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Eradication of poverty and other development issues

Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027)

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In the present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [73/246](#), the Secretary-General reviews progress made in eradicating poverty, including the response of the United Nations system to the theme of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027). The report also contains recommendations on ways to make the Third Decade effective, in support of poverty eradication-related internationally agreed development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

* [A/74/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 73/246, the General Assembly proclaimed the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027). The Assembly also decided that the theme of the Third Decade would be “Accelerating global actions for a world without poverty”, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the present report, the Secretary-General examines the progress made in eradicating poverty, outlines the progress made by the United Nations system in implementing the inter-agency, system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication and presents recommendations for making the Third Decade effective.

II. Progress made in eradicating poverty and reducing inequality

A. Eradication of poverty

2. In 1990, 36 per cent of the world’s population lived on less than \$1.90 a day (in 2011 purchasing power parity). Twenty-five years later, that proportion had dropped to 10.0 per cent. According to the World Bank’s 2018 “nowcast”, the poverty rate has since declined to 8.6 per cent.¹ Nevertheless, despite that remarkable progress, the world as a whole is not on track to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030, as called for under Sustainable Development Goal 1 of the 2030 Agenda. In recent years, poverty reduction has started to stagnate in developing countries, including in some middle-income countries, owing to the global economic slowdown, conflicts and vulnerability to climate change and disasters. With heightened international policy uncertainty with regard to trade and weaker global growth, per capita gross domestic product growth in many regions is significantly below the rates needed to eradicate poverty. Those left behind are becoming increasingly harder to reach, especially those living in rural areas and those who are members of disadvantaged and marginalized social groups.

3. Countries in fragile or conflict-affected situations have seen the rate of extreme poverty rise to 35.9 per cent in 2015, from 34.4 per cent in 2011. That recent increase followed a sharp decline that occurred between 2005 and 2011 and has seen the share of the global poor in those countries rising steadily, reaching 23.0 per cent in 2015. The Middle East and North Africa is the only region where both the poverty headcount and the absolute number of people living on less than \$1.90 have increased between 2013 and 2015. The poverty headcount rose to 5.0 per cent in 2015, from 2.6 per cent in 2013. Political instability, conflict and economic, social and environmental challenges continue to exacerbate the severity and complexity of poverty and vulnerability.

4. In Latin America and the Caribbean, many have escaped poverty since the early 2000s. Between 2002 and 2014, the proportion of people living in poverty declined by more than one third, and extreme poverty by more than a quarter. Recent deteriorating economic conditions, however, have led the poverty rate to climb by 1.2 percentage points in 2015, and a further 1.1 points in 2016, before decreasing by 0.6 points in 2018. In absolute terms, an additional 18 million people have been living below national poverty lines since 2015, bringing the regional total to 186 million people in 2018, or 29.6 per cent of the population. Extreme poverty has also increased since 2015. An additional 17 million people joined the ranks of the extreme poor,

¹ World Bank, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018: Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle* (Washington, D.C., 2018).

bringing the regional total to 63 million people, or 10.2 per cent of the population. Those regional trends have been driven largely by the poverty increases in Ecuador, El Salvador and Paraguay and the economic performance of Brazil, Mexico and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.² The incidence of poverty and extreme poverty is higher among children, adolescents and young people, women, populations living in rural areas, indigenous peoples and Afrodescendants.

5. In Asia, fast economic growth has contributed to significant reductions in poverty. The poverty rate in East Asia and in the Pacific region dropped from 3.6 per cent in 2013 to 2.3 per cent in 2015. In South Asia, both the poverty rate and the number of poor have been declining, with the poverty rate dropping to 12.4 per cent in 2015, from 16.2 per cent in 2013.

6. In the 28 member countries of the European Union, 53.5 million people lived in households that faced income poverty in 2017, and 13.8 million persons experienced severe material deprivation. The at-risk-of-poverty rate, however, decreased from 23.5 to 22.4 per cent (5.1 million people) between 2016 and 2017. The at-risk-of-poverty rate before social transfers declined slightly from 25.9 to 25.6 per cent, while the rate after social transfers declined from 17.3 to 16.9 per cent during the same period.³ That means that the disposable income of 16.9 per cent of the population in 2017 was below the national at-risk-of-poverty threshold. In countries that belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), poverty also remains a challenge, as middle-class households struggle with stagnating incomes and fail to keep up with the rising costs of housing and education. Between 2007 and 2015, the share of middle-income households that slipped into poverty from one year to the next was 2.1 per cent on average, but reached 4.0 per cent in Australia, Greece and Latvia.⁴

7. Progress in reducing the non-income dimensions of poverty is also worrying. After steadily declining for over a decade, global hunger is on the rise again, affecting 821.6 million people in 2018, up from 785.4 million in 2015. Situations of conflict, drought and flooding have exacerbated the food security situation in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, South-East Asia and Western Asia. The prevalence of undernourishment was highest in Africa (more than 256 million people). Globally, levels of undernourishment remained particularly high among children, with 1 in 5 (149 million) children under the age of 5 experiencing stunted growth in 2018. An additional 49.5 million children were affected by wasting, and 40 million more were overweight in 2018.⁵ Globally, an estimated 1.6 billion people did not have access to adequate housing, while 25 per cent of the world's urban population lived in informal settlements and homelessness was on the rise in every world region.

8. When poverty is examined using multidimensional measures, the 2018 global Multidimensional Poverty Index shows that, during that year, there were 1.3 billion poor people around the world. Of those, 83 per cent lived in sub-Saharan Africa (560 million) and South Asia (546 million). In other major regions, 118 million people lived in multidimensional poverty in East Asia and the Pacific, 66 million in Arab States, 32 million in Latin America and the Caribbean and 4 million in Europe and

² Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and others, *Latin American Economic Outlook 2019: Development in Transition* (Paris, OECD Publishing, 2019).

