



Enhance resilience to recover inclusively, says new report

The Great Disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has turned the global economy upside down, destroying millions of jobs and livelihoods. The global economic decline of 4.3 per cent in 2020 was the worst since the Great Depression and three times as bad as the contraction suffered during the Great Recession in 2009, found UN DESA's World Economic Situation and Prospects 2021 report.

Even more worryingly, the devastation of COVID-19 is highly unevenly distributed, with low-skilled, low-wage workers, women, migrants, those living in poverty and other vulnerable populations suffering the most. The crisis is estimated to have pushed an additional 131 million people worldwide below the poverty line in 2020. Nearly 800 million people are now expected to remain in extreme poverty by 2030.

The road to recovery will be long and painful. The forecasted 4.7 per cent growth in 2021 will barely be enough to offset last year's economic losses. While macroeconomically resilient – and usually rich – countries can expect to rebuild and rebound fast, more vulnerable – predominantly developing – countries will suffer the deep and widespread scarring effects of the crisis against the backdrop of limited fiscal space and unsustainable debt burden.

As frequency and intensity of crises will likely increase with a run-away climate emergency, governments across the world will need to rethink fiscal and debt sustainability frameworks, expand social protection schemes, effectively address climate risks, address the causes and consequences of rising inequality and protect the most vulnerable population groups.

This will also require governments to resist the temptation of embracing premature austerity measures, which could hamper recovery. They will also face the challenges of

preventing the buildup of asset prices and financial bubbles, taming raging inequality and putting the world economy on the trajectory of an inclusive and sustainable recovery.

Read the full [World Economic Situation and Prospects 2021](#)

HIGHLIGHTS



How people on the move can bring us closer to equality

Migration has the potential to reduce inequalities. By moving within or across national borders, migrants contribute to inclusive growth and sustainable development. In their home countries, international migrants promote investment, trade and financial inclusion and their remittances have lifted millions of migrant families out of poverty and improved their access to health, education, adequate housing and other basic services. In destination countries,

migrant workers fill labour market gaps and contribute to public pension systems. Migration has empowered millions of migrant women and promoted gender equality around the world.

The closing of international borders as a result of COVID-19 has severely slowed down migratory movements. The pandemic has also forced many migrants to return to their home countries earlier than planned, when job opportunities have dried up.

The latest estimates in the [International Migration 2020 Highlights](#), suggest that the pandemic may have slowed the growth in the number of international migrants by around two million by mid-2020, 27 per cent less than the growth expected since mid-2019.

As a consequence, the pandemic may reduce the volume of remittances sent to low-and middle-income countries by USD 78 billion or 14 per cent, affecting the livelihoods of millions of migrants and their families and hampering the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The number of international migrants reached 281 million in 2020, up from 173 million in 2000, and they represent about 3.6 per cent of the world's population. The United States of America remained the largest destination, hosting 51 million international migrants in 2020, followed by Germany (16 million), Saudi Arabia (13 million), the Russian Federation (12 million) and the United Kingdom (9 million).

India topped the list of countries with the largest diasporas in 2020, with 18 million persons living outside of their country of birth. Other countries with a large transnational community included Mexico and the Russian Federation (11 million each), China (10 million) and Syria (8 million).

Nearly two thirds of all international migrants live in high-income countries, in contrast with just 31 per cent in middle-income countries and around 4 per cent in low-income

countries. On the other hand, low- and middle-income countries hosted 80 per cent of the world's refugees in 2020.

Get the latest data from UN DESA's [International Migration 2020 Highlights](#).

HIGHLIGHTS



Leaving no one behind means leaving no one offline

As the world grapples with the COVID-19 pandemic, it is witnessing first-hand how digital technologies help to confront the threat and keep people connected. At the same time, some communities are facing tremendous technological challenges, with almost half of the world's population having no access to the Internet. "The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that access to the internet should be a basic right that helps protect people's health, jobs, and

lives. Unfortunately, considerable gaps remain in realizing universal and affordable access to the digital world," said María del Carmen Squeff, Chair of the 59th Session of the UN Commission for Social Development.

