

... to ensure a just and inclusive world

In 2024–2025, UN DESA intensified its efforts to tackle deep-rooted inequalities and amplify the voices of the most vulnerable. By supporting inclusive policymaking, strengthening data and analysis, and building capacity where it is most needed, the Department helped countries expand access to social protection, promote decent work, and bridge the digital divide. Special attention was given to the needs of older persons and youth—especially in fragile and transitional settings—ensuring their voices are heard and their rights are protected.

UN DESA...

- Called for a new policy consensus to accelerate social progress, in gearing up for the Second World Summit for Social Development.
- Assisted developing countries in navigating and addressing structural vulnerabilities, ensuring no country is left behind in the pursuit of sustainable development.
- Pushed for intergenerational equity, the reframing of caregiving, and the need to recognize better the role of the family in advancing sustainable development.
- Amplified the voices of those left furthest behind, reaffirming our global promise to break cycles of exclusion and inequality.
- Promoted inclusive economic opportunities through the creative economy, cooperatives, and micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), with a focus on empowering women, youth, persons with disabilities, and Indigenous Peoples.
- Rallied global support for urgent humanitarian and development challenges, including in Haiti and regions affected by forced displacement.

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REDUCING POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

As momentum grows toward the Second World Summit for Social Development in November 2025 in Doha, Qatar, UN DESA has been at the forefront of global efforts to keep poverty eradication and inequality reduction high on the international agenda. The Department has strengthened its support to Member States, regional organizations, and civil society, helping shape and implement transformative, inclusive development policies that enhance social inclusion, empower marginalized groups, and promote equitable development pathways.

Calling for a new policy consensus to accelerate social progress

UN DESA makes a bold call for a new global policy consensus based on equity, economic security, and solidarity in the *World Social Report 2025*, produced with UNU-WIDER. It calls for transformative policymaking



Launch of the World Social Report 2025 on "A New Policy Consensus to Accelerate Social Progress", 24 April 2025 | UN DESA





Musicians perform at an event at UN Headquarters in New York commemorating the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on 17 October 2024. | UN DESA

to tackle rising inequalities, enhance resilience, and rebuild public trust.

Drawing on both quantitative data and qualitative accounts of people's lived experience, the report shows that economic insecurity is widespread and reveals that over half of the world's population has little or no trust in their government. It highlights how structural inequality, precarious work, social exclusion, and the digital divide are hindering progress, while climate change and technological disruption exacerbate social divides.

The report also provides actionable recommendations for Member States and serves as a reference to inform a bold and forward-looking outcome for the Second World Summit for Social Development. The Summit will be a key opportunity to evaluate progress, identify gaps, and

renew political commitment to place people at the centre of development, aiming to integrate social progress and inclusive development into the core of the global agenda. It will also create space to turn the principles of Copenhagen into transformative practices that accelerate social progress in today's complex global landscape.

Advancing social justice through global advocacy

Throughout the year, UN DESA highlighted the urgent global need for social justice and inclusion. The observance of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on 17 October emphasized that poverty extends far beyond a lack of income. It is a complex, multidimensional issue rooted in systemic inequalities, discrimination, and unequal access to opportunities.



Opening session of the 63rd Session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD), February 2025, New York | UN DESA

By amplifying the voices and experiences of people living in poverty, the event called for coordinated global action to break cycles of exclusion and dismantle the structural barriers that perpetuate deprivation.



UN DESA supported Member States to advance structural reforms and inclusive policies, reinforcing its commitment to building resilient societies and equitable opportunities for all. At the 63rd session of the Commission for Social Development, held from 10 to 14 February 2025, Member States reaffirmed the importance of addressing the root causes of inequality as a foundation for lasting social transformation. The Commission underscored the need to empower individuals and foster inclusive environments where every voice is heard and valued. The session brought together senior government officials and ministers, UN entities, and over 500 civil society organizations, creating a vibrant platform for dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and collective action. It reaffirmed the global commitment

to advancing social inclusion and cohesion as key drivers of sustainable development.