³ See Eurostat, "People at risk of poverty or social exclusion", available at https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion#Number_of_people_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion.

⁴ OECD, *Under Pressure: The Squeezed Middle Class*. (Paris, OECD Publishing, 2019).

⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and others, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019: Safeguarding against Economic Slowdowns and Downturns* (Rome, 2019).

Central Asia. Two thirds of all multidimensionally poor people lived in middle-income countries, and half of the multidimensionally poor were children.

B. Progress made in Africa and the least developed countries

9. Extreme poverty is decreasing in Africa, but the pace of progress is not fast enough if African countries are to meet Sustainable Development Goal 1, to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030. In 2018, only Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Mauritius and Seychelles had estimated rates of extreme poverty below 3.0 per cent. Among the largest economies in sub-Saharan Africa, the extreme poverty rate in 2018 stood at 53.5 per cent in Nigeria, 30.1 per cent in Angola and 18.9 per cent in South Africa.⁶ The poverty headcount in sub-Saharan Africa declined slightly, from 42.4 per cent in 2013 to 41.1 per cent in 2015. The number of people living in extreme poverty, however, increased from 405.1 million to 413.3 million people in the same period. Rapid population growth in populous countries, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria, accounts for the increase in the absolute number of poor people. Of the 413.3 million sub-Saharan Africans living on less than \$1.90 a day in 2015, 33.9 per cent lived in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria. In 2013, of the 405.1 million people living in extreme poverty in the region, 49.2 per cent lived in those two countries. Because of that increase, more than half of the world's extreme poor lived in sub-Saharan Africa in 2015; by 2030, that share could be as high as 87.0 per cent. The total number of people living in extreme poverty has risen notably since 2014 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique and Nigeria.

10. Extreme poverty also remains a challenge in the group of least developed countries. In 2018, extreme poverty exceeded 70 per cent in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar, Malawi and South Sudan, while rates in the Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique exceeded 60 per cent.⁷ Extreme poverty declined marginally in Haiti, from 23.8 per cent in 2013 to 23.5 per cent in 2015. Similarly, in Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea, extreme poverty declined slightly, from 34.3 to 32.3 per cent and from 35.9 to 29.2 per cent, respectively, during the same period. Ethiopia, one of the most populous least developed countries, continued to post notable progress in reducing poverty, with its poverty rate dropping from 29.7 per cent in 2013 to 27.3 per cent in 2018. Some least developed countries, however, have seen reversals of prior progress; Uganda's poverty rate, for example, increased to 41.7 per cent in 2018, from 36.9 per cent in 2013.

C. Reduction of inequalities

11. Highly unequal societies are less effective at reducing poverty. While inequality among countries has narrowed, within-country inequality has increased in many countries, in particular between social and income groups and between rural and urban areas. Globally, income and wealth are increasingly concentrated at the top of the income distribution, resulting in a widening of the gap between those at the top and the rest of the population. Because of less inclusive growth and high inequality, there has been little progress in raising the consumption floor among the poorest members of society over the past 30 years.⁸ It is difficult to eradicate poverty when

⁶ World Bank Group, *Sub-Saharan Africa Macro Poverty Outlook: Country-by-country Analysis and Projections for the Developing World – Spring Meetings 2019* (April 2019).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Martin Ravallion, "Are the world's poorest being left behind?" *Journal of Economic Growth*, vol. 21, No. 2 (2016), pp. 139–164.

the incomes of the poorest 10 per cent increased by less than \$3 a year between 1988 and 2011, while those of the top 1 per cent increased by 182 times as much.⁹

12. In OECD countries, the bottom 40 per cent in the income distribution holds only 3 per cent of the total wealth, while the top 10 per cent holds almost half.¹⁰ In the Asia and the Pacific region, the potential impact of growth on poverty has been dampened by worsening inequality. Using the poverty line of \$1.90 a day, an estimated 145.1 million people could have been, but were not, lifted out of poverty because of rising inequality. That figure jumps to 248.4 million when the poverty line of \$3.20 a day is used.¹¹ In fact, countries that experienced a more pronounced reduction in overall poverty as a result of economic growth also experienced a worsening of inequality, in particular in Bangladesh, China, India and Indonesia. In India, the richest 10 per cent own about 81 per cent of the country's total wealth.¹² In Latin America and the Caribbean, although poverty and inequality have declined, income inequality has edged up since 2016. The cost of inequality in terms of reduced growth and poverty reduction is also rising in sub-Saharan Africa, in particular in highly unequal societies such as Angola and South Africa.

D. Employment creation

13. Productive employment and decent work are critical pathways out of poverty. Globally, however, about 172 million people were unemployed in 2018, for an unemployment rate of 5 per cent. The unemployment rate is expected to remain at the same level in 2019 and 2020, while the number of unemployed is expected to increase by an estimated 1 million per year, to reach 174 million by 2020, because of the growing labour force. Furthermore, some 700 million workers lived in extreme or moderate poverty in 2018, the majority in sub-Saharan Africa. In 1993, the number of workers living in extreme or moderate poverty, meaning on less than \$3.20 a day in purchasing power parity terms, stood at 1.3 billion worldwide. Although the enormous progress made in reducing the number of the working poor is expected to continue, decreasing by a further 55 million by 2023, the rate of decline is slowing down, as further decline in the low share of working poor in upper-middle-income countries is more difficult to achieve.¹³ Informal employment also remains pervasive. In 2016, 2 billion workers, or 61 per cent of the global workforce, were in informal employment.

