

AFRICA

Key statistics:

Overview:

Africa consists of 53 countries and has an estimated population of more than 900 million people.

Poverty:

Africa is home to 34 of the world's 48 poorest countries. The average income (excluding South Africa) is only US\$ 342 per person and more than 40 percent of the people in Sub-Saharan Africa live on less than US\$ 1 dollar a day. Some progress has been made with South, East and West African countries experiencing their strongest growth in more than 30 years.

Gender equality:

Progress towards ensuring women equal access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, justice and security has been uneven. While countries such as Ghana, Rwanda and South Africa, have made progress promoting women to leadership positions (with the highest proportion of women legislators in the world in Rwanda), many countries in Africa have failed to address gender issues. Girls have a lower rate of enrollment in primary school (86 girls to 100 boys) and secondary school. Women represent more than 60 percent of the region's illiterate population. The region has also witnessed high rates of violence against women including rape and sexual abuse in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Liberia and Niger.

Conflict:

The past decade has seen more than 20 African countries involved in or bordering countries in conflict. Many of these conflicts last decades, with an average length of 15 years. This has led to widespread population displacement (an estimated 25 to 30 percent of the affected population), collapsing security conditions and the destruction of social and physical infrastructure at a time when the proportion of people needing social assistance is increasing.

Armed combatants:

Conflict in the region has resulted in large numbers of armed ex-combatants without homes or livelihoods. Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Uganda all face the challenge of disarmament, demobilization and the economic and social reintegration of former combatants. More than 55,000 former combatants have been demobilized in Burundi, 35,000 in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and 48,000 are planned for demobilization in Cote d'Ivoire, with hundreds of thousands more remaining.



UNDP DRC – A former combatant in the Democratic Republic of Congo hands over his weapon

Natural Disasters:

Africa is prone to floods, droughts and cyclones, which have had a devastating impact on human development. Examples from 2007 include the floods in Mozambique and droughts in Lesotho and Swaziland. The economic impact of the 1992 Southern Africa drought was estimated at US\$ 3 billion and decreased the GDP of Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe by an average of ten percent.

The continent is also at risk of environmental changes due to global warming including desertification, coastal erosion and food and water security.

Call to Action:

In a region scarred by violent conflicts, early prevention and conflict management must be prioritized. Reintegrating former combatants into society and providing them with livelihoods is essential for peace and development.

In times of crisis, it is often marginalized populations, such as women and children, who suffer most. Rape and sexual violence in conflict situations are not collateral damage: they are methods of war. Perpetrators of these war crimes must be held accountable – by their communities, governments and by the international community.

Africa is subject to recurrent natural disasters that may be compounded by global warming. Human and economic losses as a consequence of climate-related hazards are not inevitable. National governments need to implement sustainable public spending which incorporates disaster risk reduction.



*UN Photo/Evan Schneider –
The effects of a drought are seen in Senegal*



*UN/Ky Chung – Celebration of Women's
Day in Cote d'Ivoire*

- Provides economic opportunities to communities affected by conflict in Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone.
- Helps national and local organizations to resolve conflicts and build consensus on divisive issues such as land, identity and natural resources in Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria and Zimbabwe.
- Supports the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants in Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone.
- Advises government actors on the design and implementation of justice and security sector reform programmes in the Central African Republic, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

UNDP in Action:

- Prevented violence in elections in Ghana, Lesotho, Mauritania, Nigeria and Sierra Leone by engaging with media, political parties and civil society.
- Addresses sexual and gender-based violence through community-based programmes in Cote d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and provided police training in Sierra Leone.
- Promotes the inclusion of disaster risk reduction in national plans and policies in Comoros, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

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