



A Decade of Global Support to Social Development



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Executive Summary

Three decades after the first World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, the world finds itself at another pivotal juncture. The principles agreed in 1995, people-centred development, equity, and social justice, remain as vital as ever, yet their realization is challenged by a changing global landscape. Human development has advanced dramatically: global Human Development Index (HDI) values have risen by more than 25 percent since 1990, and hundreds of millions of people have been lifted out of poverty. Yet these gains have proven fragile. Inequality, conflict, climate change, and technological disruption are reshaping societies, exposing systemic weaknesses, and reversing progress for many.

This report takes stock of UNDP's contribution to social development over the past decade, examining how its work has helped countries translate global commitments into national action across poverty reduction, employment, social protection, health resilience, and governance. It situates these efforts within the renewed vision of the Doha Political Declaration, which calls for integrated and people-centred approaches to eradicate poverty, promote decent work, and strengthen social inclusion in the context of accelerating global transitions.

Across regions, progress on poverty reduction has slowed, and disparities have deepened. While the share of people living in extreme income poverty has fallen globally, nearly 1.1 billion people still experience acute multidimensional poverty, lacking access to education, health, and decent living standards. Two-thirds of the world's population live in countries where income inequality has increased over the past decade. Poverty is becoming increasingly concentrated in fragile and conflict-affected settings, and the effects of climate change and demographic pressures are compounding these vulnerabilities.

Labour markets have also undergone profound transformation. The combined effects of digitalization, demographic shifts, and the green transition are creating new patterns of work, mobility, and inequality. Around 60 percent of the world's workforce remains in informal employment, with limited access to rights or protection. The acceleration of artificial intelligence is expected to reshape up to one-quarter of global employment, demanding policies that anticipate both risks and opportunities. Ensuring that these transitions lead to more equitable outcomes, not deeper divides, has become one of the defining policy challenges of our time.

In this context, social protection has emerged as a central pillar of social development. Coverage has expanded over the past decade, yet nearly half of the global population remains unprotected. Universal systems are within reach, but require stronger fiscal foundations, better data, and governance that links protection with employment, care, and climate adaptation. UNDP's engagement has focused on helping countries design and implement integrated, nationally owned systems that connect social protection with poverty reduction, disaster preparedness, and inclusive growth.

Health resilience has become equally critical. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed how deeply social and economic systems depend on equitable and robust health systems. UNDP's work in this area has emphasized the broader determinants of health—governance, financing, and inclusion—helping countries strengthen health systems as a foundation for human security and sustainable development.

Integrating health considerations into climate adaptation strategies has become an emerging priority, as countries face the growing health impacts of rising temperatures, pollution, and extreme weather.

Governance cuts across all dimensions of social development. The capacity of states and societies to mediate competing interests, uphold rights, and deliver services is what sustains progress. Over the past decade, UNDP has helped countries strengthen public institutions, deepen civic participation, and expand access to justice. This approach recognizes governance not only as a sector but as the connective tissue of sustainable development—the means through which commitments to equity, resilience, and inclusion are realized.

Taken together, these experiences demonstrate UNDP's role as an integrator within the UN system, bridging economic, social, and environmental objectives and linking the global agenda with national implementation. Over the past decade, UNDP's work has evolved from delivering sectoral programmes to supporting systems change: aligning policies, budgets, and institutions around the central goal of human development. The lessons of this period point to a renewed understanding of social development as both the foundation and the outcome of sustainable development, an agenda that requires coherence across governance, finance, technology, and human capital.

As the international community gathers in Doha for the Second World Summit for Social Development, the challenge ahead is not one of diagnosis but of delivery. The path forward lies in building universal, adaptive, and inclusive systems that can withstand shocks, manage transitions, and expand opportunities for all. UNDP's work over the past decade demonstrates that when societies invest in people, they build the resilience and trust that make sustainable development possible.

A Renewed Moment for Social Development

Thirty years after the first World Summit for Social Development (WSSD), held in Copenhagen in 1995, the world stands at another defining moment for human progress. The Doha Political Declaration, agreed by consensus ahead of the Second World Summit for Social Development (WSSD2)¹, reaffirms the original pillars of poverty eradication, full and productive employment, and social integration in the Copenhagen Declaration of WSSD, while situating them in a vastly different global development landscape.

Since 1995, the world has witnessed extraordinary advances. Extreme poverty has fallen from 38 percent in 1990 to around 8.5 percent in 2024, lifting more than one billion people out of destitution². Global life expectancy has risen from 66 years in 1995 to 73 in 2023³, while education and literacy levels have surged, with the global adult literacy rate increasing from about 77 percent in 1995 to nearly 88 percent in 2024.⁴ Over the same period, seven countries have graduated from least developed country (LDC) status⁵, and billions have gained access to essential services. Electricity access rose from 73.2 percent in 1998 to nearly 92 percent in 2023⁶ and access to safely managed drinking water increased from 61 percent in 2000 to 74 percent in 2024⁷. Internet connectivity expanded from less than 1 percent of the global population in 1995^{viii} to nearly 69 percent by 2025⁹, illustrating some elements of the unprecedented scale of human development achievements over the past three decades.

Yet, this unprecedented progress in human development remains fragile. Despite overall gains, economic insecurity and inequality persist, and far too many people remain vulnerable to socioeconomic deprivations. Today, 1.1 billion people still live in multidimensional poverty, deprived in education, health, or living standards,¹⁰ and two-thirds of the world's population live in countries where income inequality has increased over the past decade.¹¹ After three decades of steady improvements on human development, with the global Human Development Index (HDI) improving from 0.608 in 1990 to 0.756 in 2023¹² and accompanied by strong HDI gains across regions, LDCs, and small island developing States (SIDS), progress has begun to slow down. Lingering impacts of COVID-19, rising conflict and fragility, climate shocks, and economic uncertainty, are eroding earlier gains, deepening structural inequalities and affecting vulnerable population groups that are most at risk of being left behind.¹³