14. Women, young people aged 15–24 and persons with disabilities continue to be much less likely to be employed, while more than 1 in 5 young people were neither employed nor in education or training programmes in 2018. Young people are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. The likelihood of future employment for these young people is low, as they are not currently acquiring the skills necessary for a rapidly changing labour market. Worryingly, an estimated 114 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 were in employment in 2016.

⁹ Oxfam, *An Economy for the 99%*, Oxfam Briefing Paper (January 2017).

¹⁰ OECD, *Under Pressure: The Squeezed Middle Class*.

¹¹ Wan Guanghua and Wang Chen, *Poverty and Inequality in Asia 1965–2014*, World Institute for Development Economic Research Working Paper Series 2018/121 (Helsinki, 2018).

¹² Tajamul Haque and D. Narashima Reddy, eds., *India Social Development Report 2018: Rising Inequalities in India* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2019).

¹³ International Labour Organization (ILO), *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2019* (Geneva, 2019).

E. Education and health

15. Although considerable progress has been made in ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education, some 262 million children and young people between the ages of 6 and 17 were out of school in 2017. Children with disabilities, indigenous children and girls face particular challenges in access to, learning achievement in and continuation of education in many countries. For example, despite progress in narrowing gender gaps in education, girls are more likely than boys to be out of school, except in a few countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Some 16 million girls will never get the opportunity to enrol in school.¹⁴ Moreover, of the 750 million adults without basic literacy skills, two thirds are women. The persistence of gender gaps in education is due to a combination of factors that include poverty, living in rural and remote areas, disability and minority status, early marriage and pregnancy and deep-rooted traditional attitudes regarding the status and role of women in society.

16. Furthermore, over 50 per cent of children and adolescents were not meeting minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics. The rate for early childhood and primary education participation stood at 70 per cent in 2016, with the lowest rates found in sub-Saharan Africa, Northern Africa and Western Asia.¹⁵ In addition, some 750 million adults worldwide, of whom 67 per cent were women, were illiterate in 2016. Half of those lived in Southern Asia and one quarter in sub-Saharan Africa. The quality of teachers and school infrastructure is an important factor in educational outcomes. The proportion of trained primary school teachers has stagnated globally, at 85 per cent since 2015, the lowest being in sub-Saharan Africa. Less than half of schools in sub-Saharan Africa have access to drinking water, electricity, computers and the Internet.

17. With regard to ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all ages, considerable progress has been made in improving health outcomes for millions of people. In other areas, however, progress has stalled, and there are concerns that some of gains that have been made could easily be lost, given persistent global health risks such as Ebola and fragile health systems in developing countries. Gains have been made in increasing life expectancy, reducing maternal and child mortality and combating communicable diseases. The maternal mortality rate declined by 37 per cent between 2000 and 2015. Nevertheless, more than 300,000 women died during pregnancy and childbirth in 2015. The under-5 mortality rate also declined by 49 per cent between 2000 and 2017, but 5.4 million children still died before reaching their fifth birthday in 2017. The neonatal mortality rate declined by 41 per cent during the same period, but 2.5 million children under one month old still died after birth in 2017. The incidence of new HIV infections also declined over the same period, by 49 per cent.¹⁶

F. Gender equality and the empowerment of women

18. Much progress has been made in achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls. In a growing number of countries, women are increasingly able to exercise agency and voice within their families and societies. Rates of early marriage are falling, age at first birth is rising and more women are accessing reproductive

¹⁴ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics, “Data for the Sustainable Development Goals”, available at <http://uis.unesco.org/>.

¹⁵ *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18.I.6).

¹⁶ World Health Organization, *World Health Statistics 2019: Monitoring Health for the Sustainable Development Goals* (Geneva, 2019).

health care. Those gains are contributing to declines in the average number of children born per woman. Furthermore, rates of school attendance and labour force participation among girls and women are also increasing.¹⁷

19. Nevertheless, gender inequalities persist, and progress is too slow, especially in access to economic and productive resources and participation in social, cultural and political spheres. Many women face multiple forms of discrimination based on aspects of their identity in addition to their gender. Only 24 per cent of women globally hold parliamentary seats, although the representation of women in national parliaments did increase by 19 per cent between 2010 and 2019. The gender gap in labour force participation and in earnings remains large. The labour force participation rate of women in 2018 stood at 48 per cent, compared with 75 per cent for men. Recent data from 62 countries also shows that the median hourly gender pay gap is about 12 per cent and exceeds 20 per cent in managerial and professional occupations. One in three women and girls experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetimes. Furthermore, 750 million women and girls were married before the age of 18, and at least 200 million women and girls in 30 countries have undergone female genital mutilation. Women undertake 2.3 times the domestic work and unpaid care that men do. As a result, efforts to combat the feminization of poverty should focus on eliminating barriers and harmful traditional practices that prevent women and girls from realizing their full potential.

G. Social protection

20. Social protection has proved to be effective in reducing poverty and inequality. Although many countries have developed, and are in the process of scaling up, the provision of such social protection systems as non-contributory social protection programmes and cash transfers, coverage remains extremely low in countries with the highest poverty rates. For instance, although India accounts for nearly a quarter of the global poor (176 million poor people), less than a fifth of its population of 1.3 billion in 2015 was covered by some form of social protection. Worldwide, 55 per cent (or 4 billion people) of the population, including 1.3 billion children, was not covered by any social protection system in 2016. In Europe and Northern America, about 86 per cent of people were covered, while only 13 per cent were covered in sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, only 22 per cent of the unemployed population globally receives unemployment cash benefits, while 28 per cent of persons with severe disabilities receive disability cash benefits. Overall, 41 per cent of women giving birth receive maternity cash benefits.¹⁸ Social protection coverage also continues to exclude the majority of self-employed workers and of workers in the informal economy.

