

# ACCELERATING GLOBAL ACTIONS FOR A WORLD WITHOUT POVERTY: GAPS, CHALLENGES AND PROGRESS

Virtual Inter-agency Expert Group Meeting on Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018-2027), 24-27 May 2021

# Report of the Inter-Agency Expert Group Meeting

## I. Background and Purpose

The General Assembly, in its resolution A/RES/72/233, proclaimed the period 2018-2027 as the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty in order to maintain the momentum generated by the implementation of the Second Decade and to support, in an efficient and coordinated manner, the internationally agreed development goals related to poverty eradication, including the Sustainable Development Goals and their objective of leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first, and requested for an inter-agency, system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication to coordinate the efforts of the United Nations system. In its resolution A/RES/73/246, the Assembly decided that the theme of the Third Decade should be "Accelerating global actions for a world without poverty" in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and requested the Secretary-General to develop an inter-agency, system-wide plan of action (SWAP) for poverty eradication to support global efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda, accelerate global actions for a world without poverty and coordinate the efforts of the United Nations system.

The SWAP aims to establish a common understanding of the challenge of eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions everywhere and specifies seven thematic areas that focus on actions that drive the structural transformations essential to sustained, inclusive and poverty-reducing growth. In designing the plan of action, important lessons were drawn from past experience of policy integration and emerging plans, including the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to strengthen the means of action of the United Nations system such as undertaking joint research, monitoring and reporting on the indicators for poverty eradication-related goals, dissemination of information, promoting integrated programmes, importance of having system focal points, capacity building and incentivizing planning for integrated programmes. It also underscores that in order to achieve the SDGs, the ability to work across United Nations agencies is essential. This plan of action was developed by a team of inter-agency focal points over the course of six months in 2018 and was discussed and considered by Member States during the seventy-third session of the General Assembly.

In 2020, in its resolution A/RES/75/230, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to its seventy-sixth session a report on the gaps, challenges and progress made in the implementation of the Third Decade, including COVID-19-related aspects, effects and response. In view of this request, the Division for Inclusive Social Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs organised an inter-agency expert group meeting under the theme "Accelerating global actions for a world without poverty". The meeting was held virtually from 24 to 27 May 2021.

The objectives of the meeting were to review the negative impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on the achievement of the SDGs, in particular poverty eradication and inequality reduction; reflect on progress made and the gaps and challenges toward ending poverty in all its forms everywhere by 2030; share country perspectives for better support from the United Nations system; review lessons learnt from designing and implementing poverty eradication strategies at various levels that can be leveraged to spur further progress in those countries or regions lagging further behind and to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; discuss financing poverty eradication efforts; review the progress made by the UN system to get countries back on track and accelerate the implementation of the SWAP; and propose inclusive social policies for building back better post-COVID-19 and accelerating poverty eradication and effectively implementing the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027). Over 30 experts drawn from the United Nations system, academia, think tanks and civil society participated and presented papers in plenary sessions. Interactive discussions were held following each session.

The key policy messages and recommendations from the experts' presentations and the discussions at the meeting are summarized in this report. The results will be used to inform the preparations for the seventy-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly, particularly the preparation of the Secretary General's report.

Materials from the inter-agency expert group meeting can be accessed at the website of the Division for Inclusive Social Development using the following link: <a href="https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2021-meetings/egm-3rd-decade-poverty.html">https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2021-meetings/egm-3rd-decade-poverty.html</a>.

#### II. Overview

The meeting identified the gaps and challenges, assessed the progress made toward eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions everywhere, and provided policy recommendations to accelerate action. The experts reiterated that poverty is not only monetary but also multidimensional and hence ending poverty is not just about people's income but also their access to basic needs, such as quality education and health care, clean water and sanitation, decent housing and security. The need for promoting integrated approaches and policy frameworks to address multidimensional poverty; tracking progress in efforts oriented towards several SDGs jointly; diagnosing interlinkages of these deprivations; and supporting the development of integrated and well-targeted policies that address common deprivation bundles was emphasized.

