



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Aide-Mémoire

UNITED NATIONS INTER-AGENCY EXPERT GROUP MEETING: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE THIRD UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY (2018–2027)

“ACCELERATING GLOBAL ACTIONS FOR A WORLD WITHOUT POVERTY”

Food and Agriculture Organization ■ Rome ■ Iraq Conference Room
4–6 March 2020

I. BACKGROUND

With little more than a decade left to achieve the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, the world is not on track to end global extreme poverty by 2030. While economic development has delivered enormous benefits across the globe, lifting 1.2 billion people out of extreme poverty since 1990, the world remains off-track toward eliminating poverty by 2030.¹ In 2015, 10 percent (736 million people) were still living on less than \$1.90 a day compared to 35.9 percent (1.89 billion people) in 1990. And according to the World Bank’s 2018 nowcast, the poverty rate has since declined to 8.6 percent. Recent World Bank estimates also indicate that while the decline of global extreme poverty continues, the rate of extreme-poverty reduction is slowing down, from an average of a percentage point a year during the period 1981 to 2013, to 0.6 percentage points per year between 2013 to 2015.² Much of this slowdown is being experienced in developing countries as well as in some middle-income countries due to a myriad of factors that include the global economic slowdown, cuts in social spending and conflicts.

Most worryingly, poverty eradication in sub-Saharan Africa by 2030 is increasingly out of reach, with countries such as Nigeria, Mozambique, Madagascar and the Democratic Republic of the Congo experiencing an increase in poverty rates.³ In Latin America and the Caribbean, poverty rates have also edged up in countries such as Argentina, Brazil and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Furthermore, extreme poverty continues to have a rural face: about 80 percent of the extreme poor live in rural areas, living across diverse landscapes. Also, more women than men continue to live in poverty, especially during their peak childbearing years. And according to the Food and Agriculture Organization, one in every nine people in the world are hungry

¹ See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/>.

² World Bank. 2018. Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018: Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle

³ Monthly Briefing on the World Economic Situation and Prospects, No. 131. 1 October 2019, available from https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/Monthly_Briefing_131.pdf

(820 million people), even as the world produces more than enough food for everyone. Further, two in five adults are overweight, and obesity is on the rise in almost every country in the world.⁴

One in five people in the world also lives in inadequate housing, with nearly one billion still living in slums and informal settlements. And according to the global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), of the 5.7 billion people covered by the global MPI 2019 figures, 1.3 billion people (23 percent) are identified as multidimensionally poor. Of these, nearly half or 663 million children live in multidimensionally poor households and one third of them are under the age of five. Multidimensional poverty also disproportionately affects women and girls, persons with disabilities, and indigenous peoples. Many of the global poor and hungry live in the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and nations affected by conflict. Poverty is also a growing concern in middle-income countries given that populous middle-income countries such as China, India, Nigeria, Indonesia and Pakistan still have huge populations of living on less than \$1.90 a day.

Progress in accelerating global actions for a world without poverty faces significant headwinds from several megatrends as well as rising trade tensions, a stalling global economy, lackluster job growth and stagnant wages. Shifts in production and labor markets attributed to globalization, rapid advances in technology, demographic changes, and global warming and climate change are impeding SDG implementation, including poverty eradication efforts. In addition, the international community continues to grapple with persistent conflicts, rising inequality of income, wealth and access to opportunities between and within countries, high levels of youth unemployment and underemployment, gender inequalities, and climate change. According to the *2018 World Inequality Report*, the period from 1980 to 2016 saw the richest one percent of the world's population capture 27 percent of income growth, while the poorest 50 percent received only 12 percent. On the employment front, ILO estimates indicate that a majority of the 3.3 billion people employed globally experience a lack of material well-being, economic security, equal opportunities or scope for human development. Further, an estimated 172 million people globally are unemployed, including 59 million young people. Another 140 million people are classified as underutilized labour, and women continue to work part time. And the gender pay gap, at about 20 per cent globally, remains unacceptably high and is a universal phenomenon. Lastly, only 45 per cent of the population is covered by at least one social protection benefit, leaving more than 4 billion people unprotected, many of them in rural areas.

The Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage also states that at least half the world's population lack access to essential health services and that more than 800 million people bear the burden of catastrophic spending of at least 10 percent of their household income on health, with out of pocket expenses driving an estimated 100 million people into poverty each year. With far too many people still lacking access to essential health services or being pushed into extreme poverty by paying for them, it is imperative to achieve UHC by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the food and agriculture sphere, lack of access to natural resources – including land and forest tenure – as well as productive technologies, resources, services and markets disproportionately affects poor producers, women and youth in rural areas, and undermines

⁴ 2019 The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI)

their struggles to move out of poverty. Moreover, rural dwellers' lack of access to adequate social protection and other risk management mechanisms impedes their ability to adopt sustainable practices that conserve the natural resource base and invest in productive activities. In addition, policies and investments targeted to facilitate the transformation of rural areas and generate decent employment opportunities, particularly for women and youth, need to be put in place at scale. Climate change, natural disasters and extreme weather events – as well as conflict situations – constitute key development challenges working against progress and disproportionately affecting the poor. They therefore require solutions to build resilience of poor and vulnerable populations, while at the same time addressing the underlying causes and repercussions. The widening digital divide also threatens to leave the least developed countries and people living in rural and remote areas further behind and requires urgent action.

These developments raised numerous questions as to what needs to be done at the country, regional and global levels. While each country must take primary responsibility for its own economic and social development, increased effective national efforts should be complemented by concrete, effective and supportive international programmes, measures and policies aimed at expanding the development opportunities of developing countries. To that end, the General Assembly in its resolution 72/233 proclaimed the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027) and decided that the theme of the Third Decade shall be “Accelerating global actions for a world without poverty” in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to develop an inter-agency, system-wide plan of action 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.⁵

The plan of action 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 6 months in 2018 and was discussed and considered by Member States during the seventy-third session of the General Assembly.

And moving forward on the next decade to implement the 2030 Agenda, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development that was convened under the auspices of the General Assembly on the margins of its 74th session approved a political declaration launching an “ambitious and accelerated” new decade of action in pursuit of critical development targets, in particular eradicating poverty everywhere, ensuring food security and managing the planet sustainably. The declaration that has since been endorsed by Heads of State and Government, reaffirms their pledges to end poverty and hunger, combat inequality, and build peaceful, just

⁵ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/socialperspectiveondevelopment/united-nations-decade-for-the-eradication-of-poverty/swap3rd.html>

and inclusive societies. The declaration stresses that poverty continues to pose the greatest global challenge and vows once again to leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind first. In addition, Heads of State and Government also adopted the Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting on “Universal Health Coverage: moving together to build a healthier world”.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

Recognizing the urgency to end poverty and hunger everywhere between now and 2030, the Division for Inclusive Social Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization and International Fund for Agricultural Development are organizing a United Nations inter-agency expert group meeting on “The Third United Nations Decade for Poverty Eradication (2018-2027), to be held in Rome, Italy, from 4 to 6 March 2020, as part of the preparations for the seventy-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly. The purpose of the meeting is to bring together experts from the United Nations system, government, academia, think tanks, as well as civil society organizations to (i) discuss key questions related to the implementation of the United Nations system-wide plan of action for the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, including the role that United Nations system can play to accelerate global actions for a world without poverty, (ii) reflect on progress made and persistent and emerging challenges toward ending poverty in all its forms everywhere, (ii) 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; (iii) share country perspectives for better support from the United Nations system; and (iv) come up with policy recommendations on how the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027) be made effective, and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Topics to be covered are expected to include:

- i) Structural transformation, productive employment and decent work in the context of a changing global scenario
- ii) Expanding social protection systems to underpin inclusive poverty-reducing development
- iii) Human capability development: addressing the non-income forms of poverty
- iv) The future of food and sustainable agriculture
- v) Reducing inequalities
- vi) Addressing climate change and the intensification of natural hazards
- vii) Fighting poverty in fragile and humanitarian contexts

The meeting will be a three-day event that will allow a robust exchange of ideas that contribute to achieving the objectives of the Third Decade. Invited experts will set the stage for the meeting by making presentations on global and regional recent trends in poverty and hunger, employment and inequality. The interaction will foster the identification of actionable social and economic policies as well as encourage greater inter-agency convergence and collaboration within the United Nations system in sharing knowledge, promoting policy dialogue, facilitating synergies, mobilizing funds, providing technical assistance in the key policy and programmatic areas underlying the overarching objective of the 2030 Agenda of poverty eradication.