21. Some countries have made notable progress. China and Thailand have introduced universal pension and health coverage, and Mongolia has adopted universal child benefit schemes. Those efforts have resulted in about 63 per cent of the population of China and 72 per cent of the population of Mongolia being covered by some form of social protection.¹⁹ In Latin America and the Caribbean, income growth from wages in lower-income households and public transfers were the main sources that contributed to the poverty reduction that was experienced since the beginning of the 2000s.

¹⁷ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2019–2020: Families in a Changing World* (2019).

¹⁸ ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2017–19: Universal Social Protection to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals* (Geneva, 2017).

¹⁹ ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook*.

III. United Nations system support aimed at accelerating global actions for a world without poverty

22. This section contains an outline of progress made in accelerating global actions for a world without poverty, through the implementation of the inter-agency, system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication to coordinate the efforts of the United Nations system. The plan of action has seven thematic policy areas that are focused on actions that drive the structural transformations essential to achieving sustained, inclusive and poverty-reducing growth. In addition to those areas of policy focus, the United Nations system is also engaged in evidence-based policy analysis and the collection of data disaggregated by such factors as income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts, in order to support effective poverty eradication. For more complete details on related United Nations system initiatives, see the web page on the Third Decade, available from the website of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat.²⁰

A. Addressing policy and data gaps

23. A key imperative to accelerating global actions for a world without poverty is providing support for evidence-based policymaking and for addressing data gaps. In that regard, the United Nations system is actively engaged in strengthening its research and analytical work and in helping countries to strengthen their own statistical capacities.

24. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs continues to strengthen and raise the profile of research and data to accelerate global actions for a world without poverty. The Department monitors and analyses global social and economic trends and emerging issues that have a bearing on poverty eradication, inequality, jobs and social inclusion, in particular among social groups. It also supports Member States through policy advice, technical support and capacity-development activities and is a key provider of essential data and statistics to enable the international community to make informed decisions on development issues. Working closely with national statistical offices, the Department seeks to strengthen statistical capacities, to ensure that no one is left uncounted. Together with partners, the Department supports more than 75 countries in building integrated, evidence-based, inclusive and well-funded national strategies and plans to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The Department also works to mobilize financing for the achievement of the Goals.

25. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is working to improve the way data is used to fight poverty, through a revisited Multidimensional Poverty Index, developed in partnership with the University of Oxford. The updated Index looks beyond income to measure and accelerate progress against Sustainable Development Goal 1. That approach is influencing how countries gather and use data to make decisions. In the Western Balkans, UNDP, together with the World Bank and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, undertook a socioeconomic survey of multidimensional poverty among Roma populations to inform social inclusion policies. Similarly, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) pioneered the concept of multidimensional inequality in the Arab region and has been promoting the concept through normative, capacity-building and technical advisory work.

²⁰ See www.un.org/development/desa/socialperspectiveondevelopment/united-nations-decade-for-the-eradication-of-poverty/third.html.

26. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), together with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Bank, has developed the Rural Livelihoods Information System to enable policymakers to more effectively formulate differentiated policies and monitor indicators related to Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 2. FAO has also partnered with the World Bank and IFAD in a joint initiative to focus agricultural and rural development research and investment on achieving those Goals. The initiative is aimed at strengthening and raising the profile of research and data to support pro-poor investments in agriculture and rural areas within the partner agencies, as well as among policymakers, civil society and the private sector.

27. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) has been working on several critical methodological issues that include developing innovative strategies and survey designs to cover hard-to-reach populations and collecting and analysing good practices to improve the understanding of poverty. ECE has also been supporting the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus region and Central Asia in developing harmonized poverty indicators. Similarly, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) provided countries with technical assistance focused on building the institutional capacities of their national statistical offices, in order to harmonize systems for collecting human settlements statistics. Such assistance has also included conducting routine statistics surveys related to human settlements, in order to collect data on slum settlements, access to basic services, land tenure security, urban governance and civic participation, disaggregated by relevant factors.

28. To support people in vulnerable situations and to reach the furthest behind first, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has significantly increased the scale and scope of joint initiatives with the World Bank Group on data and its analysis. A joint data centre on forced displacement is being established to enhance the ability of stakeholders to make timely and evidence-informed decisions that can improve the lives of affected people, with a focus on household-level socioeconomic data. To respond to the need for accurate data on trafficking in persons in humanitarian situations, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) uses its Displacement Tracking Matrix to collect reliable baseline data on trafficking in persons and migrant exploitation, abuse and vulnerability in situations of crisis, displacement and large-scale migration. IOM and its partners also developed the Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative, the first global open-access data hub on trafficking in persons.

B. Supporting structural transformation, productive employment and decent work in the context of a changing global scenario

29. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) supports countries in advancing inclusive and sustainable industrial development through its Programme for Country Partnership and its country programmes. The Programme for Country Partnership is focused on priority industrial sectors or areas essential to a given country's development agenda, in particular those with strong potential for economic growth and job creation. Countries are receiving support in areas that include trade capacity-building, agribusiness value chain development and the strengthening of productive capacities. Currently, UNIDO is implementing 33 joint programmes in 29 countries, in partnership with other United Nations entities. UNIDO is also supporting African countries in implementing the Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa (2016–2025).

30. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is helping developing countries to address the limited productive capacities that are

constraining their ability to develop. The focus is on building a critical mass of viable and competitive productive capacities in agriculture, manufacturing and services. Success in those areas will ensure that developing countries are able to achieve structural transformation and thereby benefit from greater integration into the global economy, increase resilience to shocks and sustain inclusive and equitable growth and poverty eradication efforts. In that context, UNCTAD has collaborated with various organizations to support African countries in designing strategies to enhance the contribution of export diversification to employment creation and skills development. In 2018, UNCTAD assisted Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Turkmenistan in identifying sectors with new export potential, as well as with policies and measures that could boost export diversification.

31. UNDP worked to build more sustainable livelihoods and jobs. Nearly 4 million people living in or recovering from crisis in 25 countries, including some 300,000 people in the Sudan, 42,000 in the Syrian Arab Republic and 38,000 in Haiti, found a job or improved their livelihood with UNDP support. In Yemen, UNDP partnered with the World Bank to create emergency employment for more than 344,550 people. Enhancing entrepreneurial skills and opportunities for young people continued as a strong focus as well. UNDP and its partners are also addressing the poor state of the formal job market in Africa through the YouthConnekt programme, which supports young entrepreneurs in building businesses and creating jobs.

32. FAO is proactively supporting countries in developing policies and programmes that could generate a larger number of decent farm and non-farm employment opportunities and promote employment-enhancing and responsible investments in agriculture, food systems and agrifood value chains. FAO is also helping countries to improve working conditions and foster the application of labour standards in rural settings. In partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNIDO and the private sector, FAO engaged more than 200 young African entrepreneurs in identifying innovative solutions to challenges related to food and agriculture in 2018. Key recommended solutions included building platforms for young people to share information and knowledge, greater youth involvement in policy dialogue and the strengthening of mentorship programmes and incubation centres for young people.

33. Under the Working for Health five-year action plan for health employment and inclusive economic growth for the period 2017–2021, an intersectoral programme of work developed jointly by the World Health Organization (WHO), ILO and OECD, efforts are being made to build global momentum to address the “human resources for health” agenda and to increase country capacity. The Working for Health programme and its multi-partner trust fund are providing policy advice, technical assistance and capacity-strengthening support to Member States to accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goals 3, 4, 5 and 8. Some 26 countries have requested assistance under the programme.

34. ECE is supporting its member States in leveraging the greening of the economy to provide new employment opportunities. The Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy for the period 2016–2030 was developed by the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy, with support from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and other key partners. One of the objectives of that framework is the improvement of human well-being and social equity. Greening the economy and supporting growing economic prosperity also requires appropriate infrastructure. In that regard, ECE has been developing new public-private partnership models that ensure their alignment with social goals, so that those partnerships can make an effective contribution to reducing poverty.

35. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) actively supports its member States in enhancing economic empowerment and

entrepreneurship for women as a strategy for poverty reduction, social well-being and sustainable economic growth. ESCAP is implementing a five-year regional programme, for the period 2018–2023, entitled “Catalysing women’s entrepreneurship: creating a gender-responsive entrepreneurial ecosystem”. The initiative advances the economic empowerment of women and contributes to poverty eradication in the region by increasing access to capital for, and the use of business development services and financial technologies by, women entrepreneurs and by supporting the development of gender-responsive business development and investment policies and programmes. Beneficiary countries include Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Nepal, Samoa and Viet Nam.

C. Expanding social protection systems to underpin inclusive poverty-reducing development

36. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs continues to promote social protection as a policy tool for the reduction of poverty and inequality, through its engagement in the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board, its analytical work and its capacity-development activities. The focus of the 2018 edition of the *Report on the World Social Situation* was on the role of social protection in promoting inclusion. The Department is also carrying out capacity-development activities, in collaboration with ILO, to help developing countries to strengthen their national social protection systems.

37. As a member of the Social Protection Floor Initiative, UNDP is helping countries to integrate social protection into development strategies. Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are being supported in conducting gender-sensitive social protection assessments, including costing for gender-sensitive interventions in social protection mechanisms. UNDP is also assisting countries in improving the effectiveness of social protection mechanisms through the use of better multidimensional poverty measurements and the integration of social protection measures into climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction efforts. UNDP is also active in crisis-affected countries, delivering cash for work interventions, which are typically linked to supporting inclusive livelihoods, employment and local economic development for accelerated recovery and longer-term resilience.

38. FAO is supporting countries by building and strengthening nationally owned social protection systems that are integrated into broader livelihood promotion and rural development strategies. As an active member of the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board, FAO provides support to Governments in building the investment and economic case for scaling up social protection systems; in enhancing the visibility of those living in rural areas and the need to adjust the design of social protection programmes to better address the multiple vulnerabilities they face, while ensuring them adequate coverage; and in promoting evidence-based policy and programmatic coherence between social protection and economic performance, including agriculture and natural resource management. FAO also supports the strengthening of national and local-level government capacity with regard to the design and scale-up of social protection programmes in rural areas, including cash transfers and home-grown school feeding programmes.

39. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is helping countries to address child poverty through the expansion of social protection programmes and improvements to the equity of public expenditure. Emphasis is being placed on the rapid expansion of child and family benefits, including the progressive realization of

universal child grants. In 2018, 38.4 million children benefited from such interventions. To strengthen inter-agency convergence and collaboration, UNICEF, the Overseas Development Institute and ILO organized a high-level conference in 2019 on universal child grants, bringing together national Governments, policy practitioners and other stakeholders. UNICEF is also an active member of the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board and the World Bank Group and ILO Universal Social Protection Initiative, which are aimed at promoting and advocating the realization of universal social protection, with a focus on universal child benefits.

40. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) is helping its member States to better design social protection interventions through knowledge generation and capacity-building. ECLAC also continues to update its online database on non-contributory social protection programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean. The database contains information on cash transfer programmes, pensions and labour and productive inclusion programmes. ECLAC also shared its regional experience on social protection with African countries at the regional consultative meeting on the better monitoring of social investments, organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa and held in 2019.

41. ESCAP is strengthening the national capacities of its member States to develop comprehensive social protection systems that provide coverage for all, through the development of analytical products and the implementation of capacity-building initiatives. Those products and initiatives include the Social Protection Toolbox, a platform containing good practices in social protection; a series of modules on designing, implementing and financing social protection systems; and a forthcoming social protection simulation tool, which will enable policymakers to estimate the impact of social protection policy options on poverty and inequality, while measuring the financial costs and affordability of those options. ESCAP has also established a group of experts, consisting of representatives nominated by its member States, to develop modalities to strengthen regional cooperation on social protection.

42. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) promotes social protection programmes around the globe to alleviate poverty among women and prevent them from falling into poverty, primarily through the provision of social safety nets, universal health care and non-contributory pension schemes. UN-Women support to Member States with regard to social protection has been focused on capacity-development. In that context, UN-Women, in partnership with the National Institute for Health and Welfare of the Government of Finland, together with OECD and ILO, delivered a regional training session on building and managing social protection floors in Africa in Kenya, in 2018. In the Dominican Republic, UN-Women, in partnership with ILO and UNDP, provided integrated policy advisory services to the Government to promote the inclusion of human rights and gender equality perspective in the national social protection system.

43. The World Food Programme (WFP) has provided technical support to more than 70 countries to strengthen the capacity of national social protection systems in order to improve access to food for poor and vulnerable households. Technical support has included facilitating the development of social protection policy, guidance on deploying social protection programmes in fragile and forced displacement contexts, strengthening beneficiary information management systems and improvements in payment and delivery systems. In 2018, WFP completed the transition of a school feeding programme to national ownership in Kenya. The programme provides fresh meals to 1.2 million children. In Bangladesh, WFP is supporting the Government in implementing a sustainable and nationally owned school feeding programme. In Bhutan, WFP is focusing on systems-building, policy advice, technical assistance and capacity-strengthening support, to ensure that the Government can fully manage and implement its school feeding programme.

44. ESCWA supports and stimulates inclusive social protection reforms in Arab countries, through targeted research and policy advice, technical support and capacity-building, as well as through enhanced regional cooperation and experience exchange.

D. Human capability development: addressing the non-income forms of poverty

45. UN-Habitat is supporting the struggle against urban poverty through the Global Housing Strategy and in line with the New Urban Agenda. By the end of 2018, UN-Habitat had supported 40 countries in implementing improved housing policies. UN-Habitat is also contributing to poverty eradication through its Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme. Various national and local governments are being supported to improve tenure security in informal settlements, resulting in more than 200,000 households gaining security of land tenure. Through the urban basic services trust fund, support has been provided to municipal, regional and national authorities to develop and implement policies for increasing equitable access to urban basic services and improving the standard of living of the urban poor. By the end of 2018, some 2.7 million people benefited from improved access to water and sanitation through projects supported by UN-Habitat.

46. UNICEF collaborates with numerous United Nations agencies to address the non-income-related dimensions of poverty, such as health, nutrition, water, sanitation and education. In the area of health, UNICEF has led the process to establish an inter-agency hub for vaccination acceptance and demand to advance the understanding of vaccination demand in a more rigorous, evidence-informed and holistic manner among partners, donors and key programme stakeholders. ECE is helping countries to develop guidance documents so they can better understand and address existing challenges in order to ensure equitable access to water and sanitation. One of the lessons drawn from the assessment of the existing situation is that current governance frameworks are often equity blind. UNDP has supported digital centres in Bangladesh in extending financial services to 3 million rural people without bank accounts, an innovation being replicated in Fiji and Somalia. In Argentina, UNDP helped to implement integrated anti-poverty programmes across six ministries, through a country support platform, thereby improving medical coverage for 1 million people without public health insurance. WFP supported school feeding programmes that provided food to 16.4 million schoolchildren, resulted in higher retention rates for both girls and boys and served as a platform for community resilience, social cohesion and stability.

E. Ensuring the future of food and sustainable agriculture

47. FAO aids countries in developing and implementing broad-based multisectoral approaches that include options for the multiple pathways out of poverty. Special emphasis is placed on rural transformation, on enhancing countries' capacities to reach all vulnerable groups in rural areas and on considering the broader linkages between poverty eradication and sustainable development.

48. WFP has developed models that combine wide partnerships, innovative solutions and context-specific support for smallholders and their national Governments, with systemic impacts on agricultural value chains and broader food systems. Such efforts include the market access-oriented Smallholder Agricultural Market Support, Farm to Market Alliance and Virtual Farmers' Market initiatives, the livelihood-oriented Food Assistance for Assets initiative and the post-harvest loss

reduction efforts to strengthen food supply chains. In 2018, WFP implemented asset-creation and related training programmes, benefiting 10 million people in 55 countries. WFP and its partners have also facilitated country-led, multi-stakeholder and consultative zero hunger strategic reviews, helping 70 countries to determine priority actions for making zero hunger a reality by 2030.

49. The goal of ending hunger and malnutrition requires real and transformative change in current food systems and agriculture practices to ensure that nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable diets are available to all. In that regard, WHO, together with FAO, jointly leads the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025) and is supporting countries by developing normative products that support the implementation of the commitments made at the Second International Conference on Nutrition.

