

UN: Climate change undercutting work to end poverty, hunger

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Hunger is growing and the world is not on track to end extreme poverty by 2030 and meet other U.N. goals, mainly because progress is being undermined by the impact of climate change and increasing inequality, a

U.N. report said Tuesday.

The [report](#) on progress toward achieving the 17 U.N. goals notes achievements in some areas, including a 49% fall in [child mortality](#) between 2000 and 2017 as well as electricity now reaching nearly 90% of the world's population.

But Liu Zhenmin, the U.N. 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% 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%

of the world's population in 2018, the report said the pace is slowing and projections suggest that 6% of people will still be living in extreme poverty by 2030 if [current trends](#) continue.

Francesca Perucci, chief statistician in the U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, said an estimated 736 million people 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."

While Liu said there has been "good progress" on 16 of the U.N. 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 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.

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 reading and mathematics in 2015."

The report said women represent 39% of the workforce but hold only 27% 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% of people worldwide are online, but only 45% of those living in developing countries and just 20% in the least developed countries have access 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," U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in the report's forward.

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