

REDUCING POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

UNICEF/MARK NAFTALIN

... to give meaning to the commitment to leave no one behind

As the world faces compounding crises – from a cost-of-living crunch to rising inequalities and escalating debt burdens – UN DESA remains steadfast in its commitment to leave no one behind. In 2023–2024, the Department continued to showcase its diverse work in reducing poverty and inequality while catalysing transformative changes across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

UN DESA...

- Galvanized collective efforts to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality, and find innovative solutions to food insecurity.
- Supported the creation of decent work opportunities, including in micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises.
- Advocated for cooperatives and the social and solidarity economy.
- Advanced disability inclusion and supported Indigenous Peoples' rights.
- Addressed global challenges and supported countries facing structural vulnerabilities and crisis.

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REDUCING POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

UN DESA's initiatives to eliminate poverty, reduce inequalities, and address the structural weaknesses of countries in crisis highlight its dedication to creating a fairer and more equitable world for everyone. By empowering small and medium-sized businesses, promoting innovative solutions, supporting cooperatives, advocating for Indigenous Peoples' rights, and advancing disability inclusion, the Department is driving significant changes across the Sustainable Development Goals.

Galvanizing action to eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities

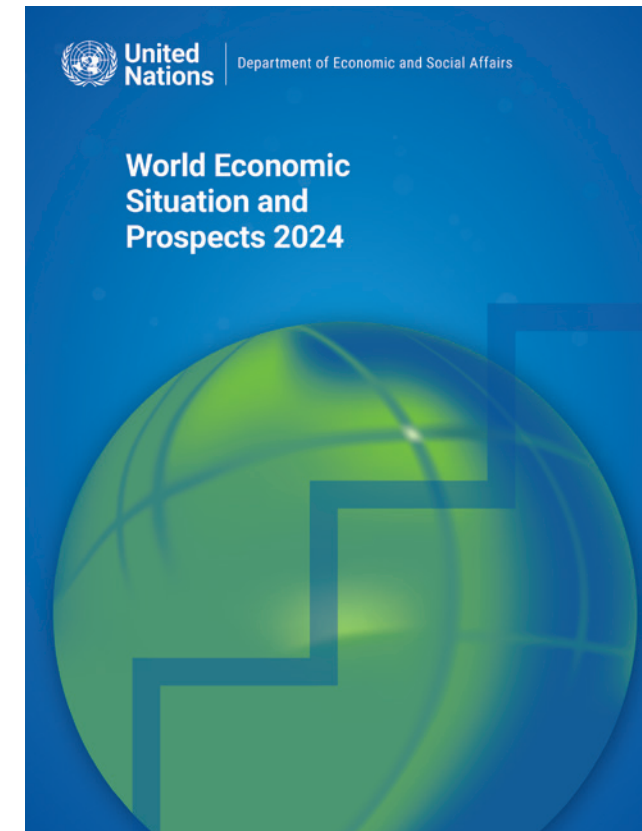
UN DESA supported the 62nd Session of the Commission for Social Development in February 2024, which emphasized the need for context-specific policies, strengthened national statistical capacities, and robust social protection systems to accelerate poverty eradication. Meanwhile, UN DESA's tireless support to Member States in preparing an ambitious Second World Summit for Social Development in 2025, demonstrates its commitment to addressing persistent gaps and mobilizing greater investments for the social pillar of sustainable development.

On 17 October 2023, UN DESA promoted the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty by highlighting the theme of decent work and social protection, emphasizing the need for dignified working conditions and income security for all. The Department drew on first-hand testimonials and joined those living in poverty and other stakeholders in calling for political leaders across the world to prioritize human dignity in decision-making, emphasizing the importance of global partnerships to achieve a poverty-free world.

Calling for collective action to address structural vulnerabilities of countries

UN DESA's normative and analytical work has shed light on critical global challenges to eradicating poverty and ensuring sustainable development. Produced in partnership with United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the five United Nations Regional Commissions, the flagship *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2024* report raised concerns about soaring debt costs hindering investment in education, health, and social protection systems in countries in vulnerable and special situations, including least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Against this backdrop, the report called for stronger and more effective global cooperation to reinvigorate the multilateral trading system, reform development finance, address debt challenges, and scale up climate financing.