To achieve its objectives, the meeting will seek to answer key questions such as:

- i. What policies and strategies are needed to accelerate the pace of poverty eradication, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and in rural areas, the least developed countries, and small island developing States? How can we achieve convergence in top down and bottom up approaches for scale up?
- ii. How can the United Nations system, within their respective mandates, collaboratively support member states to address poverty, hunger and other dimensions of poverty at different levels? How can the UN system implement the inter-agency system-wide plan of action for the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, in synergy with the Global Action Plan of the UN Decade of Family Farming and the SDGs; aligning its work, accelerating progress and keeping itself accountable for results?
- iii. What concrete actions are being implemented to support people in vulnerable situations and the most vulnerable countries and territories, and to reach the furthest behind first?
- iv. How can the United Nations systems help countries transform their food systems to achieve the SDGs, in particular the goal to eradicate poverty and hunger and reducing urban-rural-urban inequalities?
- v. Is the United Nations system making sufficient progress shifting to better support implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development nationally, regionally and globally?
- vi. The 2030 Agenda is a shared promise and a unique responsibility, but it cannot be implemented without good and sound data. What concrete steps are being taken by the United Nations system in this regard?
- vii. How can UN regional coordination mechanisms promote the establishment or strengthening of consultative mechanisms and platforms of dialogues in support of the objectives of the Third Decade as well as inform the operational activities of the UN Country Teams?
- viii. What lessons can be drawn from United Nations system efforts to better assist countries expand skills and educational opportunities, create decent and secure jobs that pay living wages and strengthen social protection systems, access to services (basic services and productive services), the support to economic development while preserving or restoring natural resources in rural areas in order to eradicate poverty and tame inequality in all its forms and manifestations?

III. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The meeting is expected to provide substantive input for the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General on the “Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027)” to be submitted to the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, including recommendations concerning how to make the Third Decade effective, in support of the poverty eradication-related internationally agreed development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals. The meeting will also review and assess progress made implementing the inter-agency system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication.

In addition, the meeting will also produce the following outputs:

- i. Substantive papers on the theme of the meeting, with concrete policy recommendations, prepared by experts;
- ii. Enhanced and better-informed dialogue between policy makers, the United Nations system and researchers on best practices for evidence-based policies related to eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions;
- iii. A report of the inter-agency expert group meeting, summarizing the presentations, deliberations of the experts and key recommendations to be included in Secretary-General's Report.

IV. Organizational and administrative matters

In addition to inviting UN system focal points for the Third Decade, the Division for Inclusive Social Development of UNDESA will also identify and invite about 10 experts, taking into consideration gender and geographical balances. The Division will meet the costs related to the participation (travel and per diem) of all the invited experts from outside the United Nations system.

Invited speakers are requested to provide brief background papers (approximately 5-10 pages, in English) to the United Nations Secretariat by **21 February 2020** for distribution to other participants and the facilitators. Each background paper should address a specific agenda item and include a summary of the expert's own research and evidence from other sources, as well as references to relevant parts of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. All sessions of the meeting will be in plenary and invited experts will lead-off discussions of each session by presenting papers which will then be followed by in-depth plenary discussions. During the wrap up session of the meeting, participants will outline the major conclusions and recommendations of the meeting. The Division for Inclusive Social Development will prepare a final report summarizing the discussions and key conclusions of the meeting. With participants' permission, the background papers and presentations will be posted on the Division for Inclusive Social Development's website.

Presenters are encouraged to prepare PowerPoint presentations and to share them in advance with the organizers, if possible. All papers and presentations should be sent to **Ms. Meron Sherif** (sherif4@un.org), with a copy to **Ms. Hantamalala Rafalimanana** (rafalimanana@un.org). Participants are expected to arrive in Rome on 3 March 2020 and to stay throughout the duration of the meeting.

V. 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. With participants' permission, the background papers and presentations will be posted on the Division for Inclusive Social Development's website.

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