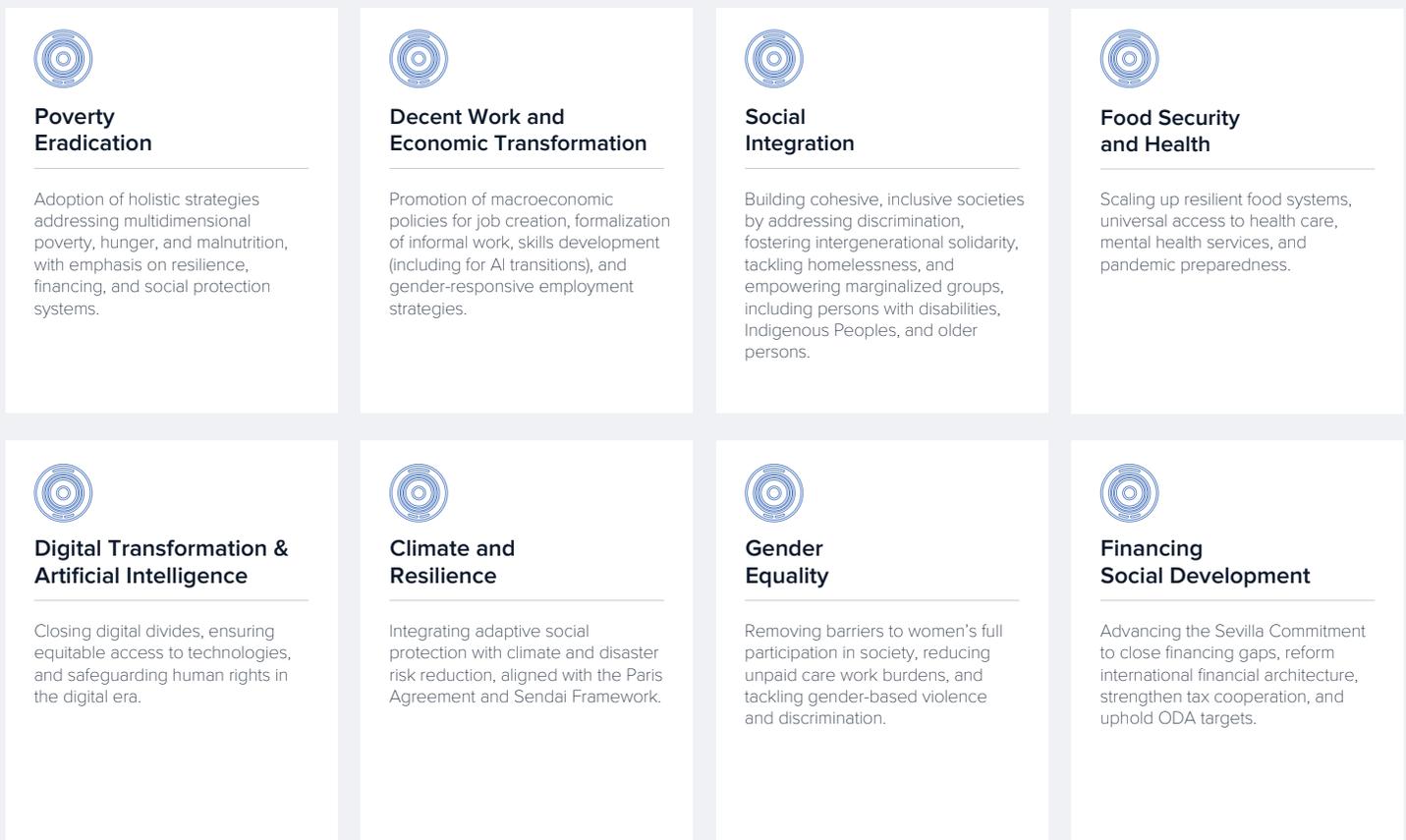
The social and economic fabric of societies is under growing strain. Development pathways that have created jobs at scale and reduced poverty, driven by expanded manufacturing and export-led growth, are narrowing. Inadequate external financing, shrinking opportunities in manufacturing due in part to automation, and mounting trade tensions are constraining export options and traditional routes to prosperity.¹⁴

Labour markets are transforming faster than policy frameworks can adapt. 60 percent of the global workforce remains informally employed (rising to 90 percent in low-income countries)¹⁵, with limited protection, precarious work conditions, and declining job security. Technological shifts, including the rapid spread of artificial intelligence, are further accelerating these disruptions. Current estimates

suggest that roughly one in four jobs is already potentially affected by automation through generative AI, primarily through the transformation of tasks rather than their replacement.¹⁶ While these advances promise productivity gains, they also risk widening inequality and eroding workers' rights if not matched by adaptive labour market and social protection policies. At the same time, new vulnerabilities are emerging driven by climate change - which now places 1 in 5 people worldwide at high risk of climate-related disasters¹⁷ - and by conflict, which directly affects 1 in 7 people.¹⁸

Against this backdrop, the Doha Declaration calls for strengthening international solidarity, upholding human rights, building trust in institutions, and renewing multilateral action to ensure that economic, digital, demographic, and green transitions work for everyone. The Declaration reinforces global commitments in several critical areas¹⁹ (see Fig. 1).

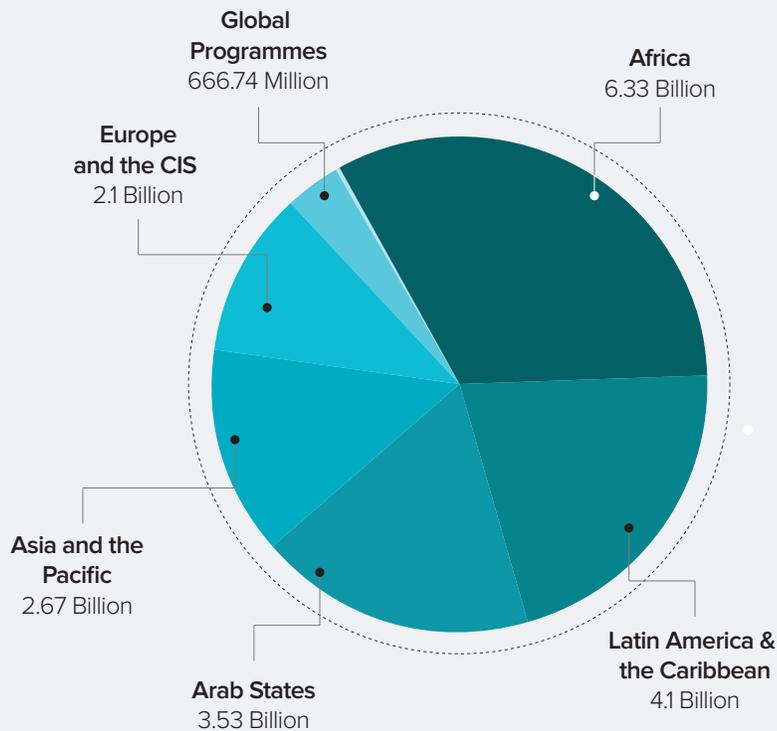
FIGURE 1
Critical Areas of Commitments of the Doha Declaration



Social development, therefore, is not only a moral imperative but also the cornerstone of sustainable peace, prosperity, and resilience. It underpins every goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, from eradicating poverty and achieving gender equality to promoting decent work, reducing inequalities, and fostering inclusive societies. Investing in people, by strengthening education, health, and social protection systems and expanding access to jobs and livelihoods, is the foundation for accelerating progress across the SDG and ensuring that growth delivers well-being for all.

UNDP has been at the forefront of this agenda since Copenhagen, supporting countries to translate global commitments into inclusive national strategies. Over the past decade (2015–2024), UNDP has channelled more than USD 19.4 billion toward poverty reduction across its global portfolio, supporting over 170 countries and territories. This investment reflects a sustained commitment to helping countries translate global promises into national action—expanding access to basic services, strengthening health and social protection systems, advancing productive employment, and promoting social inclusion. As shown in Figure 2, Africa has been the largest focus of UNDP’s poverty-reduction financing, receiving USD 6.33 billion, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (USD 4.1 billion), the Arab States (USD 3.53 billion), and Asia and the Pacific (USD 2.67 billion). Support in Europe and Central Asia (USD 2.1 billion) and through global programmes (USD 666.7 million) has further contributed to building responsive institutions, creating decent jobs, and expanding income-generating opportunities. These investments demonstrate UNDP’s ability to deploy resources at scale to help countries prevent setbacks, reduce vulnerabilities, and accelerate progress toward long-lasting prosperity.

FIGURE 2
UNDP Investment in Poverty Reduction (2015 - 2024)



From pioneering the Human Development Reports that redefined progress beyond GDP, to supporting countries in expanding access to quality education, healthcare, and social protection; expanding decent jobs and livelihood opportunities; and advancing gender equality and rights-based governance, UNDP’s work has consistently placed people at the center of development. As the international community looks beyond 2030, UNDP’s role in linking social development with climate action, digital transformation, and effective, inclusive governance, remains vital to achieving the promise of the Doha Political Declaration: inclusive, resilient, and equitable societies for all.

