

Progress on balanced food goals 'poor' in Africa: FAO

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Africa is making only faltering progress towards food and nutrition security, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has warned.

"Multiple forms of malnutrition coexist, with countries experiencing simultaneously high rates of child undernutrition or anaemia as well as high rates of obesity," it says in a new report, Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition.

In sub-Saharan Africa, "progress towards the World Health Assembly global [nutrition](#) targets has been generally poor," the Rome-based agency says, referring to goals to end hunger by 2025.

The annual document came out Thursday at the start of a two-day [food](#) and health seminar in Ivory Coast's economic capital, Abidjan.

Around 200 people from 47 African nations are gathered to discuss "sustainable food systems for healthy diets and improved nutrition", according to UN organisers.

Cooperating with other agencies including the UN Children's Fund and the World Health Organization (WHO) to furnish data, the FAO noted that a quarter of all the estimated 815 million under-nourished people in the world live on a continent poised to mark the Eighth Africa Day for Food and Nutrition Security on Saturday.

"Between 2000 and 2010, sub-Saharan Africa made sound progress in the fight against hunger," the report says.

But "the prevalence of under-nourishment in all regions of the continent (subsequently) remained flat and from 2015 to 2016 rose from 20.8 to 22.7 percent."

"Breastfeeding has the single largest potential impact on child mortality of any preventive intervention," the document notes, stating that it can help protect children from infant mortality and sickness and has an impact on IQ.

But while the WHO recommends exclusive breastfeeding until six months and thereafter until the age of two and beyond, the provision of adequate and safe complementary foods is important.

Climate impacts and [conflict](#) can also combine to heighten [food insecurity](#), the report warns.

"Conflict is not only an increasingly important cause of food insecurity and malnutrition but food insecurity and malnutrition can also become conflict multipliers," the UN agency warns.

"Addressing the causes of conflicts and supporting [food security](#) and livelihoods can help build resilience to conflict and contribute to sustaining peace."

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