



New SDG Chat launched to empower global engagement on sustainable development

Recent weeks, including at the opening of the UN General Assembly, have seen intensifying debates about the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). How do we make sure that it is powered for good and in the service of humanity? One such AI tool – the SDG Chat – has just been launched to make reliable sustainable development information more accessible to people around the world. This innovative platform offers a wealth of trusted data and resources produced by UN DESA on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Its goal: help accelerate action towards their delivery.

“This initiative demonstrates the United Nations’ commitment to the responsible use of AI and to delivering on the promise of the SDGs,” said Li Junhua, UN DESA’s Under-Secretary-General. “If more people can access reliable expertise, make better-informed decisions, and engage more effectively in advancing

sustainable development, it is our hope that ultimately, the SDG Chat will help us accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

The new SDG Chat was developed to make it easier for policymakers, researchers, students, civil society organizations and the wider public to find reliable information on the SDGs through a single, intuitive gateway. Instead of having to search across multiple websites, publications and data platforms, users now can type in their questions about global development challenges and opportunities, and receive instant answers grounded in authoritative UN DESA content.

The chatbot draws from more than 800 UN publications, and UN DESA departmental and divisional websites. SDG Chat is not meant to replace expertise or official publications. Rather, it serves as a trusted entryway that helps users quickly find relevant information from UN DESA faster, while encouraging deeper engagement with original reports, data, and resources. It can also provide answers in all six UN official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish), making UN DESA’s trusted SDG knowledge more accessible to its intended global audience.

This initiative also serves as a good example of how public-private partnerships can work together towards achieving the SDGs. By combining innovation with human oversight, transparency, and reliance on authoritative sources, UN DESA developed this AI powered tool in close collaboration with the UN Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT) and Accenture. Each of the three partners played an important role: UN DESA led the business vision and knowledge curation; OICT provided strategic guidance on the responsible use of AI; and Accenture contributed technical expertise through collaboration.

“This marks an important milestone in UN DESA’s digital transformation,” said Lisa Morrison, Acting Head of UN DESA’s Strategic Planning and Communication Services. “SDG Chat improves access to complex information, and it has the potential to broaden SDG engagement and support more informed decision-making. It also demonstrates how generative AI can responsibly enhance access to trusted UN knowledge.”

What do you want to know about the Sustainable Development Goals? Start using the SDG Chat by going to <https://desapublications.un.org/>, clicking the SDG Chat logo and typing your questions.





Rethinking inclusion: From afterthought to foundation

As economic, digital and energy transformations reshape our societies, there's no question that how well we adapt to change determines our future. But who gets to take part in that change, and does

everyone get a fair chance to benefit? Ahead of the launch of the *World Social Report* this month, we spoke with Rashmi Banga of UN DESA's Economic and Analysis and Policy Division about a new way of thinking about social inclusion, one that makes it an integral part of progress from the start.

This month, UN DESA will be launching the 2026 edition of the *World Social Report*. Would you be able to give our audience a sneak preview of the upcoming report and what findings to look out for?

"Our world is changing rapidly. Digital technologies like artificial intelligence along with climate pressures are reshaping the way we work, interact and participate in society. At the same time, geopolitical tensions are creating new uncertainties for the global economy. In this context, this year's *World Social Report* asks a simple but urgent question: How can countries manage economic, digital and energy change in today's uncertain world so that everyone has a fair chance to participate and benefit?

The Report is titled *New Economics of Social Inclusion: making transformations work for all*. It argues that while economic, digital and energy transformations are creating new opportunities, they are also leaving many people behind, especially those who are already at a disadvantage with limited access to education, skills, infrastructure, social protection or a say in decisions that affect their lives. This exclusion is not just a social failure but also poses an economic risk.

The Report emphasizes that social inclusion is not only a social goal, but also an essential condition for successful, resilient and sustainable development. To make transformations work for everyone, the report calls for paradigm shifts in development thinking, providing guiding principles for development planning and supporting policies to make transformations work for all.