The experts argued that the COVID-19 pandemic would bring to light the fragility of poverty reduction in the sense that millions of people are not far above the poverty line, and hence estimates of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on monetary poverty are tentative and furthermore depend on government action as well as the duration of the crisis and vaccine availability, efficacy and rollout. They also underscored that the setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on the progress in eradicating poverty, though severe, are not irreversible. It was also noted that the year 2021 represents an opportunity for the international community to strengthen its commitment to the "Leave no one behind" promise double down on the "no one left behind" value of the Sustainable Development Goals, and to support investments in the cash transfer, social protection, and livelihoods interventions needed to end poverty by 2030.

The participants highlighted that there is GDP and equity market growth but not jobs, rise in investment in digital technology and Artificial Intelligence, but not yet in other sectors, and job recovery in services but leaving youth out. It is necessary to implement policies to achieve full employment and inclusive growth, which promote gender equality in labour markets. Inclusive growth must be able to generate enough labor

demand to create formal sector jobs and reverse the growing informality of work, which has left more women and men in precarious situations.

It was also noted that social protection systems were key automatic stabilizers for the economy, contributing to higher resilience. The importance of social protection was emphasized as it has clearly demonstrated its value during the pandemic. It was agreed that achieving universal coverage by 2030 will require additional investment.

The key policy messages and recommendations are presented in the following section.

## III. Key Policy Messages and Recommendations

## **Definition, Measurement, Data, Analysis**

- Poverty is both monetary and multidimensional. It is therefore important to use both monetary and multidimensional indicators to measure poverty.
- Economic growth/recession is the main driver of poverty progress/setbacks.
- The extreme poverty line needs to be updated by bringing the set of poverty lines together.
- A monetary poverty line that aligns well with nutrition, health and education at reasonable levels, and allows for some indication of precariousness after people move above the poverty line is required.
- An extreme poverty as measured by \$1.90 a day might be ended but not human poverty.
- There are pockets of poverty in every country sub-national "poverty hotspots".
- It is necessary to invest in, and use, disaggregated data to identify the poor.
- New data sources such as satellite data, social networks and machine learning should be used to enable better targeting

### **COVID-19 and poverty**

- The COVID-19 pandemic has increased poverty and laid bare the precariousness of the situation of poor people.
- The poorest people are the most affected by COVID-19.
- ❖ A loss of resilience, downward mobility and de-assetting are observed.
- ❖ In MENA, income poverty was already on the rise and COVID has exacerbated this increase.
- In ASEAN countries, COVID interrupted the majority of the SDGs. But the effect differs across indicator and country.
- ❖ The poverty setbacks caused by COVID-19 are not irreversible.

## **Inequality**

- The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the existence of inequalities or has even increased inequality.
- Some groups are more affected. The effects of COVID-19 differ across gender and race (e.g., South Africa), across regions (e.g., Caribbean countries where the economies depend on tourism are more affected), between urban and rural areas (e.g., USA), and between immigrants and native-born (e.g., OEDC countries).

#### Food insecurity

- Rising hunger and food insecurity will imperil efforts to eradicate poverty.
- The COVID-19 pandemic is placing significant stress on all components of food systems (production, trade and distribution, and consumption), threatening the food security and livelihoods of millions of vulnerable people.

#### **Economic recovery**

Economies are rebounding but not producing the expected jobs. In advanced economies, a fast rebound is occurring thanks to macroeconomic support and vaccines. However, employment remains subdued and job recovery is not for young people. The newly created jobs are often of inferior quality. Young people in particular are left behind, even where massive employment retention schemes helped contain the decline in employment, (e.g., Japan, Rep. of Korea, Portugal and Spain).