Human Development Thinking and the Social Development Agenda: From Copenhagen to Doha

The Human Development Reports (HDRs) and the Human Development Index (HDI) have shaped global thinking about social progress over the past three decades, providing conceptual and empirical underpinnings that align closely with the aims of social development articulated at the 1995 World Summit in Copenhagen. Both emerged as responses to the limitations of growth-led models of development, calling for a shift from economic accumulation to human well-being, inclusion, and agency as the true measures of progress. While “human development” and “social development” evolved from different institutional trajectories, the former advanced by UNDP through the HDRs beginning in 1990, and the latter rooted in the UN’s social policy and rights-based agenda, they share a common foundation centered on equity, participation, and the expansion of human capabilities.^{20 21}

The first Human Development Report in 1990 provided a transformative framework for rethinking development around people rather than production.²² It articulated Mahbub ul Haq and Amartya Sen’s vision that “the real wealth of a nation is its people”, and that development is about enlarging people’s choices and freedoms.²³ HDRs have provided a continuous stream of analytical insights that have advanced the discourse on inclusion, gender equality, sustainability, and resilience, all issues central to social development. Successive HDRs have interrogated themes such as inequality, human security, climate vulnerability, and multidimensional poverty, thereby broadening the social lens of human development beyond metrics.

Within that framework, the Human Development Index was introduced as a concise measure of human well-being, capturing achievements in health, education, and income. By translating an abstract idea into a quantifiable form, the HDI gave empirical visibility to what the Copenhagen Declaration later defined as “people as the central subject of development.”²⁴ In doing so, UNDP helped reposition human and social dimensions of development at the center of national and global policy debates.

The theoretical linkage between human development and social development lies in their shared understanding that development is both a process and an outcome of expanding human freedoms. Human development, grounded in Amartya Sen’s capability approach, focuses on enabling individuals to lead lives they value;²⁵ social development provides the societal and institutional conditions that make such choices attainable and sustainable. The HDI measures the outcomes of social investment, while social development encompasses the broader systems (education, health, protection, participation, and justice) that sustain and distribute those gains equitably.²⁶

Over the thirty years since Copenhagen, UNDP’s human development work has both informed and reinforced the global social development agenda. The HDRs have continually expanded the frontier of what constitutes progress, integrating themes such as inequality (2019 HDR),²⁷ gender and empowerment (1995 HDR),²⁸ human security (1994 HDR),²⁹ and planetary pressures (2020 HDR).³⁰ Together, the HDI and HDRs have become both a mirror and a catalyst for social development, turning values into metrics and metrics into policy pathways that promote inclusion, equity, and dignity for all.

The Evolution of Human Development Thinking through the HDRs (1990–2025)

Building on the conceptual foundations laid in the early 1990s³¹, successive Human Development Reports have both reflected and shaped global social development priorities. Each decade has deepened the human development paradigm—linking the expansion of human capabilities to poverty eradication, decent work, inclusion, and resilience—and has mirrored the evolution of the global social agenda from the Copenhagen Summit (1995) to the 2030 Agenda and the Doha Declaration (2024).

1990s: Foundations and Copenhagen

The HDRs of the 1990s established human development as people-centered alternative to GDP, anchoring progress in health, education, and income, with the first Human Development Report (1990) launching the HDI and articulating development as enlargement of people’s choices.³² The 1991 HDR on Financing Human Development argued that national budgets and aid should be structured in favor of social investment.³³ The 1992 HDR examined global interdependence, emphasizing how trade, environment, and technology shaped people’s access to opportunities and livelihoods.³⁴ The 1993 HDR placed “people’s participation” at the heart of development, recognizing inclusion, empowerment, and participatory governance as vital to social integration.³⁵ The 1994 HDR introduced the concept of “human security,” linking poverty and exclusion to threats of conflict, hunger, and displacement, and broadening the social development agenda to include protection from vulnerability, placing people rather than territories at the center of security debates.³⁶

The 1995 HDR on gender and the 1997 HDR on poverty eradication directly reinforced the three pillars of the Copenhagen Summit: poverty eradication, full employment and decent work, and social integration. The 1995 HDR on gender argued that gender inequality constrains human development, highlighting women’s unpaid and care work as invisible but foundational to livelihoods and social integration.³⁷ The 1996 HDR addressed economic growth, warning that growth without equity does not reduce poverty or improve social well-being.³⁸ The 1997 HDR returned squarely to poverty eradication, identifying exclusion, lack of jobs, and weak protection systems as barriers to dignity and inclusion.³⁹ The 1998 HDR on consumption exposed unsustainable patterns and their effects on inequality⁴⁰, while the 1999 HDR⁴¹ on globalization recognized risks of exclusion in a rapidly integrating world, calling for safety nets and international cooperation.

2000s: Rights, Governance, and the MDGs

The HDRs of the 2000s positioned social development within a rights-based and governance-driven framework, in line with global cooperation and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The 2000 HDR positioned human rights as central to development, arguing that rights and development are mutually reinforcing.⁴² The 2001 HDR examined how technology and knowledge can steer innovation for human progress, linking digital access to equality of opportunity, livelihoods, and jobs.⁴³ The 2002 HDR on democracy stressed that participation, accountability, and inclusion are prerequisites for reducing poverty and inequality.⁴⁴ The 2003 HDR explicitly aligned human development with the MDGs, embedding Copenhagen’s poverty, work, and integration pillars into a time-bound agenda.⁴⁵ The 2004 HDR addressed cultural liberty, recognizing diversity and identity as key to social integration, while the 2005 HDR on international cooperation underlined shared responsibility in tackling poverty and exclusion, stressing financing and solidarity across countries.^{46 47}

Subsequent reports extended the agenda: the 2006 HDR framed the global water crisis as rooted in inequality⁴⁸, the 2007/08 HDR treated climate change as a human-development challenge of vulnerability and adaptation,⁴⁹ and the 2009 HDR examined human mobility as a driver of jobs, rights, and integration but also a source of vulnerability.⁵⁰ The 2010 HDR, marking the twentieth anniversary, marked a return to inequality, advancing the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), thus

formalizing multidimensional poverty measurement, to assess deprivations in health, education, and living standards.⁵¹

2010s: Inequalities, Sustainability, and Universalism

The HDRs of the 2010s integrated Copenhagen’s pillars into the broader universality of the 2030 Agenda. The 2011 HDR on sustainability and equity argued that poverty eradication and social inclusion cannot be separated from environmental stewardship.⁵² The 2013 HDR on the rise of the Global South emphasized inclusive growth and livelihoods in emerging economies, noting the pivotal role of Middle Income Countries (MICs) in global progress.⁵³ The 2014 HDR on vulnerability underscored the need for robust social protection to safeguard development gains against shocks, directly foreshadowing Doha’s call for universal protection floors.⁵⁴ The 2015 HDR reframed work to include paid, unpaid, and care work.⁵⁵ The 2016 HDR emphasized universalism, “human development for everyone”, and operationalized the principle of “leaving no one behind” in line with achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.⁵⁶ The 2019 HDR on inequalities identified “new divides” in digital access, tertiary education, and climate resilience, recognizing inequality as a barrier to poverty eradication, jobs, and inclusion.⁵⁷

