals requires more than just the "dedication and good will" of governments.

"We explored how civil society, the private sector, academia and other actors can help move the SDGs forward," she said.

During the Forum, 47 countries will share their experiences, including the successes, challenges and lessons learnt so far.

Ms. Chatardová said she expects that the Declaration – an outcome document to be adopted at the end of the Forum – will encapsulate a strong political message on the international community's unwavering commitment to realizing the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda.

Biggest obstacle is greed

In the opening day's keynote speech, Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University, said that there were enough resources in the world for everyone to live free of poverty and it should not require a big effort on the part of large developed countries, to profoundly help those struggling in poverty.

Presenting league tables produced by his team and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, he said Sweden was the country most on course to achieving the SDGs, and that Europe is “by far” the region doing best so far.



UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

Moreover, the list of the top 10 countries closest to achieving the SDGs mirrors a complementary ranking of the world’s happiest countries. “It is literally the truth”, that sustainable development is the path to happiness, he said.

The happiest countries are the ones that tax themselves the most, he added, noting that Swedes think it is a good thing to pay half their national income to finance quality education and healthcare.

The United States, on the other hand, is “all about tax cuts for rich people”, he declared. “To achieve sustainable development, you have to pay for it,” he said, adding that tax cuts for the rich, stifles sustainable development.

The Forum meets annually under the auspices of ECOSOC, including a three-day ministerial segment, and is due to meet once every four years at the level of Heads of State and Government under the auspices of the UN General Assembly.

Under the theme “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies”, this year’s Forum focuses on six of the 17 goals:

Goal 6: To ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Goal 7: To provide access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

Goal 11: To make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Goal 12: To ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Goal 15. To protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss.

Goal 17. To strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, that will be considered each year.

'Wind blowing in the direction of peace' in Africa: UN Secretary-General

Recent developments in Africa indicate that the continent is increasingly moving in the "direction of peace" and enhanced security, the United Nations [Secretary-General](#) told journalists in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, on Monday.

António Guterres was there to take part in the second annual UN-African Union conference, part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the relationship between the two organizations. The two-day meeting covers a wide range of topics, and Mr. Guterres spoke about the partners' close collaboration in areas such as peace and security.

"We feel a wind blowing in the direction of peace," he said, referring to recent developments such as the historic [visit](#) by Ethiopia's Prime Minister to rival and neighbour Eritrea, as well as [peace talks](#) on South Sudan, where conflict has raged since 2013.

"All this gives us hope that the African continent will be moving more and more in the right direction in peace and security," he added, telling delegates that the UN could not afford to fail in its dealings with the continent.

But the UN chief also focused on what he described as the "dramatic crises" in Africa, where the UN has deployed peacekeeping missions in four countries: the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mali and South Sudan.

He said the rise of armed groups and international terrorist organizations such as Boko Haram, means that these operations are not involved in "traditional" peacekeeping, and he cited the need for more funding, particularly in enforcing peace and countering terrorism.

"We need to understand that when African troops are fighting terrorists in the Sahel, they are not only protecting the citizens of the Sahel. They are protecting the whole world. And the world must be in solidarity with Africa, as African forces are protecting us all," he stated.

The Secretary-General also called for greater support for the UN's Agenda 2030 and African Union's Agenda 2063, both of which address long-term economic development.

He appealed to the international community to take action against the flow of illegal funds, money-laundering and tax evasion, which cost Africa \$50 billion every year.

He said: "This is a responsibility for the international community to support Africa to make sure that African resources remain in Africa to support African development."

FEATURE: Niger's girls find 'sanctuary' in fistula treatment centres

Twenty-three-year-old Kodi Moumdau laughs with a group of young women in brightly coloured shawls in her ward at the National Fistula Centre [Centre National de Référence de Fistule Obstétricale] in the outskirts of Niamey, the capital of Niger. They can consider themselves amongst the lucky women who have been treated for and survived an obstetric fistula condition.

Kodi Moumdau give birth last year but her child was stillborn and in the process of delivery a fistula, or tear, developed between her vagina and anus. Fistulas of this type can result in a lack of bowel and urine control, leading to embarrassment and shame amongst women who are suffering the condition.

