



**United  
Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs

**Virtual Expert Group Meeting**  
**on**  
**“Inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being and dignity for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda”**

**Division for Inclusive Social Development, in collaboration with FAO and the UN  
Regional Commissions**

29 - 30 July and 2 - 3 August 2021

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**Draft Aide-Mémoire**

**I. Purpose of the meeting**

In its resolution E/RES/2021/8, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations decided that the priority theme for the 60<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission for Social Development to be held in February 2022 shall be, “Inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being, and dignity for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda”. An Expert Group Meeting will be convened in preparation for the 60<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission which is expected to adopt a resolution on the priority theme.

The Commission, a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council, serves as the main United Nations forum for an intensified global dialogue on social development issues and in promoting the integrated treatment of social development issues in the United Nations system. It continues to have the primary responsibility to review, on a periodic basis, issues related to the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. Furthermore, the Commission will, within its mandate, make a vital contribution to the follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by supporting the thematic reviews of the High-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) on progress being made in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, including cross-cutting issues.

The meeting will provide inputs to the report of the Secretary-General on the priority theme, which offers the analytical backdrop to the Commission’s deliberations. The meeting will contribute to the work of the Commission by providing concrete, evidence-based recommendations on policies for an inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19, with a focus on eradicating poverty and hunger to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

**II. Background**

At the World Summit for Social Development, world leaders recognized the significance of social development and human well-being for all and gave these goals the highest priority then, and into the twenty-first century. The Summit established a new consensus to promote people-centred development and brought poverty eradication, for the first time, to the major national and international policy agenda.

Member States pledged to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment, and foster social integration/inclusion to achieve stable, safe, and just societies for all. <sup>1</sup>

At the UN Sustainable Development Summit held in 2015, Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Recognizing that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, Member States pledged to leave no one behind in the implementation of the Agenda and endeavour to reach the furthest behind the first. With less than ten years left to achieve the objectives of its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular, end poverty in all its forms everywhere (SDG 1) and end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition (SDG 2), the world is off-track in achieving these objectives by 2030.

### The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on poverty and hunger

The world is facing the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to loss of jobs and income, **extreme poverty is expected to increase in all countries**, but particularly in LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS, which rely heavily on tourism, remittances, and external capital flows. Global extreme poverty (\$1.90/day) is projected to increase in 2020 for the first time since 1998, pushing an additional 119 - 124 million people, so-called 'new poor', into extreme poverty. This number is projected to rise to between 143 and 163 million in 2021.<sup>2</sup> The number of people living under the international poverty lines for lower-middle-income countries (\$3.20/day) is also projected to increase by an additional 175 - 228 million, a majority of which is in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

The multifaceted impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have **exacerbated pre-existing inequalities**, with **marginalized and disadvantaged populations being most affected**. These groups include those in chronic extreme poverty (80% of which live in rural areas), the working poor, women, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, children, and adolescents. While the pandemic has brought to the fore the potential of social protection in mitigating the impacts of shock and supporting recovery, it has also made glaringly apparent the gaps in existing social protection systems as well as the inadequacies in health and education systems that feed structural inequalities. Increases in closures of micro- and small enterprises, layoffs/unemployment (especially among young and lower-skilled workers), severe human capacity losses (especially among disadvantaged households) due to school closures, and lack of access to ICTs are further accelerating in-country inequalities. Inequality between countries is also likely to increase.

The crisis has disclosed the fact that many households may be just one shock away from falling into poverty. Moreover, a new category of poor people created by the crisis have a somewhat different profile from those living in chronic poverty before the COVID-19 pandemic. They are more likely to reside in middle-income countries, somewhat better-educated, and engage in informal work. The COVID-19 crisis has had a negative impact on the incomes and food security of both rural and urban households, as well as on farm and off-farm sources of income. The magnitude of the crisis has led to significant negative impacts on the livelihoods and food security of both rural and urban households, as well as on farm and off-farm sources of income. Deepening levels of poverty and widening inequalities make it more difficult for poor people to move out of poverty, heightening their risk of being trapped into a vicious cycle of inter-generational poverty. A richer and more nuanced picture is made possible when poverty is measured in relation to

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<sup>1</sup> A/RES/S-24/2

<sup>2</sup> The World Bank, updated in January 2021 <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/updated-estimates-impact-covid-19-global-poverty-looking-back-2020-and-outlook-2021>

different poverty lines (depending on a country's income level) and across multiple dimensions (beyond the single measure of monetary income) to reflect the multiple deprivations of those living in poverty.

An estimated 3 billion people today cannot afford a healthy diet and the burden of malnutrition on social development continues to be a challenge. **The COVID-19 crisis has made matters worse.** Food supply chains are interrupted, thus intensifying vulnerabilities and inadequacies of the global food system, especially for the most vulnerable populations. As many as **132 million additional people went hungry in 2020** because of the COVID-19 crisis<sup>3</sup> due to falls in income and remittances, and in some contexts, rising food prices. More families are being forced to ration food (a situation made worse by the closure of schools and the millions of children missing out on school meals), in turn leading to an increase in child stunting, with many long-term negative effects on children's health, well-being, and potential.

### Inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19: long-term strategies to address multiple dimensions of poverty and hunger

Although COVID-19 is a global, albeit temporary, shock to economic growth of all countries, the magnitude and duration of its **impact will vary widely between regions.** The trajectory of economic recovery will be closely linked to vaccination timelines and sufficient fiscal space to launch stimulus and recovery plans. **International solidarity, multilateralism, and investment in sustainable and resilient financial infrastructure** and innovation should be promoted to help poorer countries establish the urgently needed fiscal space to support social development and combat poverty and hunger in all their forms.