2020s: Uncertainty, Resilience and Cooperation

The HDRs of the 2020s explicitly connected social development to global crises and resilience. The 2020 HDR integrated poverty and livelihoods with planetary pressures, introducing the Planetary Pressures–Adjusted HDI and urging just transitions that advance human development and climate resilience.⁵⁸ The 2021/22 HDR documented a new uncertainty complex of planetary pressures, societal transformation, and polarization, recording consecutive global HDI declines in 2020 and 2021, and highlighting that social protection systems and inclusive governance are essential buffers.⁵⁹ The 2023/24 HDR on breaking the gridlock reframed poverty eradication, decent work, and inclusion as global public goods, requiring multilateral cooperation and trust to overcome collective action failures.⁶⁰ The 2025 HDR shifts the conceptual frontier by placing artificial intelligence squarely at the intersection of development and choice. It argues that AI should be governed around human agency and capabilities, and not allowed to dictate development paths. As the second installment in a trilogy on uncertainty, it extends the paradigm of human development into a new digital era.⁶¹

Human Development in Numbers: Global Progress and Persistent Inequalities

Since 1990, the HDRs have reshaped development discourse by insisting that progress must be measured in people’s well-being and opportunities, not just by GDP. The introduction of the HDI offered a new lens on progress, focusing on health, education, and standard of living. Over time, HDRs have expanded the paradigm to include inequality (IHDI), MPI, and, more recently, planetary pressures (PHDI) and digital transformations. Together, these indices trace a path from foundational social commitments to a broader agenda that addresses fragility, climate risk, AI, and renewed social compacts.

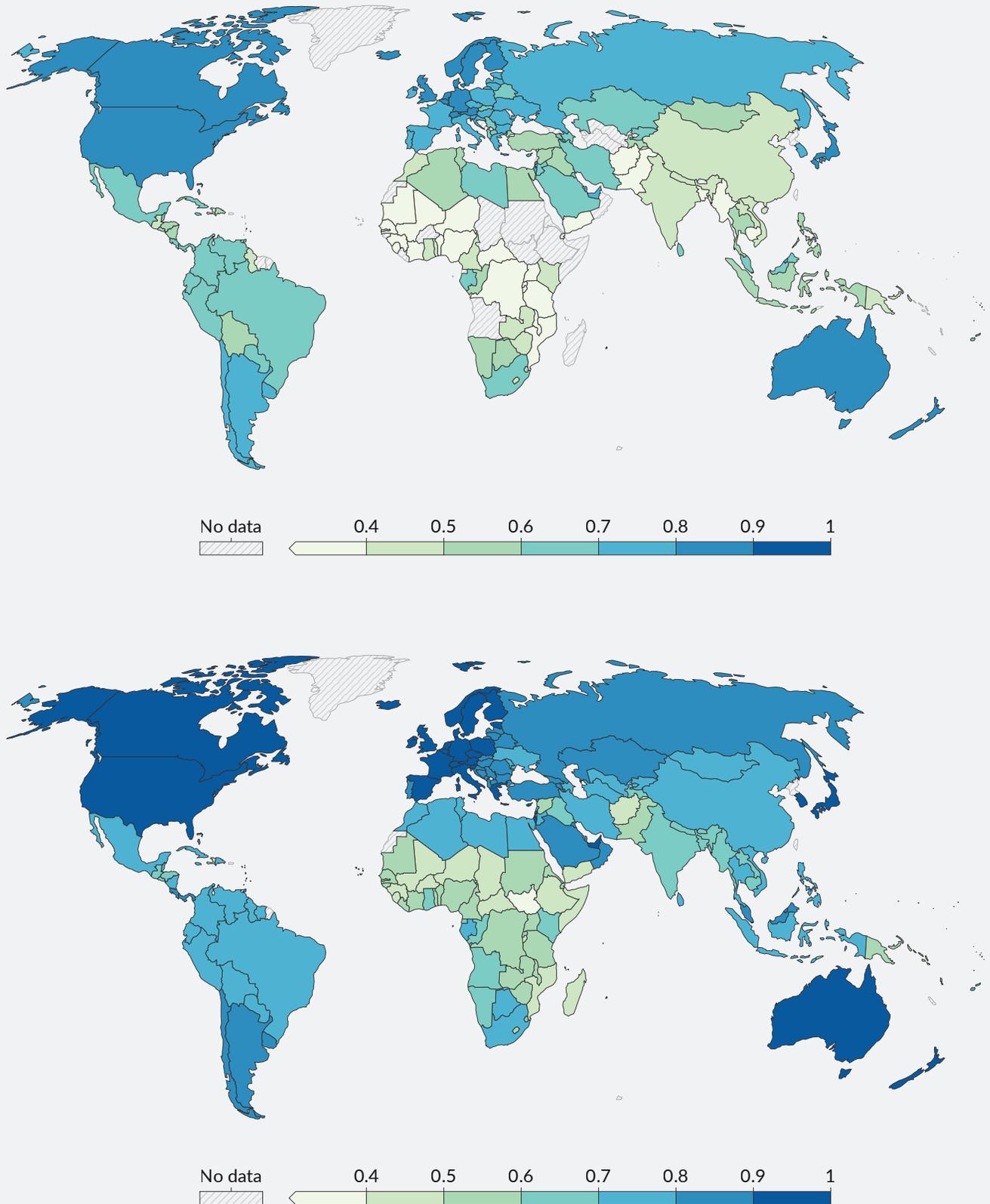
Human development has steadily advanced over the past three decades, though the pace and distribution of progress have varied widely. Between 1990 and 2023, the global Human Development Index (HDI) increased from 0.61 to 0.76, a rise of roughly 24 percent, marking one of the most sustained improvements in human well-being ever recorded.⁶² This global gain reflects major advances in life expectancy (up by over 8 years, from 65 to 73)⁶³, education (expected years of schooling rising from about 9.3 to 13.0)⁶⁴, and income (GNI per capita, PPP-adjusted, increasing by nearly 70 percent).⁶⁵

Regional trends demonstrate both striking progress and persistent inequality. Between 1990 and 2023, East Asia and the Pacific achieved the fastest gains in human development, with HDI values rising by over 50 percent, reflecting rapid advances in income and education. South Asia followed

FIGURE 3

Human Development Index, 1990 vs. 2023

The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure of key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, a good education, and a decent standard of living. Higher values indicate higher human development.



closely, improving by 48 percent, propelled by gains in schooling and health. Sub-Saharan Africa also made significant strides, up 40 percent since 1990, though it remains the region with the lowest average HDI, at 0.57 in 2023. LDCs recorded the largest relative increase, over 55 percent, but still trail far behind global averages. In contrast, Europe and Central Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean each improved by about 20 percent, while Arab States registered a 31-percent gain. OECD countries saw smaller, incremental progress (about 14 percent) but maintained very high human-development levels, averaging 0.92.