This month, the Commission for Social Development will discuss "Socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all", particularly through the lens of the COVID-19 pandemic. From 8 to 17 February 2021, the 59th session of the Commission (CSocD59) will meet largely virtually for the first time ever. A variety of speakers, representing not only governments but also NGOs, businesses, municipal authorities, and academia, will share their experiences and innovative solutions that have used digital technologies to promote social development and well-being for all.

The delegates will give special attention to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the disadvantaged, marginalized, or vulnerable groups and communities. "The COVID-19 pandemic poses unprecedented challenges to social development and the well-being of people worldwide, because poverty has deepened and pre-existing inequalities have exacerbated, with the most vulnerable hit the hardest," said Ms. Squeff.

The Commission will conclude with recommendations on how countries can make further progress on these issues of digital cooperation, social inclusion, and development.

The CSocD59 will feature five virtual high-level panel discussions including a ministerial forum on "Promoting multilateralism to realize inclusive, resilient, and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 in the context of the Decade of Action and delivery for sustainable development and its social dimensions", general debates, as well as over 50 side events organized by Member States, UN Agencies and Organizations accredited to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

In addition to the main theme, the Commission will look closer at the emerging issue of "Social policy to promote a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable recovery: Building

back better post COVID-19 for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the Decade of Action and delivery for sustainable development”.

The side events will cover a broad range of related issues, such as digital inclusion for all, digital education, digital technologies and older persons, ending homelessness, social protection, financing for development, good governance, the social impact of COVID-19, multilateralism for social justice, youth and digital technologies, and national initiatives in various regions. In addition, the NGO Committee on Social Development will host a Civil Society Forum starting on 9 February to forge partnership among stakeholders.

When Everyone is Included, Everyone Benefits.

For more information about the 59th Commission for Social Development: <https://bit.ly/un-csod59>

GET INVOLVED



The UN Food Systems Summit needs your voice – now!

The UN Food Systems Summit is a turning point in the world’s journey to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Over the course of the year, the Summit will deepen our understanding of the problems we must solve, and set a course to radically change the way we produce, process, and consume food.

“We must all – in every section of society – lean into courageous conversations rather than avoiding them,” said Dr. Agnes Kalibata, Special Envoy for the UN Food Systems Summit 2021.

“At no moment in time should we forget this basic principle that what brings us together around our food systems is so much more powerful than what could potentially pull us apart.”

“It is critical that the Food Systems Summit is also a ‘People’s Summit’. This Summit cannot be owned and shaped by just a few actors. The Summit has opened doors for everyone, and we will need networks all over the world to lean into the conversation and have their voices heard,” she added.

So, how can you get involved?

Become a Food Systems Hero

The Summit is for everyone and its success relies on people everywhere getting involved, and sharing their views. By signing up to become a #FoodSystemsHero, you are joining a global movement for safe, sustainable and equitable food systems – and

making a commitment to learn, share, gather and act for food systems transformation. Find out more.

Have your say in the Summit

Visit the recently launched online [Summit Community](#), a highly collaborative space to guide the science, solutions, concepts and outcomes of the Summit. The platform is open to anyone with an interest in food systems at all levels, and will be a key entry point for stakeholder engagement on defining the solutions.

The five [Action Tracks](#) will draw on the expertise of actors from across the world's food systems, and offer a space to share, learn, foster new actions and partnerships and amplify existing initiatives. Each Action Track's leadership teams continues to look for game-changing ideas from everyone – everywhere. Have your say through these online surveys:

Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all

Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns

Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production

Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods

Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

Stay informed on the UN Food Systems Summit's activities with [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#) | [YouTube](#)

EXPERT VOICES



The art and science of tracking human mobility across borders

UN DESA has just revealed the latest data on international migration, showing that 281 million people currently live outside their country of origin and that they represent about 3.6 per cent of the world's population. But how do we know how many migrants there are in the world? What work goes into tracking human mobility? Clare Menozzi, Population Affairs Officer in UN DESA's Population Division, explains.

Who is considered an international migrant? How do we know how many migrants there are in the world?

“From a statistical perspective, international migrants are defined by the intersection of two factors: space and time. Space, because we usually characterise a migrant as a person who has changed his or her country of residence and established a new residence in another country. Time, because we use a cut-off, often of 12 months, to determine the amount of time a person must have lived continuously in a country in order to be considered a migrant. Temporary absences for holiday or work assignments are generally not considered in the definition.