#### Social protection

- Social protection has clearly demonstrated its value during COVID-19.
- Countries with solid social protection systems were able to respond faster and better to the COVID-19 pandemic. Countries with weak social protection systems had significant challenges.
- Social protection systems were key automatic stabilizers for the economy, contributing to higher resilience, but achieving universal coverage by 2030 will require additional investment.
- The pandemic has positively changed ideas and practices. Emergency social protection measures in response to the pandemic accomplished things that were not being done prior to the pandemic, such as targeting workers in the informal economy. New programmes are more effective at reaching people living in poverty than before. But these measures were too temporary.
- It is necessary to accelerate the extension of social protection to those in the informal economy ensuring adequate coverage for workers in all types of employment.
- Strengthening social protection systems, including floors and investing in universal social protection systems are crucial for more resilience. Low-income countries need to invest an additional USD 77.9 billion or 15.9% of GDP per annum to guarantee at least a basic level of social security for all by 2030 through a nationally-defined social protection floor.
- Social protection should be used as an accompanying measure for inclusive rural transformation and effective poverty reduction, especially in poverty hotspots.
- There is a strong need for creating a proactive, rather than reactive social protection system. Comprehensive social protection has been proven to be a key developmental tool in drastically reducing poverty and inequality, therefore a universal basic income is recommended as a way to not only provide immediate relief to impoverished households but boost economic participation by increasing the spending power of consumers

#### **Employment**

- It is necessary to quickly roll out vaccines.
- Maintaining accommodative fiscal and monetary policies is important to sustain recovery.
- It is necessary to invest in key sectors that create jobs while paving the way for building an inclusive and resilient economy.
- In developing countries, job recovery can be financed by enhancing domestic fiscal support and address gaps in external resources (stagnant ODA, declining FDI, uncertain remittances flows, volatile capital inflows and a looming debt crisis).
- Stepping up international cooperation for emergency response, job recovery, and inclusive and sustainable growth is critical.

#### **Education, Science and Innovation**

- Investments in training should be made since skills needed for jobs are changing due to the pandemic.
- Science plays an important role in identifying ways to recover and innovations in all sectors are also required to adapt to new circumstances.

Scientific work for identifying new SDGs synergies and dependencies fostered by the pandemic in specific contexts, is important in order to address in clusters multiple challenges. By addressing or financing for the SDGs in cluster, based on their most positive synergies in the given contexts, it can be achieved more with less resources

#### Health

- The ACT Accelerator, including COVAX needs to be funded.
- COVID-19 has reinforced the existing evidence that investments in health have long-term returns, while underinvestment has potential large-scale global social and economic effects. Investments in health must be made in smart, multisectoral policies aligned with the SDGs.
- There is a strong need for building strong, resilient, and prepared health systems to have healthy populations
- Countries should aim for universal health coverage.

#### Agricultural and structural transformation

- Agricultural productivity growth has been shown to be more poverty-reducing than growth in other sectors, in particular in low-income countries where agriculture constitutes a major portion of the economy and absorbs a large part of the labour force. Fully harnessing this potential for poverty reduction requires targeted policies and investments.
- To harness the potential contribution of agricultural innovation and productivity growth for poverty and hunger reduction, policies and investment need to be conceived within the broader framework of agricultural, rural and structural transformation.
- Structural transformation should be accelerated both in agriculture (rural push) and in non-agriculture sectors (urban pull) to accelerate recovery and rapid reductions in poverty. There is need for increasing agricultural productivity by transiting from staple to non-staple products, improving economic integration with domestic and global economy through investment in infrastructure, and increasing public investment in agriculture.

## **Recovery policies**

- Recovery policies and assistance should be proportional to impact.
- Recovery policies based on sustainable frameworks can have more support from communities. It is important to seize the opportunity of a positive trend on behaviour change, as a result of the pandemic, towards more sustainable lifestyles.
- It is important to construct an economy that caters to all citizens and provides a decent life for all to reduce inequality.
- The impact of the pandemic on settled immigrants needs to be minimized. Countries need to ensure that immigrants have equal access to training and are included in digital literacy programmes.
- Universal "household-level" social transfers in areas/sectors severely affected by COVID-19 need to be provided in order to support those already in poverty and vulnerable worker (disproportionally women).
- Women's access to productive resources should be expanded to help lift them out of poverty or help them cope with various shocks.
- Food systems and markets should be sustained, protected and improved during the crisis to reduce economic and food insecurity risks to communities, especially the most vulnerable, and enable a quicker and more inclusive recovery.
- The year 2021 represents an opportunity for the international community to strengthen its commitment to the "Leave no one behind" promise of the Sustainable Development Goals, and to support investments in the cash transfer, social protection, and livelihoods interventions needed to end poverty by 2030.