FIGURE 4
Human Development Index Values by Regions (1990 – 2023)

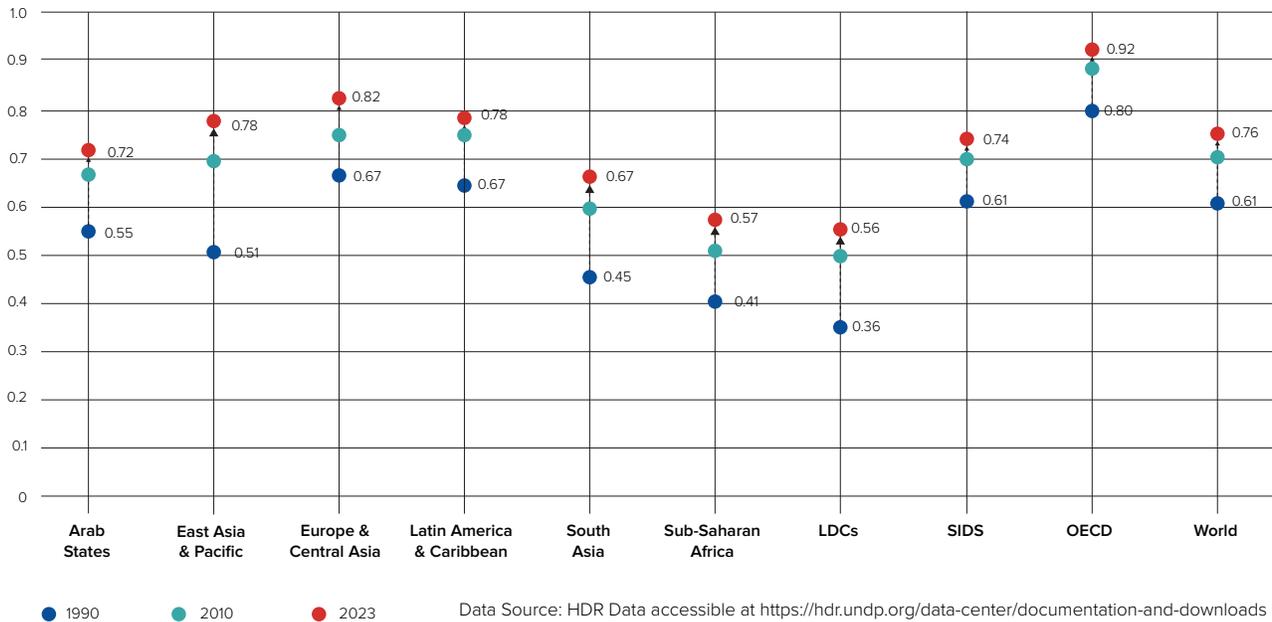
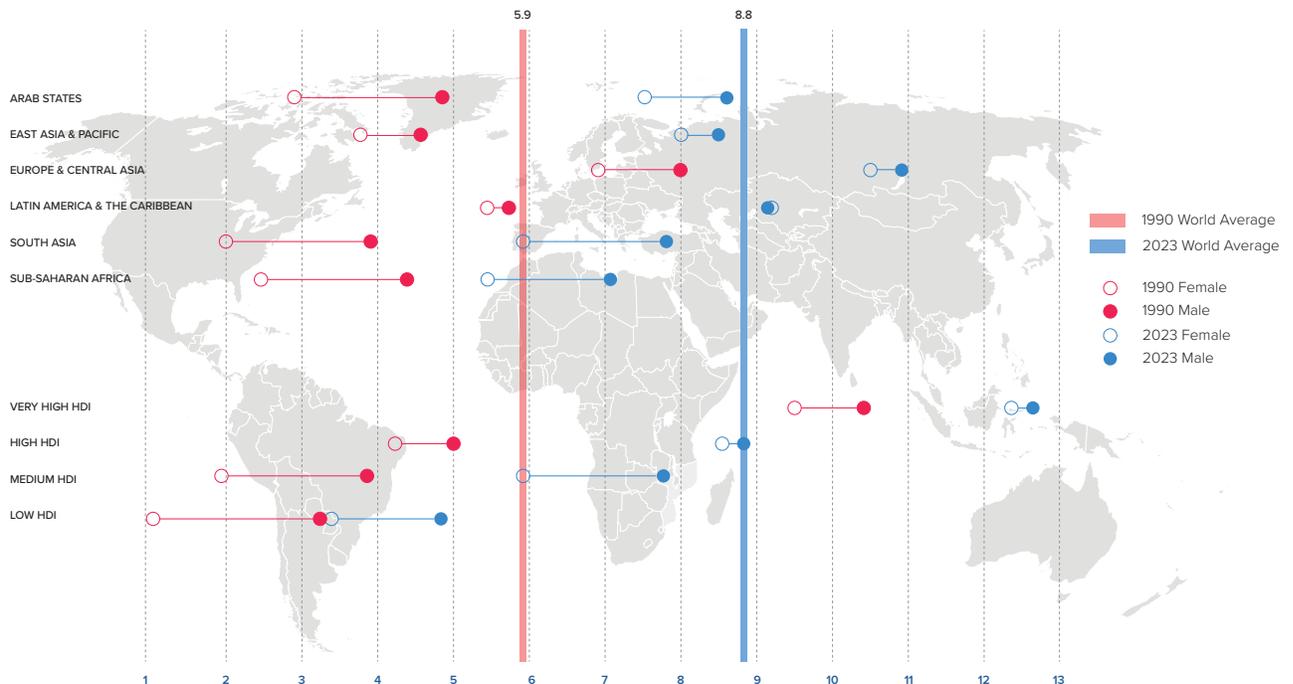


FIGURE 5
Human Development Index Values by Regions (1990 – 2023)



UNDP Support for Social Development: Translating Human Development into Action

While the previous chapter traced the evolution of human development thinking over the three decades since Copenhagen, this chapter looks specifically at the past ten years, examining how UNDP has translated that vision into concrete support for social development on the ground. During the past 10 years, corresponding to the first decade of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNDP has worked with over 170 countries and territories to expand opportunities, reduce inequalities, and strengthen the systems that enable people to thrive in dignity.

UNDP's support for social development has spanned interlinked areas including poverty and inequality reduction; jobs and decent work; inclusive social protection and health resilience; digital inclusion; financing for social development; and governance for inclusion and accountability. Just as the Human Development Reports have expanded how progress is understood and measured, UNDP's work over the past decade has demonstrated how those concepts can be embedded in practice—through investments that strengthen human capabilities, build cohesive societies, and sustain progress against shocks. Together, these areas illustrate how UNDP has operationalized the principles of human development - equity, inclusion, and resilience - through policies, partnerships, and programmes that advance the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration and the Doha Political Declaration.