To estimate the total number of international migrants in the world, we review existing empirical data on the number of people who are foreign-born or foreign citizens. These data are obtained from population censuses, population registers and nationally representative surveys. We generally prefer to use data on country of birth because it reflects changes in country of residence more accurately.”

Besides the impacts of COVID-19 on international migration, what other notable changes did you notice in this year’s data trends that did not align with your expectations?

“While the COVID-19 pandemic caused major disruptions to migration trends this year, there are several other trends that stand out. One of these is the rapid increase in the number of international migrants living in Latin America and the Caribbean. Between 2000 and 2020, the number of migrants in that geographical region more than doubled. The increase was driven, in part, by the large number of people displaced from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru host over two thirds of all migrants from that country.

Another important trend is the growing number of countries that have focused on providing options for safe, orderly and regular migration. Globally, more than half (54 per cent) of all Governments with available data reported having policies to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration, as defined in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 10.7.2.”

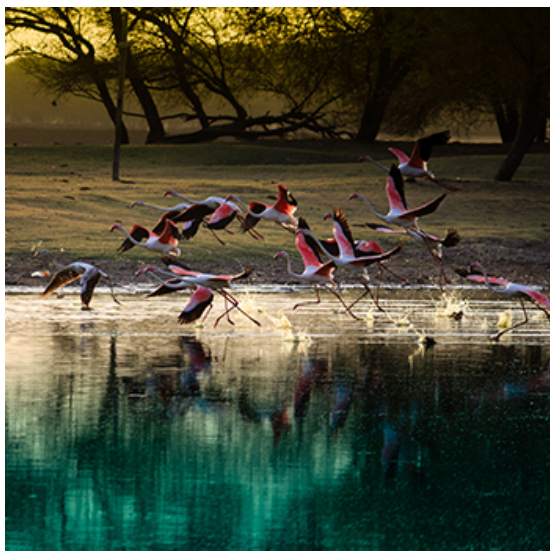
The latest International Migration 2020 Highlights states that migrant women are catalysts of change, promoting positive social, cultural and political norms. Can you describe that process?

“As migrants, women contribute to the economic development of their countries of origin and destination. Migration creates opportunities for female employment and increases women’s bargaining power and status in households. Many become the principal earners of their families. The remittances that women migrant workers send home improve the livelihood of their families and contribute to the economies of their communities of origin.

Despite the many positive effects of international migration, migrant women remain among the most vulnerable members of society. In many host countries, they face barriers that prevent them from participating fully and equally in social, political and economic life. Migrant women often have lower employment rates than native-born women or male migrants and are paid less than their male counterparts. Women also face gendered risks of exploitation, violence and abuse, including human trafficking.

Countries are increasingly recognizing the importance of implementing gender-responsive migration policies. Around half of Governments with available data reported having formal mechanisms to ensure that migration policy was gender responsive.”

Get the latest data from UN DESA’s [International Migration 2020 Highlights](#).



India moves beyond GDP to make nature count

How can the world take nature into account in the decision-making process, moving beyond GDP? At a recent Forum on the benefits of natural capital accounting, the Indian Government demonstrated how a new statistical framework is helping them combat environmental degradation and promote sustainability.

India is one of around 90 countries that have successfully adopted the System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA) including the new framework, SEEA – Ecosystem Accounting. This framework provides policy makers with the information that makes nature and the ecosystem services it provides visible in the decision-making process. The new framework for ecosystem accounting is expected to be adopted as statistical standard by the UN Statistical Commission in March.

The forum, the [Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services \(NCAVES\) India Forum 2021](#), was organized by the Government of India, the United Nations and the European Union with three sessions on 14, 21 and 28 of January.

“We need an integrated information system that covers all pillars of sustainability, economic, social and environmental,” said UN Chief Economist Elliott Harris, while stressing to participants how the new framework is essential for sustainable development. “The SEEA is an important step toward being able to measure these interconnections.”

The Indian Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Prakash Javadekar, highlighted that the Government of India is firmly proceeding to guide the country on the path of sustainable development and looks forward to evolving a comprehensive view of the natural resources and ecosystems.

“For far too long, we have grown at the expense of nature, treating it as a resource with no limits,” said Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme. “2020 was the year nature sent us a message – reminding us through pandemics, droughts, wildfires, hurricanes, melting glaciers, and rising temperatures – that we can no longer afford its invoices.”