The Report uses the available evidence to examine the progress of 168 countries over the last 25 years towards their economic, digital and energy transformations, and the degree to which the resulting benefits are shared across society. A key finding is that countries with similar levels of progress towards these transformations may differ significantly when it comes to how inclusive their transformations have been.

Policies and actions matter: the report presents some successful country experiences in these areas. These are not ready-made, one-size fits all solutions. Rather, countries can derive lessons to suit their own institutions, labour markets, public finances and development needs."

The report covers the concept of “New Economics of Social Inclusion”. Can you explain what this means and why it matters in our efforts to promote sustainable development for all?

"The “New Economics of Social Inclusion” (NESI) applies an economic lens to social inclusion. It provides a framework arguing that social inclusion is not something to address after an economy has grown, but is a part of what makes economic progress possible. Societies grow stronger and more resilient when everyone has a fair chance to build skills, access services and participate meaningfully. Exclusion, on the other hand, poses economic risks with costs of delayed inclusion rising with time.

NESI emphasizes two important guiding principles to make transformations socially inclusive, which are building people’s adaptive capacity so that they can cope with change, and strengthening inclusive institutions so that opportunities are open to everyone. Following these principles, NESI proposes a policy compact centred on investing in people.

NESI helps translate the economic, social and environmental pillars of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into integrated policy actions. It supports the principle of “leaving no one behind,” which is central to the SDGs. It also emphasizes that national action will not be sufficient. Renewed multilateralism and stronger support for developing countries will be critical to ensuring that ongoing transformations are stable, balanced and inclusive."

What can policymakers and development leaders expect to gain from reading this report?

"This report provides policymakers and development leaders with a new evidence-based framework to help them design socially-inclusive economic, digital and energy transformations. When people participate in shaping transformations, it builds trust in public systems.

Three major takeaways for policymakers are: *Firstly*, the report proposes “New Economics of Social Inclusion” for designing socially-inclusive economic, digital and green transformations. It provides guiding principles and a policy compact that can be adopted to ensure that social inclusion is not merely a social outcome of growth, but a prerequisite for economic progress.

Secondly, drawing on evidence from 168 countries, the report demonstrates that transformations do not automatically result in social inclusion. This highlights the decisive role of national policies, institutions and governance choices. *Thirdly*, the report goes beyond theory and presents country experiences and policy examples that have helped countries’ progress on socially inclusive transformation.

For development leaders, the report’s central message is that today's overlapping transformations require a paradigm shift in development planning. Success should be judged by whether societies build adaptive capacities of people and inclusive institutions that allow everyone to contribute to and benefit from change."

Tune in to follow the report launch on 15 October: webtv.un.org





3 reasons safe homes matter in the fight against poverty

Around the world, more than 300 million people live without safe, secure and adequate housing. Finding a solution to this human suffering will be front and center as

the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty is commemorated under the theme “Safe Homes For All.” Here are three reasons why safe homes must be at the heart of efforts to end poverty.

1. The global housing crisis affects billions of people

More than 2.8 billion people worldwide experience some form of housing insecurity. This includes 1.1 billion people living in informal settlements and slums. On top of that, over 300 million people lack a place to call home.

The crisis disproportionately affects people already facing poverty and exclusion, including women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees and racial and ethnic minorities.

Rising housing costs, armed conflicts, forced displacement and climate-related disasters are increasing housing insecurity. Many people are being pushed into unsafe, overcrowded or precarious living conditions. Not by choice, but because housing systems are failing to meet their needs.

2. A safe home is the foundation for dignity and opportunity

A home is much more than physical shelter. It provides security, privacy, stability and a sense of belonging. It also creates the foundation from which people can access education, health care, decent work, social protection and public life.

Without a secure home, access to other rights becomes much more difficult. Housing insecurity can harm physical and mental health, interrupt children’s education, disrupt employment and separate families and communities.

As one participant in the global consultation for the 2026 theme explained: “A home is not just four walls: it is a place where one feels safe.”

The [Doha Political Declaration](#) adopted at the Second World Summit for Social Development last year, reinforces this message by reaffirming the right to an adequate standard of living, including safe, accessible and affordable housing, drinking water and equitable sanitation.