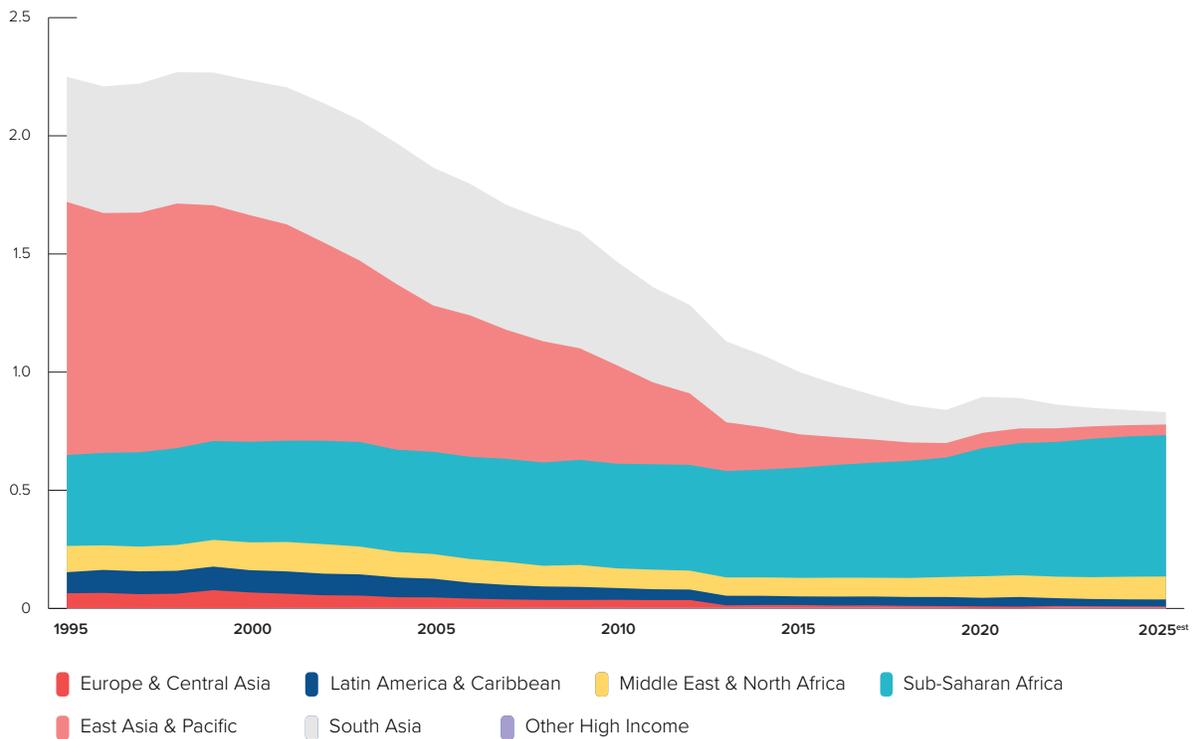
Tackling Poverty and Inequality

DATA SNAPSHOT

- **1 billion people** live in acute multidimensional poverty across 112 countries⁶⁶
- **584 million children** under 18 are multidimensionally poor, more than half of all those affected⁶⁷
- **455 million people** in multidimensional poverty live in countries affected by conflict⁶⁸
- Among 86 countries with harmonized data, **76 have achieved significant reductions in multidimensional poverty** since 2010⁶⁹
- **18 percent of the world's population** (about 1 in 6 people) is multidimensionally poor⁷⁰
- **817 million people** live on less than **\$3 per day** (2021 PPP)—the new international poverty line adopted in 2025.⁷¹ **622 million people** (7.3 percent of the global population) are projected to live in extreme income poverty by 2030⁷²
- The **working-poverty rate** fell from **7.7 percent (2020)** to **6.9 percent (2023)**, representing **241 million workers** living in extreme poverty⁷³
- Nearly **half of all people in extreme poverty** live in Sub-Saharan Africa, where poverty is increasingly concentrated in fragile and conflict-affected states⁷⁴
- **2/3 of the world's population** live in countries where income inequality has risen since 1990
- **1 in 3** women worldwide experience gender-based violence in their lifetime⁷⁵
- An estimated **5 billion people** still lack effective access to justice services⁷⁶
- **1.3 billion people** (16% of the global population) live with disabilities, facing unemployment rates twice as high as the global average⁷⁷

When world leaders gathered in Copenhagen in 1995 for the first World Summit for Social Development, eradicating poverty stood as one of its three defining pillars, alongside full employment and social integration. At that time, nearly 2.25 billion people¹ lived in extreme income poverty, representing more than one-third of the global population. The Copenhagen Declaration called for people-centered development grounded in equity, participation, and dignity. These are key principles that reshaped international cooperation and guided successive global agendas, from the MDGs to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Over the next two decades, unprecedented gains were achieved: by 2015, the global extreme-poverty rate had fallen to 10 percent, lifting more than one billion people out of destitution and marking one of the most rapid improvements in human well-being in history.⁷⁸

FIGURE 6
Population living below the poverty line (2021 PPP) in billion people



Yet the last decade has revealed both the fragility and the unfinished nature of that progress. Between 2015 and 2025, the pace of poverty reduction slowed dramatically as global shocks—pandemics, conflict, climate change, and debt distress—exposed deep structural inequalities and vulnerabilities. Today, 817 million people still live on less than \$3 a day, and 1.1 billion experience multidimensional poverty that goes beyond income to encompass deprivations in education, health, and living standards.⁷⁹ The geography of poverty has also shifted: it is now increasingly concentrated in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, with more than half of the extreme poor living in Sub-Saharan Africa.

As the world marks thirty years since Copenhagen, the Doha Political Declaration renews the call for an integrated approach to social development, one that links poverty eradication to decent work, social protection, gender equality, and climate resilience. It underscores that social development is not only a moral imperative but the foundation of inclusive, peaceful, and resilient societies.

¹ Unless otherwise specified, poverty figures cited in this report refer to the World Bank’s updated international poverty line of \$3.00 per person per day (2021 PPP), introduced in June 2025. Earlier estimates based on 2017 PPP (\$2.15/day) are not directly comparable in absolute terms, but overall trends remain consistent, showing a sustained, though slowing, decline in global poverty since 1990.

UNDP's support to poverty reduction has evolved over several decades, combining policy-level interventions, capacity development, and targeted programmes to address multidimensional poverty in diverse contexts. Since the late 1980s, poverty reduction has been a central pillar of UNDP's mandate, with Executive Board decisions in the mid-1990s making poverty elimination an overriding priority, leading to sharper programming focus and the development of distinct anti-poverty strategies.⁸⁰

At the global level, UNDP has anchored its poverty reduction work in the human development approach, promoting inclusive and equitable economic growth, gender equality, and capacity development as pathways to eradicate poverty.⁸¹ The MDGs provided a unifying framework, and UNDP leveraged this to strengthen national poverty reduction strategies, integrate multidimensional poverty analysis, and place poverty reduction at the center of public discourse.⁸² Post-2015, UNDP's poverty reduction narrative reflected a strategic shift towards multidimensional approaches aligned with the SDGs, integrating economic, social, and environmental dimensions, and emphasizing institutional capacity building, policy coherence, and SDG localization.

In LDCs, UNDP's support evolved to incorporate urban poverty as a growing area of concern, alongside traditional rural and livelihood-focused interventions. Institutional capacity building and policy support remained central, contributing to national development frameworks and enabling countries to integrate poverty reduction into broader sustainable development strategies.⁸³ This included tools such as the SDG Localization Toolkit (2015), Sustainable Urbanization Strategy (2016), and the "Getting to the Last Mile in Least Developed Countries" framework, which guided local governance and service delivery in fragile contexts⁸⁴.

Programmatically, UNDP expanded the poverty-environment nexus, leveraging GEF funds for initiatives that simultaneously addressed environmental sustainability and livelihoods. For example, in conflict-affected contexts, solar power projects reduced fossil fuel dependence while enabling a second cropping cycle for rain-fed agriculture, directly enhancing food security and incomes.⁸⁵

The Strategic Plan 2018–2021 marked an important conceptual shift by integrating poverty reduction and environmental protection within a unified sustainable development outcome. Its architecture was organized around three development contexts—eradicating poverty, accelerating structural transformation, and building resilience—positioning poverty reduction both as a direct goal and a cross-cutting priority. The plan introduced a dual emphasis: supporting people to exit poverty by expanding access to services, jobs, and livelihoods, and helping them avoid falling back into poverty through asset creation, social protection, and measures to strengthen household security. It also aimed to address structural drivers of poverty (economic exclusion, weak governance, and inequality) through more transformational, multi-sectoral solutions.