50. The joint programme entitled “Accelerating progress towards the economic empowerment of rural women”, implemented by UN-Women, FAO, IFAD and WFP, directly engages 50,000 rural women in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, the Niger and Rwanda. The programme is aimed at improving food security and nutrition, income generation and income security, and the participation and leadership of women in public spheres. It also strengthens the policy environment for gender-responsive rural development. Between 2017 and 2018, targeted rural women farmers increased their productivity by 34 per cent, while strengthening their participation in cooperatives that have seen incomes increase by approximately \$1 million in total. Overall, programme benefits reach at least 315,000 women, men and children in the seven programme countries.

F. Reducing inequalities

51. UN-Women is helping countries to develop and implement gender-responsive economic policies, including on decent work, social protection, unpaid care, procurement, climate-resilient agriculture and land. UN-Women is leading efforts to promote policies under which unpaid care work is recognized, reduced and redistributed, by having care positioned as a social and collective responsibility through, among other measures, improvements to women’s access to free or affordable childcare services. A methodology developed by UN-Women to cost investment in childcare and the positive effect on women’s employment and public revenue has been used in Kyrgyzstan, South Africa, Turkey and Uruguay. Furthermore, UN-Women has strengthened entrepreneurship among women, resulting in more than 23,000 women in 25 countries having accessed financial services and improved their businesses through support from UN-Women.

52. Through its Public Finance for Children programme, UNICEF seeks to influence and support the mobilization, allocation and use of national financial resources to achieve greater, more equitable and sustainable results for children. Those efforts were accelerated in 2018, including an increase in the number of countries that are conducting analyses and advocating that sufficient resources be allocated for child related policies and services.

53. As principal recipient of grants from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, UNDP helped to deliver last-mile health services in 35 countries. Through the partnership between UNDP and the Global Fund, 1.4 million people accessed HIV treatment, 6.3 million people received HIV testing and/or counselling and 97,000 pregnant women received antiretrovirals to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Some 7.6 million cases of malaria were treated and nearly 20 million bed nets distributed, a 12 per cent increase over 2017. The partnership enabled seven countries to achieve 100 per cent coverage with regard to

antimalarial medicines. UNDP has also increased its focus on opportunities for people with disabilities, through the launch of new guidance on how to support disability inclusion. And with the support of UNDP and its partners, more than 4 million women gained access to basic services, including financial services and non-financial assets, and 17.2 million women registered to vote in 2018.

54. FAO is supporting countries in accelerating gender equality and the economic empowerment of rural women. Its policy on gender equality prioritizes the equal participation of and decision-making by women and men in rural institutions and in shaping laws, policies and programmes; equal access to and control over productive resources, services, income, markets and decent employment, and the reduction of women's burden of work.

55. ECLAC is supporting its member States in carrying out anti-discriminatory policies, including affirmative action measures for indigenous peoples and Afrodescendants, and in addressing the causes of social exclusion. ECLAC also coordinated the preparation of the report entitled *Promoting Equality: An Interregional Perspective*, which was the result of a joint effort by ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA, with a focus on the issue of equality and the public policies that can promote it. ECLAC prepared a toolkit on the measurement of inequality with regard to capacity-building. The toolkit analyses different indicators used to measure socioeconomic inequality and provides elements for analysing the redistributive impact of direct taxes and in-kind and cash public transfers.

56. ESCAP is strengthening the knowledge base of policymakers on inequality trends and recommendations for reducing inequalities. ESCAP has also developed and refined innovative methodologies to measure inequality of opportunity, in order to more accurately identify the furthest behind. ESCAP is also developing an online platform on inequality that will host an interactive online assessment tool on multiple dimensions of inequality and its drivers, as well as a database of good practices. Similarly, normative work carried out by ESCWA has advanced a new framework to gauge and respond to multidimensional inequalities by linking inequality of outcome, opportunity and autonomy. Those efforts will ensure more inclusive approaches to policymaking.

G. Addressing climate change and the intensification of natural hazards

57. The joint UNEP-UNDP Poverty-Environment Initiative is a global programme that supports country-led efforts to put pro-poor, pro-environment objectives at the centre of government actions by mainstreaming poverty and environment objectives into national and subnational development planning, from policymaking to budgeting, implementation and monitoring. A total of 24 national and 4,214 local policies and plans, 93 sectoral policies and plans and 84 budgeting and expenditure processes were mainstreamed by end of 2018, and 56 monitoring and evaluation systems were established. UNEP and UNDP also launched the joint project entitled "Poverty-Environment Action for Sustainable Development Goals (2018–2022)", to prevent environmental degradation that especially harms the poor and the vulnerable.

58. Through its adaptation-oriented approach, UNDP targeted people and communities most at risk in the face of climate change. In Viet Nam, improvements in the management of forests, mangroves and wetlands increased the income of more than 330,000 forest-dependent people. In Cambodia and Sri Lanka, the agricultural livelihoods of 5,500 households were made more resilient through better water management. With support from the Government of Japan and other partners, UNDP has also helped countries to integrate disaster and climate risks into planning and

investment decisions. In 18 countries in Asia and the Pacific, 115 schools in tsunami-prone areas now have a plan of action should a tsunami strike. UNDP has also supported six Caribbean countries in strengthening early warning systems.

59. UNCTAD successfully strengthened the capacity of policymakers, transport planners and transport infrastructure managers in small island developing States to understand the impacts of climate change on coastal transport infrastructure and to take appropriate adaptation response measures. Key project outcomes include the assessment of potential vulnerabilities to climate variability and change in Jamaica and Saint Lucia under different climate scenarios, as well as a transferable methodology to assist in adaptation planning.