# Financing poverty eradication and sustainable development efforts

Recovery needs to be financed in developing countries and domestic fiscal support should be enhanced. It is also important to address gaps in external resources by meeting ODA commitments; funding ACT Accelerator, including COVAX; providing grants or ultra-long-term financing; prioritizing spending on health and social protection floors, and expanding debt swap initiatives and state-contingent debt instruments.

## Integrated approaches, International cooperation

- Global cooperation is very important as the pandemic has shown.
- The short-term measures taken during the pandemic prove that States can do much more than what they were doing pre-COVID-19.
- The international community can play a key role in promoting trajectories for inclusive policy by framing the emergency as still unfolding, stressing the role of the State, and supporting its expansion.
- Integrated approaches and stronger collaboration should be used.
- ❖ International cooperation needs to be stepped up to fund and achieve SDG1 and other SDGs.

# Annex 1

# Agenda

# ACCELERATING GLOBAL ACTIONS FOR A WORLD WITHOUT POVERTY: GAPS, CHALLENGES AND PROGRESS

Virtual Inter-agency Expert Group Meeting on Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018-2027)

24-27 May 2021

DAY 1 – Monday 24 May 2021				
Opening Session	Welcome and Introductory Statements			
8:00 – 8:20	<u>Facilitator</u> : <b>Ms. Wenyan Yang</b> , Global Dialogue for Social Development Branch (GDSDB), Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD), Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)			
	Welcome message (video): Ms. Daniela Bas, Director, DISD/DESA			
	Background and purpose of the meeting: Ms. Meron Sherif, GDSDB/DISD/DESA			
Session 1	Setting the stage: multidimensional poverty and data and analysis requirements			
8:20 –9:00	<ul> <li>Presentation: Ms. Sabina Alkire, OPHI, Oxford – Progress in eradicating multidimensional poverty: evidence from the global MPI</li> <li>Presentation: Mr. Andy Sumner and Mr. Eduardo Ortiz-Juarez, King's College London—Assessing present and future global poverty: prospects and challenges for achieving SDG1</li> <li>Presentation: Mr. Daniel Mahler, World Bank – Available data and estimates of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on global poverty</li> <li>Presentation: Mr. Arief Yusuf, Padjadjaran University – Recovering from COVID-19 and accelerating progress to combat inequality and eradicate poverty in South East Asian countries</li> </ul>			
9:00 – 9:20	Interactive Discussion			
Session 2	Poverty, inequality and COVID-19			
9:20 – 10:00	Facilitator: Mr. Bobo Diallo, UN Women			
	<ul> <li>Presentation: Mr. Homi Kharas, Brookings – Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on global poverty</li> <li>Presentation: Ms. Kalterina Shulla, University of Bonn – The COVID-19 pandemic and the achievement of the SDGs</li> <li>Presentation: Mr. Andrew Shepherd, Overseas Development Institute (ODI) – Gaps, challenges and progress in eradicating poverty: recovering from COVID-19 and making the decade one of action and delivery</li> <li>Presentation: Ms. Juliana Martínez Franzoni, University of Costa Rica – COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on opportunities for more inclusive social policies: lessons from Latin America</li> </ul>			
10:00 – 10:30	Interactive Discussion			
10:30	Close			