Country-level programming demonstrated these integrated approaches. In **Namibia**, UNDP supported national poverty eradication strategies through policy research and planning.⁸⁶ In **Senegal** and **Togo**, Emergency Community Development Programmes expanded access to basic services and livelihoods, though sustainability suffered when government cost-sharing fell.⁸⁷ The Poverty-Environment Initiative advanced more integrated approaches, e.g., in **Lao PDR**, where provincial authorities aligned investment strategies with environmental sustainability⁸⁸; and in **Lesotho**, where MSME support strengthened competitive and gender-sensitive business environments.⁸⁹ In crisis-affected contexts, resilience and poverty reduction were tightly connected: in **Darfur**, stabilization programmes restored livelihoods; while in **Mozambique**, post-disaster recovery linked livelihood restoration with climate-resilience measures

The Strategic Plan 2022–2025 further evolved UNDP’s poverty reduction work under the “3×6×3” framing, elevating Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) as a core direction of change. Poverty and inequality were framed as multidimensional and intersectional, requiring rights-based targeting, intersectionality analysis, and community engagement. A major step was the introduction of the LNOB marker to strengthen accountability for inclusion across portfolios.

This Plan placed greater emphasis on structural transformations that are inclusive, green, and digital, responding to a rapidly changing global context marked by COVID-19, climate impacts, debt distress, and shifting poverty geographies that increasingly locate poverty within middle-income countries. To reinforce global ambition, the 2022–2025 Plan established an outcome-level target to help 100 million people escape multidimensional poverty by expanding access to livelihoods, basic services, and social protection.

Country-level examples illustrate the breadth of post-2015 interventions:

- In **Armenia**, UNDP contributed to social protection programming, earning trust from government, civil society, and the private sector, and supported policy development through technical methodologies embedded in Poverty Reduction Strategies.⁹⁰
- In **Benin**, grassroots income-generating projects reached over 4,000 people—95% women—demonstrating the gender-responsive nature of UNDP’s poverty reduction work.⁹¹
- In **Bangladesh**, UNDP’s Livelihoods Improvement of Urban Poor Communities⁹² Project tackles urban poverty reduction, amidst rapid urbanization, and climate resilience across 11 City Corporations and 8 municipalities, through the development of small-scale climate-resilient infrastructures, adaptive livelihoods initiatives, access to finance to strengthen resilience of homes, development of larger social housing solutions, and empower women as key decision-makers across communities. The program has reached over 3.8 million urban residents across 19 municipalities. Over 55,000 individuals benefitted from skills development training, 40,000+ women entrepreneurs accessed seed capital, and 609 low-cost housing units were built. USD 6.9 million generated through community group savings initiative helped reduce shocks and stress in sustaining basic household expenditure during climate-induced hazards and the COVID-19 public health crisis. The initiative is implemented under UNDP’s National Urban Poverty Reduction Programme (NUPRP), from 2018-2024⁹³, in partnership with Bangladesh’s Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (LGRD&C), which significantly reduced income poverty, improved MPI scores, and enhanced financial inclusion among beneficiary households. In addition, the programme has significantly enhanced women’s economic empowerment, with 98% of the 40,549 women who received business grants now successfully managing small enterprises, fostering local economic growth and resilience.⁹⁴

Overall, the post-2015 narrative is characterized by:

- Integration of multidimensional poverty reduction into all programme areas, ensuring economic, social, and environmental linkages.
- Policy leadership and SDG localization, using participatory tools and frameworks to align national strategies with global goals.
- Innovative financing and partnerships, leveraging environmental funds and private sector engagement for poverty reduction.
- Gender-responsive and inclusive programming, targeting vulnerable groups and ensuring equitable benefits.

Promoting Jobs and Livelihoods

DATA SNAPSHOT

- **Global GDP growth for 2025 revised down to 2.8%** (from 3.2%), reflecting heightened geopolitical and trade uncertainty⁹⁵
- Global employment growth projected at 1.5% in 2025 (approx. 53 million jobs) — **7 million fewer than earlier forecasts** (60 million)⁹⁶
- Over **2 billion workers worldwide are informally employed**⁹⁷, representing the majority of workers in many LMICs, exceeding **89% in least developed countries** and disproportionately affecting women and youth⁹⁸
- **Global labour income share fell from 53.0% (2014) to 52.4% (2024)**. Had labour income share remained at its 2014 level, workers globally would have earned US\$1 trillion more in 2024, roughly **US\$290 more per worker** (PPP)⁹⁹
- Occupational upgrading is underway: employment is shifting toward **higher-skill roles**, especially in middle- and high-income countries. The share of **over-educated workers rose from 15.5% (2013) to 18.9% (2023)**, while the share of under-educated workers fell from 37.9% to 33.4%.¹⁰⁰
- Nearly **1 in 4 workers** globally is employed in occupations with **some exposure to AI-driven task automation**¹⁰¹
- An estimated **269 million young people** are not in employment, education, or training (**NEET**), with young women disproportionately affected¹⁰²

Jobs and livelihoods remain a cornerstone of human development and a primary channel through which individuals secure income, build assets, and strengthen resilience. Yet global labour markets are undergoing deep structural shifts. Weakening macroeconomic conditions and geopolitical uncertainty have begun to decouple economic growth from employment generation. Global GDP growth for 2025 has been revised downward to 2.8%, contributing to a projected slowdown in employment growth to 1.5% (about 53 million new jobs), which is 7 million fewer than earlier forecasts. At the same time, labour income shares have declined globally, falling from 53.0% in 2014 to 52.4% in 2024; had this share remained at its 2014 level, global labour income would have been around US\$1 trillion higher in 2024, equivalent to approximately US\$290 more per worker (PPP). These trends reflect long-standing misalignments between productivity gains and wage growth, reinforcing inequality and limiting the potential of labour markets to contribute to broader prosperity.

Informality remains the defining feature of labour markets in much of the world, constraining productivity, fiscal capacity, and access to social protection. More than 2 billion workers, about 58% of the global labour force, are engaged in informal employment without legal or social protections. In low-income countries, informal employment exceeds 89% of all jobs and rises to over 92% among women, underscoring the disproportionate burden on women and youth. Informal workers are concentrated in rural, agricultural, and climate-sensitive sectors where earnings are volatile and upward mobility is limited. Persistently high levels of informal employment hinder structural transformation by keeping firms small, limiting access to finance and technology, and constraining the tax base needed to fund social services and public investment.

Young people face especially acute challenges transitioning into productive work. An estimated 269 million youth globally are not in employment, education, or training (NEET), with young women disproportionately affected. Despite rising educational attainment, labour-market transitions remain slow, and skills mismatches are widening. The share of workers whose educational levels fall below job requirements declined from 37.9% to 33.4% between 2013 and 2023, while the share of over-educated

workers increased from 15.5% to 18.9%. These patterns reflect persistent disconnects between education systems, labour-market demand, and evolving technologies—conditions that hamper productivity, innovation, and inclusive growth.

Technological change, particularly digitalization and artificial intelligence, continues to reshape labour markets. Nearly one in four workers globally is employed in occupations with some exposure to AI-driven task automation, and around 7.5% are in roles with high exposure—where generative AI could automate most tasks. While technological diffusion offers opportunities for new forms of entrepreneurship, productivity gains, and market access, these benefits are unevenly distributed. Platform-based and gig-work arrangements have expanded, but often without adequate regulation or protection, raising concerns about job quality, income security, and collective bargaining rights. At the same time, climate change is generating more frequent and severe shocks that disrupt livelihoods—particularly in agriculture and other climate-sensitive sectors—while the green transition is generating new labour-market opportunities that require reskilling, formalization, and access to capital.

Across these transformations, delivering inclusive and resilient employment pathways will require integrated policies that support skills development, enterprise growth, formalization, social protection, and just transitions into green and digital economies.