Alongside fast-acting temporary measures to weather the crisis, **national governments need to put in place long-term recovery strategies to build resilience against future shocks and enable a socially just transition towards sustainable development.** This will require rethinking economic growth as a means to advancing sustainable livelihoods, well-being, and dignity for all people, with the 2030 Agenda as a blueprint. Specifically, an integrated policy framework should be formulated to simultaneously reduce poverty, hunger, and inequalities and enhance people's capabilities and resilience. The building blocks of such a framework should be integrated to establish synergies. Its components should include, among others, ensuring equal access to social services (especially quality education and healthcare) and social protection, investing in basic infrastructure, providing decent work opportunities for all, and fostering economic security.

In undertaking these structural reforms, universal policies should be complemented by targeted measures to ensure that no one is excluded based on gender, age, disability, location, socio-economic status, or any other factors. A **multi-dimensional analysis of poverty and hunger should inform these long-term recovery strategies.** The transformation of food systems should seek to be inclusive of all population groups (including the most vulnerable), environmentally sustainable, combat food waste (one-third of food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted globally), reduce the cost of nutritious foods, and increase the affordability of healthy diets. Such changes require interventions along the entire food supply line.

### **III. Objectives, Key Questions, and Methodology**

The Expert Group Meeting aims to examine effective policies and strategies to enable an inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 to ensure sustainable livelihoods, well-being, and dignity for all and to achieve the objectives of the World Summit for Social Development and the 2030 Agenda, by eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions. The meeting will:

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<sup>3</sup> UN 2020, State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI)

- Review overall poverty and hunger trends in all their forms and dimensions at the global and regional levels;
- Examine how the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic consequences affects the livelihoods, well-being, and dignity of people, especially those who are in vulnerable situations;
- Review effective temporary measures taken by countries across regions to protect those at risk of falling into poverty and experiencing hunger;
- Discuss how to devise effective policies and strategies to enable an inclusive and resilient recovery in the long-term, building on existing measures taken to respond to COVID-19 to eradicate poverty and hunger in the post-COVID-19 era;
- Review existing approaches and tools to analyze and address multiple dimensions of poverty and food insecurity to better inform policies at the national and regional levels.

The above will facilitate the deliberations of the Commission for Social Development at its 60th session and the 2022 High-Level Political Forum. Experts will engage in open and inclusive discussions in the various sessions.

To accomplish these objectives, the meeting will bring together experts from academia, national governments, civil society, and the UN system. Presentations by experts will focus on the following:

- How can policies be designed to ensure an inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 by addressing poverty, inequalities, and food insecurity in an integrated manner so that no one is left behind?
- How can the analysis and measurement of the multiple dimensions of poverty and hunger help formulate effective and efficient policies?
- What measures can be taken to prevent people from being further left behind? What measures can prevent ‘transient’ poor from becoming ‘chronically’ poor and trapped in a poverty cycle?
- How can sustainable and adequate social protection systems, including social protection floors, be strengthened and their coverage extended to help eradicate poverty?
- How can governments and the international community mobilize resources to finance social protection systems to eradicate poverty and hunger and improve food security and nutrition?
- How can countries capitalize on temporary/emergency measures that they put in place in response to the COVID-19 crisis to launch long-term socio-economic policies/structural transformations to create more inclusive, resilient, and equitable societies?
- How can digital technologies help support poverty eradication efforts, foster equitable and inclusive growth, and reform food systems?
- How can governments, the private sector, and civil society transform food systems to reduce the cost of nutritious foods and increase the affordability of healthy diets?

#### **IV. Expected outputs**

The meeting is expected to provide substantive input for the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General on “Inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being, and dignity for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda” to be submitted to the 60<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission for Social Development. The meeting will produce the following outputs:

- i. Substantive papers on the theme of the meeting, with concrete policy recommendations, prepared by experts;
- ii. A meeting report, prepared by UNDESA, summarizing the deliberations of the experts and key recommendations, which will serve as input to Secretary-General’s Report.

## **V. Organizational and administrative matters**

The Expert Group Meeting will be held virtually and is scheduled to take place from 29 July to 3 August 2021. About 14 - 15 experts and 16 -18 resource persons/discussants will be identified and invited by the Division for Inclusive Social Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (UNDESA), taking into consideration gender and geographical balances.

To mitigate the challenge of the time difference, the virtual EGM will be conducted over 4 consecutive working days (from 8 am to 10:30 am New York time), including regional break-out sessions (time to be decided).

The Secretariat will provide a preliminary list of substantive issues that will be described in an annotated agenda of the Expert Group Meeting to guide experts' presentations. Prior to the meeting, the invited experts will be required to submit short written papers (5-10 pages in length, in English) to the United Nations Secretariat **by 22 July 2021**. All papers and presentations should be sent to Ms. Makiko Tagashira ([tagashira@un.org](mailto:tagashira@un.org)) and Ms. Isabelle Deganis ([isabelle.deganis@un.org](mailto:isabelle.deganis@un.org)), with a copy to Mr. Joshua del Duca ([delduca@un.org](mailto:delduca@un.org)).

In addition to outside experts, representatives of UNDESA, the UN Regional Commissions, FAO, ILO and other UN entities, and representatives from the civil society will participate.

The meeting will be conducted in plenary sessions, except for regional break-out sessions. The invited experts will present their papers, followed by interactive discussions. At the conclusion of the meeting, participants will endorse major conclusions and recommendations of the meeting. A final report will be produced after the meeting.

## **VI. Documentation and the Language of the meeting**

The documentation of the meeting will be comprised of relevant publications, documents, and materials related to the theme of the meeting, which will be made available on a dedicated webpage created for the meeting. The expert papers will be posted on the webpage.

The working language of the meeting will be English. Documentation for the meeting will be provided in English.