# DAY 2 - Tuesday 25 May 2021

	DAT Z = Tuesday 20 may 2021		
Session 3	COVID-19 transmission channels on the economy, recovery and poverty eradication		
8:00 – 8:40	Facilitator: Ms. Sabina Alkire, OPHI, Oxford		
	<ul> <li>Presentation: Mr. Khalid Abu-Ismail, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) - Confronting the COVID-19 pandemic and the oil price shock and poverty eradication – the experience of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries</li> <li>Presentation: Ms. Lunyu Xie, Renmin University of China - Targeted poverty alleviation - polices, data, and findings: the experience of China</li> <li>Presentation: Mr. Keith Nurse, Sir Arthur Lewis Community College - Tourism, COVID-19 and poverty eradication: the experience of the Caribbean</li> <li>Presentation: Mr. Abebe Shimeles, African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) – Recovering from COVID-19 and accelerating structural transformation: the experience of Ethiopia</li> </ul>		
8:40 – 9:20	Interactive Discussion		
9:20 – 10:00	Facilitator: Mr. Khalid Abu-Ismail, ESCWA		
	<ul> <li>Presentation: Ms. Vuyokazi Futshane, Oxfam South Africa - Recovering from COVID-19 and inequality: the experience of South Africa</li> <li>Presentation: Mr. Rogers Dhliwayo, UNDP Kenya - Accelerating progress in poverty eradication post-COVID-19: the case of Kenya</li> <li>Presentation: Mr. Justin Farrell, Yale University and Mr. Tom Mueller, Utah State University - COVID-19 and poverty in rural areas: the experience of the United States</li> <li>Presentation: Mr. Thomas Liebig, OECD - Do not leave immigrants behind during COVID-19 recovery: the experience of OECD countries</li> </ul>		
10:00 – 10:30	Interactive Discussion		
10:30	Close		
DAY 3 – Wednesday 26 May 2021			
Session 4	UN system support to the implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018-2027)		
8:00 – 8:40	Facilitator: Mr. Keith Nurse, Sir Arthur Lewis Community College		
	<ul> <li>Presentation: Mr. Aurelio Parisotto, ILO – Gaps, challenges and progress made in employment creation</li> <li>Presentation: Mr. Hiromichi Katayama, UNESCO – Gaps, challenges and progress made in the promotion and provision of access to quality education</li> <li>Presentation: Dr. Nata Menabde, WHO – Gaps, challenges and progress towards universal health coverage, global health security and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</li> <li>Presentation: Mr. Bobo Diallo, UN Women – Gaps, challenges and progress towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls</li> </ul>		
8:40 – 9:20	Interactive Discussion		

9:20 – 9:50	Facilitator: Ms. Kalterina Shulla, University of Bonn		
	<ul> <li>Presentation: Ms. Christina Behrendt, ILO – Gaps, challenges and progress towards universal access to social protection</li> <li>Presentation: Mr. Chris Toe, WFP – Addressing food security in fragile and humanitarian contexts</li> <li>Presentation: Mr. Günter Hemrich, FAO – Gaps, challenges and progress in boosting agricultural productivity and ending hunger</li> </ul>		
9:50 – 10:30	Interactive Discussion		
10:30	Close		
DAY 4 – Thursday 27 May 2021			
Session 5	Fiscal and inclusive social policies for poverty eradication		
8:00 – 8:30	Facilitator: Ms. Hantamalala Rafalimanana, GDSDB/DISD/DESA		
	<ul> <li>Presentation: Ms. Resina Katafono, Financing for Sustainable Development Office, UNDESA – Financing poverty eradication efforts, including domestic resource mobilization and official development assistance</li> <li>Presentation: Ms. Rasha Natour, BRAC Ultra-Poor Graduation Initiative (UPGI) – CSOs and the fight against poverty: promoting the active participation of people living in extreme poverty in the design and implementation of programmes and policies that affect them</li> </ul>		
8:30 – 8:50	Interactive Discussion		
Session 6	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and national poverty eradication		
8:50 – 9:20	Facilitator: Ms. Christina Behrendt, ILO		
	<ul> <li>Presentation: Mr. Mario Samaja, UN Resident Coordinator Office - The experience of Paraguay</li> <li>Presentation: Mr. Julius Chokerah, UN Resident Coordinator Office - The experience of Kenya</li> <li>Presentation: Ms. Marcela Rios, UNDP Chile - The experience of Chile</li> </ul>		
9:20 – 10:00	Interactive Discussion		
10:00 – 10:15	Summary of key policy messages and recommendations: <b>Ms. Hantamalala Rafalimanana</b> , GDSDB/DISD/DESA and <b>Mr. Parfait Eloundou-Enyegue</b> , Cornell University		
10:15 – 10:25	Closing of the meeting: Ms. Wenyan Yang, GDSDB/DISD/DESA		

# Annex 2

# **List of Participants**

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24-27 May 2021

Experts		
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