Ms. Andersen underscored that it is crucial that Natural Capital Accounting be factored into monitoring frameworks for the post-2020 global biodiversity targets: “Natural Capital Accounting has an important role to play in recalibrating our relationship with nature,” she said.

While the complexity and sophistication of the framework was highlighted during the Forum, India’s experience showed that implementation is by no means insurmountable.

“India has shown us today that it does not take decades to break down information siloes. SEEA implementation can be achieved in a short period of time, and India is a shining

example of this,” said Stefan Schweinfest, Director of UN DESA’s Statistics Division. It is expected that even more countries will begin to implement this new system after the new framework is adopted in March.

To learn more about the project, visit [this website](#). Access India’s final project report [here](#).

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MORE FROM UNDESA

The pandemic has revealed the true cost of inequality

SDG BLOG



Agnes Kalibata, Special Envoy
for the 2021 Food Systems Summit



By Agnes Kalibata, Special Envoy for the 2021 Food Systems Summit

In 2020, the entire world knew what it was to be hungry. Millions went without enough to eat, the many victims of COVID-19 were starved of air, and the lonely and remote were deprived of human contact.

Yet while no one was spared the impact of the pandemic, for many it was a taste of the challenges that those at the bottom of the pyramid have long faced, while the most vulnerable have been pushed even closer to the very limits of existence.

Millions of people in several countries are now facing famine. Hospitals are running out of oxygen. And conflict and violence are making life even more precarious.

The pandemic has revealed the real cost of long-term inequality around the world.

Our food systems nourish 7.8 billion people and counting. It is food that employs more than a billion worldwide in agriculture alone and offers the promise of economic growth and development. And it is food that impacts our very ecosystems, down to the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the climate we enjoy, come rain or shine.

Food systems offer real possibilities we can build on to improve and make them more appropriate for the well-being of people and our planet, but there is much that needs to change if we are to be successful.

COVID-19 has brought to the fore the connection between food, health and quality of life, but also how many of our food systems are failing us, especially where inequality is most prevalent.

Poor diets, leading to obesity, disproportionately affect low-income communities that are already experiencing the worst challenges to quality of life. It is because of inequalities that the impact of COVID-19 is three times worse among low-income communities where conditions directly related to food are more prevalent.

The pandemic has powered an unprecedented global appetite for change, from the movements to secure free school meals for disadvantaged children to agricultural reforms taking place worldwide. The urgency created by COVID-19 has demonstrated how quickly the global community can respond and adapt to existential threats, and it is this energy that must be channelled into transforming food systems to be more inclusive, more equitable and more sustainable.

Even before the pandemic, 2021 was destined to be a “super-year” for food. A year when the right to safe and nutritious food, and the production, consumption and disposal of food finally received the requisite global attention as the UN convenes the world’s first Food Systems Summit.

The change needed will require everyone around the world to think and act differently because every one of us has a stake and a role in functioning food systems. Now, more than ever, national leaders must chart the path forward by uniting farmers, producers, scientists, hauliers, grocers, and consumers, listening to challenges and insights, and pledging to improve each aspect of the food system for the well-being of mankind and our planet.

Policymakers must listen to the millions of farmers and indigenous communities as custodians of the resources that produce our food, and align their needs and challenges with the perspectives of environmentalists and entrepreneurs, chefs and restaurant owners, doctors and nutritionists to develop national commitments that level the playing field.

Progress is already under way. More than 50 countries have joined the European Union and African Union in engaging with the Food Systems Summit and its five priority pillars, or *Action Tracks*, which cut across nutrition, poverty, climate change, resilience and sustainability. And more than three dozen countries have appointed a national convenor to host a series of *country-level dialogues* in the months ahead, a process that will underpin the Summit and set the agenda for the Decade of Action to 2030.

Everyone around the world must feel invited and empowered to participate in the Food Systems Summit to start the journey of transitioning to more just and sustainable food systems. It is a “People’s Summit” for everyone, and its success relies on everyone everywhere getting involved through participating in *Action Track surveys*, joining the online *Summit Community*, and signing up to become *Food Systems Heroes* who are committed to improving food systems in their own communities and constituencies.

