



Development Buzz (November 15): Planet hits 7 billion | Pakistan floods | HDR 2011 | CCTs for development

By Ashlee Betteridge
15 November 2011

Seven billion people: what next?

The population of the world was [estimated to have hit seven billion](#) some time around October 31.

The UNFPA launched its [State of the World Population 2011](#) report to coincide with the milestone. The report examines the dynamics behind the growth, including fertility rates, the international labour market, gender equality and access to services. One of the trends it explores is the [migration of young people to cities](#) around the world. It profiles nine countries facing different demographic and social challenges caused by population change.

The UNFPA also released [a song](#) to mark the occasion and started a global campaign called "[7 Billion Actions](#)". The BBC has also put together a [nice data tool](#) that shows you where you fit in the seven billion. There are also some fantastic visualisations by [NPR](#).

Besides all the singing, awareness raising and fun data navigators, there has also been a whole swag of blogs and articles looking at the implications of population change on development. Here are some of our picks:

- The Irish Times [gathered opinions](#) from Jeffrey Sachs, Michael Viney and Fintan O'Toole on economics, politics, climate and overpopulation.
- New Security Beat offers us [seven ways that seven billion people](#) affect the planet, as well as analysis of the [impacts on climate change](#).
- If the seven billionth child was born in India, it would have access to basic, subsidised [health insurance](#), says Alan Gelb.
- Is education for girls [the best way](#) to curb population growth?
- The author of 'How Many People Can the Earth Support?' [weighs in](#) with some

calculations.

- Amanda Glassman looks at the implications of the growing world population for [women's health](#).
- The World Food Programme has [seven reads](#) on food security for seven billion.
- The ever-optimistic Charles Kenny says [we should be happy](#) there are more people on the earth — he believes the real problem is consumption.
- Good Intentions are Not Enough has a running list of [blog posts on the seven billion](#).

Pakistan floods

The flood crisis in Pakistan is continuing — however the dearth of attention it is receiving has not improved.

There is a major shortfall in assistance. Flood relief programs could be forced to close due to a [critical shortage of donor funds](#). Both the UN and Oxfam have said they have so far only raised one third of the funds they had hoped for.

Some [nine million people](#) are at risk of malnutrition and disease from the floods, triggered by heavy monsoon rains. They have lost their homes, crops and some 78,000 head of livestock — the recovery is expected to be a [significant financial and planning challenge](#).

The disaster has also raised some serious questions on [risk planning and disaster preparation](#).

So why aren't donors giving? Some of the [reasons](#) cited so far have been a lack of international media attention, the famine in Africa, the financial crisis, and deteriorating relations between Pakistan and the U.S.

Horn of Africa update

The Horn of Africa famine is still critical, and according to a draft United Nations report, relief efforts are [still falling short](#). Less than 60 percent of the 3.7 million people targeted have received monthly food assistance and the current UN appeal for Somalia is only 79 percent funded.

Security issues in the region are one of the reasons for the difficulty in delivering aid. The humanitarian crisis itself is also compounding the security problems — there have been reports that al-Qaida operatives are [distributing aid and cash](#) to famine victims in Somalia to win over new recruits.

Human security issues are also being exacerbated by the famine. There are [reports](#) of an

increasing number of women and children being trafficked or smuggled from drought-devastated areas into countries such as Kenya.

SE Asia floods

At least [1,000 people](#) have died in the floods across Southeast Asia in recent weeks, with Thailand the hardest hit. The floods have inundated key [factories](#) and homes in the suburbs of Bangkok — as a result, [consumer confidence](#) in the country has fallen to a ten year low. The floods are also being [viewed](#) as a [crucial security and political](#) test for Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra's [government](#).

The city centre has remained relatively dry and floodwaters are beginning to drain away (it is [estimated](#) that Bangkok could be free of flood waters by November 25) — however there are concerns that the dirty water is [spreading diseases](#). One approach that the community have been using to fight disease is “[decontamination balls](#)” — microorganism-filled mud balls that can allegedly clean and disinfect flood waters. Their effectiveness, however, is contested.

G-20 in Cannes

The G-20 Leaders Summit was held in Cannes, France, from November 3-4 (you can read the final declaration [here](#) [pdf]). While the European debt crisis was a key point of discussion, development was also on the agenda.

Bill Gates called on the summit to [step up](#) development and poverty alleviation efforts and presented a report ‘[Innovation with Impact: Financing 21st Century Development](#)’, which outlines ways that development can be funded even with the current global financial troubles.

Others in the development community criticised the G-20's lack of action on issues such as [food security](#), [employment](#), [tax](#) and [more](#).

Human Development Report 2011 ‘Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All’

The newest [Human Development Report](#) was launched this month by the UNDP, including the latest Human Development Index (HDI) measures. This year's report focuses on sustainability and equity, examining how environmental degradation compounds inequality and how inequalities in human development also have adverse impacts for the environment.

The report extrapolates some of the [negative impacts climate change](#) could have on the human development index.

Simulations for the Report suggest that by 2050 the global HDI would be 8 percent lower than in the baseline in an “environmental challenge” scenario that captures the adverse effects of global warming on agricultural production, on access to clean water and improved sanitation and on pollution (and 12 percent lower in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa). Under an even more adverse “environmental disaster” scenario, which envisions vast deforestation and land degradation, dramatic declines in biodiversity and accelerated extreme weather events, the global HDI would be some 15 percent below the projected baseline.

If you would like to explore the new HDI figures graphically, the Guardian has a [map tool](#). There are also numerous HDI visual data tools available on the [UNDP website](#).

Conditional cash transfers in the spotlight

Are conditional cash transfers (CCTs) the new golden child of development? DFID’s CCT programs have [received praise](#) from an independent government watchdog this month (as well as some suggestions to improve the value for money of the programs) and the International Labour Organisation has released [a new report](#) [pdf] on social protection that emphasises the role of transfers for poverty alleviation. The World Bank also brought [together a group of CCT experts](#) in Washington DC at the end of October to look at the effectiveness of transfer programs and to discuss ways to improve their design.

In the Philippines, however, there has been [some debate](#) around the Aquino government’s use of the transfers, even though the [IMF chief](#) and [World Bank chief](#) have lauded the program.

In brief

- A new [working paper from the CGD](#) looks at why abolishing school fees in Kenya failed to increase public school enrolment.
- Haiti is still suffering from a [cholera outbreak](#).
- The debate around evaluation of the United Nation’s Millennium Villages has [been heating up](#).
- Transparency International has [released a report](#) looking at which oil and gas companies are best at promoting revenue transparency.
- Donors should be [doing more for children](#) who are being denied schooling in their first languages, says Helen Pinnock from Save the Children.
- USAID is researching [new emergency food products](#) that could better help malnourished children survive and recover.

- Could [malaria elimination](#) be possible within decades?

Ashlee Betteridge is a Researcher for the [Development Policy Centre](#). Development Buzz is our monthly round-up of global development issues and debates.

About the author/s

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Ashlee Betteridge was the Manager of the Development Policy Centre until April 2021. She was previously a Research Officer at the centre from 2013-2017. A former journalist, she holds a Master of Public Policy (Development Policy) from ANU and has development experience in Indonesia and Timor-Leste. She now has her own consultancy, Better Things Consulting, and works across several large projects with managing contractors.

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