Promoting healthy ageing and intergenerational equity

UN DESA worked to ensure that both ageing populations and younger generations can thrive together in a rapidly evolving world. In February 2025, the Department hosted a side event during the 63rd session of the Commission for Social Development to explore how



Experts explore how AI can advance social equity across generations at a CSocD side event by UN DESA on youth, ageing, and inclusive development. | OLUSIMI VIJAY AFUN-OGIDAN

Al is reshaping both the opportunities and risks faced by youth and older persons. Sponsored by Chile and Portugal, and co-organized with the International Telecommunication Union, the Global Coalition on Aging, and Tech Runway Africa, the discussion highlighted the importance of inclusive Al design, digital literacy, and global cooperation to ensure that digital transformation fosters social cohesion and intergenerational equity.

Through the United Nations Inter-Agency Group on Ageing, the Department also produced an advocacy brief, calling for greater recognition of how population ageing impacts sustainable development.

Advancing disability inclusion in social development

UN DESA hosted the largest global forum dedicated to advancing the rights of persons with disabilities in

development. The 18th session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, held in June 2025, drew over 1,000 participants to United Nations Headquarters, with a record-high 164 speakers, including 48 at the ministerial level or higher. Representatives from Member States, the UN system, other international organizations, national human rights institutions, and civil society delivered powerful statements during the general debate.

Discussions explored critical issues impacting the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities. These included innovative financing, leveraging AI, and the rights and role of Indigenous persons with disabilities. The Conference generated a strong social media impact, with the hashtag #COSP18 reaching an estimated 39.9 million people—highlighting widespread support and enthusiasm for the Conference's focus on inclusion and the rights of persons with disabilities.



Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed (standing) speaks with a participant during the 18th Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, June 2025. | UN PHOTO/LOEY FELIPE

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UN DESA staff and participants gather to commemorate the International Day of Families on 15 May 2025, New York. | UN DESA AND THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR FAMILY DEVELOPMENT (IFFD)

Focusing on the role of families in sustainable development

UN DESA highlighted the critical role families play in advancing the 2030 Agenda, hosting a special event to commemorate the International Day of Families on 15 May 2025. As preparations continue for the Second World Summit for Social Development, the event emphasized how family-oriented policies can address

poverty, reduce inequality, and promote social inclusion. Through expert discussions, participants explored key findings from VNRs, highlighted regional best practices, and emphasized the importance of enhancing social resilience in a rapidly changing world. The 2025 observance also drew on insights from the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, with a focus on work-family balance, intergenerational solidarity, and the far-reaching impacts of megatrends such as technological change, migration, and climate challenges.



UN DESA helped elevate caregiving as a pressing global social and economic issue. In collaboration with US public television station WETA, healthcare company Otsuka, the National Partnership for Healthcare and Hospice Innovation, and the Global Coalition on Aging, the Department co-hosted one of three flagship



UN DESA co-hosted a flagship screening of the PBS documentary Caregiving, executive produced by Bradley Cooper (right), to spotlight caregiving as a vital social and economic issue. | COREY SOPKIN FOR CRAIG WARGA



Geraldine and her family appreciate the support they've received at Jesús Está Vivo church, which includes medical care for her daughter and son | UN OCHA/VINCENT TREMEAU:

screenings of the new PBS documentary *Caregiving*, executive produced by Oscar-nominated actor Bradley Cooper. The event featured a high-level panel discussion and drew a diverse and influential audience, including ambassadors, philanthropic and private sector leaders, civil society advocates, and major media representatives. It served as a powerful platform to raise awareness and foster dialogue on the critical role of caregiving in shaping inclusive and resilient societies.

Addressing displacement and refugee protection

As the world witnesses an unprecedented displacement crisis and reduced funding by donor countries, the gap between humanitarian needs and available resources continues to widen. In response, UN DESA

brought together Member States, UN partners, international financial institutions, civil society, and observers to explore sustainable, long-term solutions for refugees and host communities, as well as ways to address the global displacement crisis. In April 2025, the Department supported the President of ECOSOC in convening a Special Meeting on Forced Displacement and Refugee Protection at UN Headquarters in New York. Countries that have shown leadership in hosting and integrating refugees shared experiences, highlighting best practices and lessons learned. The meeting emphasized the importance of international cooperation, shared responsibility, and long-term strategies that link humanitarian aid with development goals. ECOSOC reaffirmed its commitment to advancing comprehensive solutions that protect displaced populations and support inclusive, resilient communities.