Too often, we say it is time to act and make a difference, then continue as before. But it would be unforgivable if the world was allowed to forget the lessons of the pandemic in our desperation to return to normal life. The writing on the wall is clear that our food systems need reform now. Humanity is hungry for this change. It is time to sate our appetite.

** The views expressed in this blog are the author’s and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of UN DESA.*

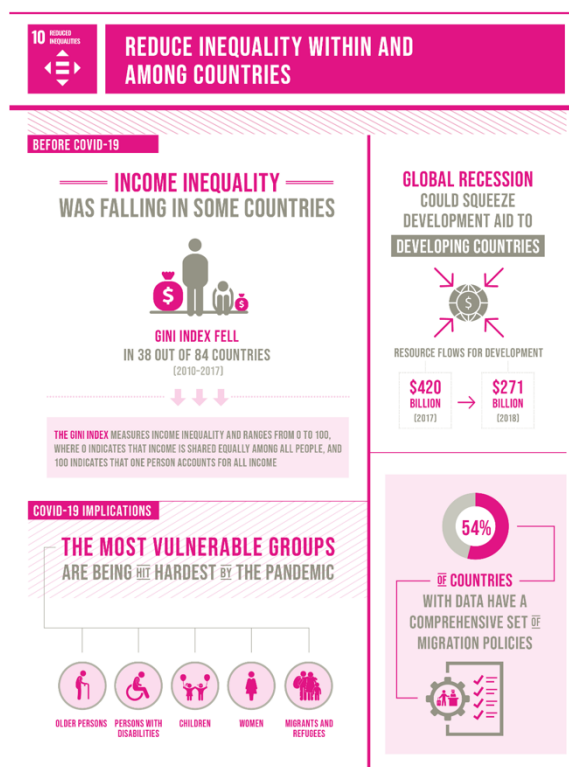
SDG 10 in numbers



Despite some positive signs – such as lower income inequality in some countries and preferential trade status for lower-income countries – inequality in its various forms persists.

The COVID-19 crisis is making inequality worse. It is hitting the most vulnerable people hardest, and those same groups are often experiencing increased discrimination. The wider effects of the pandemic will likely have a particularly damaging impact on the poorest countries. If a global recession leads to reduced flows of development resources, that impact will be even more severe.

Access more data and information on the indicator for SDG 10 in the [SDG Progress Report 2020](#).



Least developed countries in 2021 — progress amidst the COVID-19 crisis?



2021 commemorates the 50th anniversary of the creation of the least developed country (LDC) category by the United Nations. In March 1971, the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) identified the first 25 LDCs, followed by the formal endorsement of the category by the General Assembly in November that year. Currently, there are 46 countries on the list.

In February 2021, the CDP will undertake its triennial review of the list of LDCs to recommend countries for inclusion and graduation. Twenty-four international experts will review the latest available data for 15 indicators for all developing countries. The process also involves analyzing detailed assessments and conducting frank discussions with five countries that could qualify for graduation due to their remarkable development progress in recent years: Bangladesh, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, and Timor-Leste.

However, the review this year will be different. As the pandemic has plunged the whole world into a health, socio-economic and financial crisis of an unprecedented scale, COVID-19 threatens to have devastating effects on all LDCs and can negatively impact the preparations of the graduating LDCs.

The CDP has carried out a comprehensive study of the impact of the coronavirus crisis on the LDCs as data for the LDC criteria is available only up to 2019. A new set of supplementary graduation indicators for all developing countries, the detailed assessments of the five graduation candidates and country consultations will further enable the CDP to fully incorporate the impact of the pandemic in its review.

Despite facing the long-term impact of the pandemic and the loss of preferential treatment, most of the five graduation candidates continue expressing their unwavering commitment to graduation, recognizing graduation as an important milestone in their development. Their enthusiasm should encourage development and trading partners to engage in active dialogue with these LDCs to provide the support they require to ensure a smooth and sustainable transition in these challenging times. They deserve it.

Learn more about the work of the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) [here](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

As a preventive measure amidst the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, many of the high-level meetings organized by UN DESA are currently taking place virtually. Others may have been postponed, cancelled or are still being reviewed. Find out the latest information about upcoming events: [UN DESA Calendar](#).

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