3. Lasting solutions must include people living in poverty

People experiencing poverty have direct and irreplaceable knowledge of the challenges they face. Housing policies developed without their meaningful participation can overlook daily realities and reproduce the exclusion they are intended to address.

The 2026 theme, which is part of the three-year theme “United for Peace and Human Rights,” calls for people living in poverty to be recognized as rights-holders and knowledge-holders. Governments should move beyond conducting consultations and involve affected communities in designing, implementing and evaluating housing policies.

Governments and their partners must also mobilize adequate resources and ensure that housing is affordable, accessible, safe, secure and connected to essential services.

On the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, UN DESA joins partners around the world in calling for housing systems that place human rights, dignity and meaningful participation at their centre. While the Day is officially recognized on 17 October, the commemoration event will take place on 16 October this year.

Safe homes for all are not a privilege. They are essential to end poverty and building peaceful, inclusive and sustainable societies.

For more information:

[International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 2026](#)

[Doha Political Declaration of the Second World Summit for Social Development](#)

Photo: UNDP Myanmar





Photo: UN DESA / Predrag Vasic

Where women hold power, progress follows

By Björg Sandkjær, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination, UN DESA

Back when I was in Norway, [a research study from the Department of Social Research](#) caught many people by surprise when it was first published. It found that women's participation in the labour market has contributed more to the country's overall wealth and tax revenues than all of its petroleum production.

Oil is finite; one day the wells will run dry. The work that women do as part of the labour force, once you enable it – through childcare, parental leave, equal pay, changing social norms – keeps paying dividends year after year.

In that sense, [investing in women's participation in the labour market](#) is an endlessly renewable resource.

I think about that research study often in my current role, because the data now let us ask the same question at a global scale: what happens to development when women hold real power, not just a seat near it?

This year's [Gender Snapshot 2026](#), a joint publication by UN Women and UN DESA, gives us evidence to answer that question across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. And it's a compelling one.

In Rwanda, where 64 per cent of parliamentarians are women, gender equality is now embedded across school curricula, and students show real, measurable awareness of it.

In India's West Bengal, quotas that brought women into village councils helped close the gender gap in how long adolescents stay in school.

Globally, countries with more than 20 per cent women in parliament have childhood immunisation rates up to 12 percentage points higher than countries without.

None of this is coincidence. When the people making decisions reflect the people living with their consequences, the decisions change. And they tend to change for the better, for everyone.

That's a case for optimism.

But the report is also a warning, and I don't want to soften it.

At the current pace, gender equality is 171 years away. Not one target under Goal 5 is on track to be met by 2030.

Six in seven countries are led by men. More than eight in ten finance ministers are men.

Women are largely absent from rooms where the vision for a country's future is articulated, where taxing and spending are decided.

And it's not static: one in three national gender equality mechanisms – the institutions meant to turn commitments into budgets and laws – has lost institutional power in the past two years.

I'm convinced that the lesson from Norway holds up globally. The McKinsey Global Institute has estimated that advancing women's economic equality could [add up to \\$12 trillion to global GDP](#).

That is not a marginal gain. It is roughly the size of a major economy, sitting unrealised because half the population is still structurally distant from fully participating in the decisions and markets that shape not just their own lives, but also outcomes for entire societies.

So when I hear people describe gender equality as a "soft" issue, I beg to differ. Not only is gender equality a human right.

Nobody would suggest a country neglect a resource that is valuable.

Yet that is, in effect, what happens every time a woman is kept out of a cabinet post, a boardroom, or a village council with a real budget.

The good news is that unlike oil, this potential isn't depleting or even polluting – it's simply undervalued. Closing the gender gap isn't a side issue for the 2030 Agenda. It's one of the fastest ways we have left to deliver on all of it.

ASG Sandkjær previously served as the Deputy Minister for International Development at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

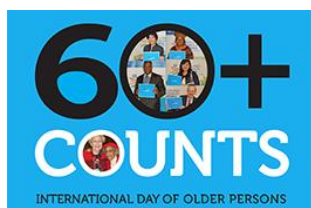




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