UN DESA also supported the independent experts of the Committee for Development Policy to undertake



Participants at the Commemoration of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, celebrated on 17 October 2023. | UN DESA



Meshell Whyte, ATD 4th World Activist at the 2023 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. | UN DESA

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Realizing the SDGs will require investments in people. We need to mobilize financial resources at a level that matched our social development ambitions, both through domestic resource mobilization and international partnerships.
Li Junhua, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs
Opening Remarks at the Commission for Social Development
5 February 2024
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Li Junhua, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, delivers opening remarks at the Commission for Social Development, 62nd session. | UN DESA.



Participants at the international workshop in Fiji cultivating mushrooms using Juncao technology. | UN DESA

the triennial review of the list of LDCs, which highlighted the mixed progress made amidst challenging global conditions, as this group of deeply deprived countries strive to graduate from the LDC classification.

Empowering micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises

Recognizing the pivotal role of micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in creating decent jobs and driving the global economy, UN DESA has focused on empowering them. In February 2024 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, UN DESA partnered with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office and Country Team to deliver comprehensive training to local entrepreneurs. These workshops

equipped participants with enhanced entrepreneurial and digitalization skills, enabling them to tap into regional markets like the Africa Continental Free Trade Area. By strengthening MSMEs – which represent over 90 per cent of all businesses globally – UN DESA is fostering economic growth and job creation, contributing to poverty eradication and inclusive, sustainable development.

Scaling innovative solutions: Juncao technology

UN DESA is empowering communities to address poverty, environmental degradation, and food security challenges through innovation. In Fiji, UN DESA collaborated with national partners to showcase the transformative



A speaker at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in April 2024. | UN DESA

potential of “Juncao”, a type of grass that can be used in mushroom production, as feed for animals, as windbreaks, and to minimize soil erosion. An international workshop held in February 2024 brought together participants from 20 countries to witness Fiji's successful implementation of Juncao across six demonstration sites, facilitating knowledge exchange and promoting the adoption of this versatile technology.

Promoting cooperatives and the social and solidarity economy

UN DESA remains a strong advocate for cooperatives and the social and solidarity economy as drivers of a more inclusive and equitable global economic system.

The Department worked with UN Member States to proclaim 2025 the International Year of Cooperatives by preparing reports, supporting negotiations for the underlying resolution, and establishing mechanisms for its observance. UN DESA plays a key role in coordinating UN activities on cooperatives, conducting capacity-development, and collaborating with diverse partners in the social and solidarity economy.

Supporting Indigenous Peoples' rights

UN DESA's commitment to upholding the rights of Indigenous Peoples is exemplified by its assistance to the Government of Paraguay from August to November 2023 in implementing its National Plan on Indigenous

Peoples. Through capacity-building workshops and comprehensive analysis of existing efforts and gaps, UN DESA facilitated collaboration between government officials, Indigenous representatives, and other stakeholders. The workshops focused on practical actions to improve the well-being and rights of Paraguay's Indigenous Peoples, who face poverty, discrimination, and limited access to essential services. UN DESA's collaboration with the Government of Paraguay and the UN Country Team is helping prioritize the needs of Indigenous Peoples and address their disadvantages.

Advancing and promoting disability inclusion across all fronts

UN DESA is a long-standing champion for disability inclusion. In June 2024, the Department played

a pivotal role in ensuring meaningful participation of disability experts from traditionally marginalized groups in the 17th Conference of States Parties to the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (COSP17). By consulting with representatives from organizations of Indigenous women with disabilities, deaf persons, and those with deaf blindness on key decisions, UN DESA fostered an inclusive and diverse Conference. This led to record social media engagement, raising awareness and fostering dialogue on disability rights. The Department's major *UN Disability and Development Report 2024*, produced through collaboration with more than 200 experts including representative organizations of persons with disabilities, also provides a robust and up-to-date analytical basis for disability-inclusive implementation of the SDGs globally.



Delegates at COSP17. | UN DESA

Spotlighting the crisis in Haiti and need for scaled-up international support

UN DESA's commitment to addressing complex crises and supporting the people whose lives and livelihoods they threaten is evident in its support to the ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti (AHAGH). This group has been actively monitoring the situation, engaging stakeholders, and advocating for a holistic approach to address the multifaceted crisis in Haiti. In June 2024, the Department supported the AHAGH meeting in its efforts to address the latest developments concerning the implementation of the UN Cooperation Framework for Sustainable Development for Haiti (2023–2027). The meeting underscored the urgency to deploy the Multinational Security Support Mission to assist the Haitian National Police in securing the country and boosting economic activity, as well as a need for funding for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration efforts. UN DESA will continue to contribute to efforts to stabilize Haiti and promote sustainable development in the country.



A woman walks by a fire in the rubble-filled streets of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. | UN PHOTO/MARCO DORMINO