

Regional News Roundup

AFRICA

Cluster bombs banned The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), which seeks to ban the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of these weapons, has been ratified and will enter into force on 1 August 2010. The convention agreed in December 2008 in the Norwegian capital, Oslo, requires ratification by 30 countries to become binding in international law. On 16 February, legislation enacted by Burkina Faso and Moldova fulfilled this stipulation. So far 104 countries have signed. The rapid pace of reaching 30 ratifications in only 15 months reflects the strong global commitment to get rid of these weapons urgently, said the CCM co-chair. Cluster munitions or bombs are indiscriminate weapons dropped from the air or deployed by ground-based delivery systems that often distribute hundreds of bomblets, or submunitions, than can cover an area the size of several football fields. Many of the bombs fail to explode and remain a threat to lives and livelihoods.

Read more: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=88142>

Poor governance jeopardises primary education in Africa Poor governance and management are jeopardising efforts to provide quality basic education in seven African countries, among them Uganda, according to a new report published by Transparency International (TI). The report, Africa Education Watch: Good governance lessons for primary education, shows that despite ten years of efforts to increase school enrolment through the Education for All initiative and the Millennium Development Goals, deficient or non-existent governance systems and practices are limiting progress. In the past decade, according to UNESCO, more primary school age children in Africa are going to school than ever before, and in many countries primary education is, by law, free of charge. However, TI's report found that parents who can ill-afford it still face fees. In the countries covered, 44 per cent of surveyed parents were requested to pay registration fees for their children.

Read more:

http://www.transparency.org/news_room/latest_news/press_releases/2010/2010_02_23_aew_launch_en

Full report:

http://www.transparency.org/content/download/50164/802844/Africa_Education_Watch_eng.pdf

KENYA

Experts voice food security concerns Bumper harvests being reported in several east African countries will do little to improve long-term food security in countries like Kenya, where almost six million of its 38 million inhabitants receive some form of food aid. This is a result of infrastructural weaknesses, five failed rainy seasons, low production, high prices, conflict in pastoral areas and the continuing disruption cause by post-election violence in early 2008. In this article, various specialists address these and other causes of Kenya's poor food security.

Read more: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=88196>

SOMALIA

Nearly 20,000 Somalis fled capital in 19 days Nearly 20,000 people have been uprooted from their homes in the Somali capital by renewed clashes between the forces of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and opposition groups during the first 19 days of February, the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) reported. Over half of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) have managed to escape Mogadishu, while others are stranded in relatively safer areas of the capital. The worst of the latest fighting between Government forces and al-Shabaab militiamen is reported to have occurred on 10 February, when 24 people died and nearly 160 others had to be hospitalized with war-related injuries.

Read more: [http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=33827&Cr=somali&Cr1 =](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=33827&Cr=somali&Cr1=)

Appeal for more humanitarian assistance in Puntland The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) has launched an appeal for more humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in

Puntland. Clean drinking water, food, shelter, health services and education are top of the list. The DRC is one of the few humanitarian organisations operating in the town of Qardho, in the Puntland region of Somalia. However, with the increasing number of IDPs from south and central Somalia and the drought-affected communities in the region, the humanitarian situation is overwhelming.

Read more:

<http://www.drc.dk/news/news/artikel/appeal-for-more-humanitarian-assistance-to-idps-in-puntland/>

SUDAN

Appeals for calm ahead of elections Officials are appealing for calm during the campaign period ahead of upcoming historic elections in April as insecurity remains a major concern. They have called on politicians not to raise ethnic or political tensions in a region already reeling from violent clashes. Electoral campaigning in the highly charged contest opened on 13 February, two months before three days of polling from 11 April, with the results due a week later. Votes will be cast for both the president of the republic and for the semi-autonomous south, as well as for national, southern and state legislative assemblies.

Read more: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=88167>

Fury at unspent funds

A fund administered by the World Bank to help Southern Sudan recover from decades of civil war has spent little more than a third of its money, angering western donors who provided most of the capital. By the end of last year, only USD181 million of the USD524million they had committed to the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) had been spent. More than four years into the fund's six-year lifespan, USD343 million still languishes unused. The World Bank's strict rules on disbursing funds explain why so much has been left unspent. The case highlights a dilemma of relevance to many efforts to help developing countries: a stringent approach towards spending money may result in large sums lying unused, but a more relaxed policy risks wasting the funds. Either option leaves the World Bank exposed to criticism. South Sudan is one of the world's poorest regions and has a desperate need for schools, clinics, clean water and roads.

Read more: <http://www.fcaea.org/aid=417.phtml>

Food shortages start earlier than normal According to a recent report by the Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS) food security conditions are expected to deteriorate between February–March in the eastern parts of Jonglei and Upper Nile states as well as Northern Bahr El Gazal, and northern parts of Warrap as food stocks are depleted earlier than normal. Last year's poor rains and resultant below-normal water levels not only reduced crop harvests but have also reduced access to important off-farm food sources such as fish and wild foods. Food security conditions in these areas are likely to deteriorate further during April–June when an earlier than normal peak hunger season is anticipated to begin in many more areas than normal. Since August 2009, food insecure conditions have persisted in Eastern Equatoria. Food insecurity in all these areas will continue until harvests in July and September 2010.

Read more:

<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/AMMF-82WQSN?OpenDocument&clickid>

Archbishop urges politicians to commit to peace-building The Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Juba has called on politicians to remain serious and committed to the cause of Sudan and Southern Sudan in particular. Talking to the faithful at a requiem mass Archbishop Paolino Lokudu Loro told politicians to be serious and behave well in the next April general elections. He further asked them to be honest before the citizens.

Read more: <http://www.cisanewsafrika.org/story.asp?ID=4420>

UGANDA

300 feared dead as landslides bury villages in the east At least 300 people, including 100 children, are believed to have been killed when landslides buried three villages in eastern Uganda late on 1 March after heavy rains. Some 2,000 people have been displaced and entire fields of

crops ruined. Officials described the situation as “desperate”, saying a total of 300 residents from three villages were missing and just 31 villagers were known to have survived. Meanwhile, nearby rivers had burst their banks and flooded homes.

Read more: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=88283>