Stakeholders at a UN DESA national capacity-building workshop in November 2025, in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe | MINISTRY OF WOMEN AFFAIRS, COMMUNITY, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES DEVELOPMENT OF ZIMBABWE



Recognizing the crucial role micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) play in creating jobs, reducing poverty and driving inclusive economic growth, UN DESA delivered a series of capacity-building workshops in Zimbabwe from 19–22 November 2024. Organized at the request of the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community and SME Development, the workshops benefited entrepreneurs and policymakers, with a strong focus on entrepreneurship and digitization. The workshops also reinforced the Department's commitment to gender-responsive economic empowerment, where more than half of the participants were women entrepreneurs. The sessions validated a training guidebook designed to enhance MSME resilience, which will inform Zimbabwe's national capacity-building programmes.

Fostering an inclusive economy for sustainable development

UN DESA continues to champion inclusive economic models that empower marginalized communities and promote sustainable development. In partnership with the Government of Indonesia and other stakeholders,



UN DESA co-hosted a dynamic workshop on the creative economy and inclusive social development from 24–26 June 2025 in Bali, Indonesia. | MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND CREATIVE ECONOMY OF INDONESIA



President of ECOSOC at its 2025 session, H.E. Mr. Bob Rae (Canada), addresses the special meeting on the theme "Haiti's Children Cannot Wait: Supporting Stability, Resilience and Prosperity in Haiti," December 2025, New York. | UN PHOTO/ESKINDER DEBEBE

the Department advanced the implementation of a UN General Assembly resolution to promote the creative economy for sustainable development. Through capacity-building workshops in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Bali, and in collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office and Country Team, participants explored how creative industries such as performing arts, culinary arts, software development and publishing—comprising more than 50 million people worldwide, especially youth, women, and marginalized groups—can drive inclusive growth. These efforts emphasized the creative economy's role in reducing inequality and empowering those in vulnerable situations, particularly in LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS.

UN DESA also leveraged the International Day of Cooperatives 2025 to position cooperatives as critical actors in advancing sustainable and inclusive development.

The Department, through its role as co-chair of the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives, worked together with partners—the United Nations Federal Credit Union and the New York City Department of Small Business Services—to commemorate the Day. Held at UN Headquarters in New York, the event showcased how cooperatives foster social and economic inclusion, create decent work, and promote sustainable business practices.



Haiti, which is both an LDC and a SIDS country, faces a complex crisis with political, security, human rights, development, and humanitarian challenges. In



Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations, addresses the General Assembly on behalf of the Like-Minded Group in support of Middle-income Countries at the high-level meeting on Middle-Income Countries, 1 April 2025. | UN PHOTO/LOEY FELIPE

2024–2025, UN DESA played a key role in galvanizing international attention and action to address the crisis facing Haiti, with a particular emphasis on the urgent needs of children and youth. The Department provided substantive support to the ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti, and building on the work of the Group, facilitated to organize a special ECOSOC meeting, "Haiti's Children Cannot Wait," held on 2 December 2024. The meeting issued a Call to Action to rally the international community to strengthen support for Haiti's stability, resilience, and prosperity. Building on this momentum, the Department also contributed to the joint ECOSOC—Peacebuilding Commission meeting held in June 2025, which reinforced the need to align peacebuilding,

humanitarian, and development efforts, and called for sustained, coordinated international support to help Haiti achieve a more secure and prosperous future.



UN DESA supported countries on the path to sustainable development, driving forward tailored international support mechanisms to eradicate poverty and achieve the SDGs. Its work with the Committee for Development Policy (CDP), for example, has been critical in

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CDP's rigorous technical oversight, as evidenced in its reports, remains indispensable in upholding the integrity of the LDC category while navigating evolving global challenges.

H.E. Mr. Lok Bahadur ThapaPermanent Representative of Nepal,
Chair of the LDC Group

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tracking the progress of countries transitioning out of the LDC category. While 11 countries under enhanced monitoring remain on track for sustainable graduation, they continue to face significant hurdles—including climate change impacts, armed conflict, the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and declining official development assistance (ODA). To strengthen the graduation process, the Department's work led to an updated process for the CDP's triennial review of the list of LDCs, making it more transparent and responsive to possible disruptions in graduation processes. At the same time, UN DESA ramped up its support to middle-income countries, offering in-depth analysis and convening policy discussions to tackle persistent structural barriers holding back their progress.

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