Speaking in her local language Djerma, Kodi Moumdau explained her fears when the fistula first happened: "When I was pregnant, my legs became paralyzed, so I was rushed to the hospital. My baby was still-born and that is when my body tore."

Many young women with fistulas are shunned by their communities, as the condition, which can frequently lead to bad odours, is considered by some as dirty.

Kodi Moumdau was fortunate to the extent that she was treated quickly, after being taken directly to a specialist local hospital in Tillaberi region in the north-west of Niger and then onto the National Fistula Centre in Niamey.

Fistula Increase

Kodi Moumdau is not alone.

In Niger, the incidence of obstetric fistulas is increasing, in line with population growth and the continuing lack of education about the causes of the condition. Child marriage, early pregnancy and female genital mutilation

all contribute to the growing number of cases in Niger and across sub-Saharan Africa. The exact number of affected women in the sub-Saharan region is not known, although the United Nations estimates it could be up to one million.

In the National Fistula Centre, one of 11 fistula treatment centres in Niger, there are 69 women who are accommodated in neatly arranged wards in the dusty and parched hospital compound. Of those, 42 are waiting to have the operation to repair the tear to their bodies.



UNFPA/Ollivier Girard

UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed (c) stands with Margot Wallstrom, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden (l) and Dr. Lalla Malika Issoufou Mahamadou, second First Lady (r) at the National Fistula Centre in Niamey, Niger.

Dr. Abdoulaye Idrissa, the director of the centre, carries out around six operations a week. Dressed in his theatre scrubs or clothes and white coat, he frequently visits the wards. He moves easily between patients, asking them how they feel and exchanging some much-needed light-hearted conversation. He is clearly liked and respected.

“Even if we carry out one operation, we consider that a success,” he told UN News. “But I have to say we have a heavy and difficult task because as the population of Niger increases, so do the needs. We fight to do our best. Each year we increase the number of obstetricians and surgeons on our staff, we open new clinics, so we are able to reach more parts of the country.”

And he recognizes, the causes behind the increase in obstetric fistulas are common to many developing sub-Saharan countries, saying: “The essential factors remain poverty, illiteracy, access to health care services...there are social factors also, like early marriage.”

The average age of patients who he treats is 18, but he frequently sees girls as young as 12 or 13. The risk of a fistula is far greater for young pregnant

girls whose bodies are not yet fully formed.

UN-AU visit

The work of the National Fistula Centre was showcased to a joint high-level visit of the UN and African Union, which spent two days in Niger looking at the issues of women, peace and security and development, as well as empowerment and the importance of getting more women into leadership positions.

The health of women is an important part of making sure they are able to fulfill their potential.

UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed led the joint delegation to Niger and met patients and doctors at the centre on Saturday.

“These centres are an oasis, a place of sanctuary for girls in early child marriage, who have ended up needing horrendous fistula repairs,” she said, adding “not only are fistulas damaging to their own wellbeing physically and mentally, women are also stigmatized. Within their families and societies, they no longer have a home.”

“There are two sides to this,” she continued, “making sure we put more money into the repairs and the work that the doctors do here tirelessly and then also take up the advocacy, because we should be able to prevent and bring zero child marriage to our children in Niger and the rest of Africa.”

Spotlight Initiative

These centres are an oasis, a place of sanctuary for girls in early child marriage, who have ended up needing horrendous fistula repairs – *UN Deputy Secretary-General*

This is where a new effort, Spotlight Initiative, a partnership of the European Union and UN, aims to make a difference. A fund in support of the Sustainable Development Goals, and focused on ending all forms of violence against women and girls, the Spotlight Initiative will have a specific focus on early marriage in Africa.

Niger is one of eight implementing countries selected on the continent. In discussions with the Prime Minister and ministers during the trip, it was clear that the Initiative brought both great hope and expectations – including for significant investments in more centres such as this.

Two months after her operation, Kodi Moumdau is looking forward to returning home and being reunited with her husband. She chats and laughs with her fellow fistula survivors on the bed she has slept in since she arrived from the countryside to where she will soon return, confident that she can resume her life at home.