60. WHO piloted the African Risk Capacity Replica initiative in Mali and Mauritania. The initiative is aimed at increasing the number of people covered by sovereign insurance against drought and supporting national institutions through relevant technical assistance. It also developed a comprehensive set of environmental and social standards and a related risk screening tool, the latter to ensure that environmental and social risks are identified during the design of activities and that risks are adequately avoided, reduced or mitigated. The organization also began a new strategic partnership with the Green Climate Fund that will strengthen countries' access to climate finance and supported Kyrgyzstan, Senegal and Tajikistan in mobilizing approximately \$28 million in climate funds to strengthen the resilience of their food systems to climate change.

61. Under the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socioeconomic Vulnerability in the Arab Region, ESCWA is working to identify the expected impact of climate change on freshwater resources and associated vulnerability hotspots through the application of integrated regional assessment models. UN-Women is leading the integration of climate resilience among women farmers by addressing gender gaps in land rights and tenure security, climate information and the uptake of climate-smart technologies and practices.

H. Fighting poverty in fragile and humanitarian contexts

62. UNHCR has partnered with the Partnership for Economic Inclusion of the World Bank and with several non-governmental organizations to alleviate poverty for 500,000 refugees and host community households in 32 countries over five years. UNHCR is also strengthening its partnership with FAO to increase the inclusion of refugees and host communities in agriculture-based activities to increase food security and income opportunities for refugees. FAO is also a leading actor in the Global Network against Food Crises, established to combat food crises from humanitarian and development perspectives and tackle its root causes.

63. UNIDO supports refugees, migrants, asylum-seekers, women, young people and other vulnerable groups through its work on training and education, value chains, technology transfer and institutional capacity-building. Because of those endeavours, UNIDO helps to create new job opportunities, raise employability and improve social cohesion between displaced people and host communities. In Turkey, UNIDO and its partners have provided refugees with skills to enable their full participation in society.

64. UNICEF has been active in managing joint analysis and planning activities and in providing support to country teams in order to tackle poverty in fragile and humanitarian contexts, including through the strengthening of cash transfer programmes. Similarly, UN-Habitat supports internally displaced persons and refugees in crisis situations by providing essential services, such as affordable and secure housing. UNCTAD collaborated with IOM and UNHCR to develop policy

guidelines for host countries and development and humanitarian partners on how to best ensure that refugees and migrants use their skills and abilities to build their livelihoods while contributing to host communities and their economies.

65. WHO meets urgent needs and builds resilience in countries facing conflict or recurrent shocks. A total of 10 million people in 55 countries benefited from asset-creation and related training programmes. WHO has also scaled up resilience-building programmes in the Sahel region, where recurrent climate shocks, underinvestment in development and peace agendas intersect. The IOM capacity-building programme on migration, the environment and climate change has benefited policymakers in 57 countries. IOM also works with the humanitarian community to ensure that the risk of trafficking is mitigated and addressed, right from the start of the humanitarian response stage.

IV. Conclusion and recommendations

66. To accelerate global actions for a world without poverty, Member States may wish to consider the following recommendations:

(a) Countries should prioritize ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions, with a renewed focus on leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first, including women and children, persons with disabilities, older persons and indigenous peoples. Sufficient resources should be allocated to reach this goal;

(b) Countries should adequately prepare to address challenges in the world of work that are being driven by technological innovations, demographic trends, climate change and globalization. A pro-poor and human-centred approach that puts workers' rights and the needs, aspirations and rights of all people at the heart of economic, social and environmental policies is needed in order to institute integrated policies for poverty eradication through decent work, including by promoting rural-inclusive employment policies and supporting the formalization of the informal economy;

(c) Sustained investments are needed in agriculture, in particular in smallholder agriculture. The stimulation of sustained and inclusive economic growth, starting in agriculture, with direct effects on employment and labour income for the rural poor, is a driver for the eradication of extreme poverty;

(d) Governments should expand access to inclusive and equitable education, universal health coverage, training, skills upgrading and high-quality public services;

(e) Public policies should strengthen health systems, in particular through scaling up universal health coverage, in order to improve the health of people living in poverty, prevent people from falling into poverty owing to health costs and combat health inequities between and among social groups;

(f) Governments should expand adequate social protection coverage by implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems for all. In addition, access barriers to social protection experienced by disadvantaged groups and those in vulnerable situations should be eliminated.

67. For its part, the United Nations system and its organizations can strengthen the implementation of the Third Decade by:

- (a) **Prioritizing the joint formulation and implementation of poverty eradication strategies within the context of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and other planning processes;**
 - (b) **Supporting capacity development in such areas as building national statistical systems, data analysis, policy formulation and the mainstreaming of Sustainable Development Goals into national development plans and strategies;**
 - (c) **Continuing to support the strengthening of national institutions to enhance policy coherence and multisectoral coordination for the effective eradication of poverty and hunger, including enhancing policy coherence between food security, nutrition, social protection and agriculture and implementing territorial development approaches to reduce inequalities between rural and urban areas, enhance the sustainable use of resources and boost synergies between rural areas and cities;**
 - (d) **Engaging Governments, disadvantaged social groups and those in vulnerable situations, civil society, the private sector, academia and other stakeholders in generating actionable solutions, and identifying and addressing systemic gaps in implementation critical to accelerating global actions for a world without poverty;**
 - (e) **Supporting Governments in strengthening the focus on equity, gender and rights in national health policies, strategies, plans and programmes, in such critical system areas as human resources for health, service delivery, health financing, health information systems, governance and health products;**
 - (f) **Advancing normative tools and approaches, convening global, regional and national expert groups, forums and partnerships on poverty in all its forms and dimensions and reporting on global, regional and national situation and trends in relation to the eradication of poverty.**
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