UNDP's support to employment and livelihoods sits at the core of its mandate to expand human capabilities, reduce poverty, and strengthen resilience. Across regions and contexts, UNDP works with governments, the private sector, and civil society to create enabling environments for productive employment; enhance people's capabilities to access employment opportunities; and promote sustainable, inclusive economic opportunities. Our work spans short-term livelihood stabilization, medium-term recovery, and long-term structural transformation recognizing that jobs are essential not only to income generation but also to social cohesion, peacebuilding, and sustainable development.

This positioning is particularly critical in fragile and crisis-affected contexts, where livelihoods are often destroyed by conflict, disaster, or economic instability. UNDP bridges humanitarian and development action by providing immediate employment opportunities while laying the foundation for market recovery, enterprise growth, and longer-term income generation. Instruments such as the 3×6 approach¹⁰³, which links emergency income, savings mobilization, and enterprise development demonstrate how UNDP promotes community recovery while stimulating local markets.

Improving employability, skills, and transitions to work is a central pillar of UNDP's support. In Europe and Central Asia, UNDP has helped modernize public employment services in countries like **Albania**, **North Macedonia**, and **Kosovo**.¹⁰⁴ Support has included developing profiling instruments for jobseekers, enhancing counselling, piloting youth guarantee schemes, digitalizing administrative systems, and strengthening performance frameworks. These efforts have enabled more tailored and coordinated employment services while increasing the participation of the private sector.

UNDP's support for skills development and TVET is broad and increasingly focused on emerging sectors, digital, green, care, and entrepreneurial skills. In **Bangladesh**, UNDP has provided market-relevant skills to more than 100,000 youth, often coupled with start-up support and access to finance.¹⁰⁵ In **Ukraine**, nearly two-thirds of participants trained through UNDP programmes secured employment, including many internally displaced people.¹⁰⁶ In **Mongolia**¹⁰⁷ and **Tajikistan**¹⁰⁸ UNDP has worked with training institutions to update curricula, certify trainers, and introduce digital and life-skills modules. Women's skills development is a strong focus, particularly in rural and conservative settings, and is frequently paired with childcare, mentoring, or cooperative models to facilitate workforce entry.

UNDP also supports apprenticeship pathways, entrepreneurship training, and job-placement models

that help bridge gaps between education and employment. Blended measures, combining training with enterprise support, wage subsidies, or counselling, have demonstrated higher transition rates, particularly among youth and vulnerable populations.

UNDP complements supply-side measures by supporting micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), cooperatives, and value chains with high employment potential. Recognizing that most jobs in lower middle income countries (LMICs) are created by small firms, UNDP helps entrepreneurs access capital, technology, and markets. Programmes provide grants, mentorship, business development services, and platforms for aggregation and joint procurement.

In the **Middle East and North Africa**, UNDP has applied the 3×6 approach to stimulate local value chains by combining cash-for-work, savings schemes, and microenterprise development. In **Lebanon, Tunisia, and Gaza**, partnerships with anchor firms have enabled micro-suppliers to access larger, more stable markets, helping generate jobs despite macroeconomic volatility.^{109 110} In **Sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel**, UNDP has supported agricultural and livestock value chains, such as sesame in **Somalia**¹¹¹, coffee and horticulture in **Rwanda**, and dairy in **Mongolia**, improving quality, productivity, and market linkages.¹¹²

UNDP also promotes green and circular economy models that create jobs while delivering environmental benefits. In **Lesotho**¹¹³, plastic-waste initiatives have enabled communities to create recycling enterprises; in **Chad**¹¹⁴ and **Nepal**¹¹⁵, ecotourism and ecosystem restoration activities are linked to community livelihoods. Such models strengthen both incomes and environmental stewardship.

In crisis and post-conflict settings, UNDP plays a critical role in stabilizing livelihoods, restoring local markets, and helping communities rebuild. Labour-intensive public works are central to this approach, providing short-term employment while rebuilding essential community infrastructure such as roads, water systems, and irrigation. These activities have been implemented in **Syria, Yemen, Libya, Haiti, Nepal, and Ukraine**, generating income for vulnerable households, including women, youth, and displaced populations.

UNDP often links emergency employment with in-kind grants, enterprise rehabilitation, and skills development to ensure that communities transition from temporary relief to long-term economic recovery. Support to MSME continuity, through grants, advisory services, and supply-chain reconnection, has helped firms survive shocks and retain workers. In **Gaza**, the Facilitating Decent Jobs Programme placed skilled graduates into host organizations, creating both short- and longer-term employment opportunities.¹¹⁶ These approaches strengthen resilience and lay the foundation for recovery by rebuilding productive assets, restoring functioning markets, and enabling social cohesion.

A defining feature of UNDP's employment portfolio is its strong focus on inclusion. Interventions target groups facing structural barriers to labour-market access, including women, youth, migrants, displaced persons, and persons with disabilities.

Youth employment programmes combine skills, entrepreneurship, and mentoring with access to finance and employment services. YouthConnekt in **Rwanda** has supported job creation through youth enterprise development and social innovation hubs.¹¹⁷ In **Georgia**¹¹⁸ and **Armenia**¹¹⁹, community models enable rural youth to access training and labour-market information. In **Tajikistan**¹²⁰, digital and IT skills training has resulted in high placement rates, including for women and youth outside major cities.

UNDP supports women's economic empowerment by enhancing access to skills, childcare, finance, and market opportunities. In **Serbia**¹²¹ and **Bosnia and Herzegovina**¹²² UNDP supported social enterprises that generated income and community services. Several countries integrate quotas,

equal-wage policies, and targeted Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) within national frameworks to address persistent gender inequalities.

Programmes for persons with disabilities span self-employment schemes, workplace accessibility initiatives, and VET linkages. In **Azerbaijan**¹²³, UNDP supported national-level self-employment initiatives for persons with disabilities, demonstrating the value of integrated public-private partnerships. In **Armenia**¹²⁴, UNDP helped strengthen assessment systems to better align disability support services with labour-market integration. In **Albania**, UNDP assisted the Government to embed the employment of persons with disabilities into its core labour-market and skills-development architecture: for example, through inclusive VET review work that fed into the new Employment Promotion Law and establishment of the Employment Social Fund (which provides the financial and institutional mechanism to channel quotas, levies and active-labour-market programmes for persons with disabilities).¹²⁵

A defining characteristic of UNDP's employment work is its focus on strengthening national institutions and policy frameworks that govern labour markets. UNDP helps countries develop national employment strategies; modernize public employment services; and improve coordination across ministries, private-sector actors, and training institutions. Reforms have enhanced the targeting, responsiveness, and accessibility of services—particularly when supported by digital tools such as labour-market information systems, case-management platforms, and skills-profiling instruments.

UNDP also supports the development of competency-based training frameworks, accreditation systems, and VET curricula linked to labour-market needs. By working with national training agencies, employers, and local governments, UNDP contributes to bridging the gap between education and employment. Efforts to improve MSME policy frameworks, including business registration, quality assurance, and standards, help integrate small firms into national and regional value chains. Through these reforms, UNDP works to embed employment within long-term development planning and institutionalize mechanisms for inclusive and sustainable job creation.

UNDP increasingly aims to transition from fragmented, project-level interventions toward more integrated and scalable employment solutions capable of driving structural transformation. While many pilots have demonstrated positive results—improving employability, supporting start-ups, and creating short-term jobs—these gains often remain localized and time-bound. UNDP therefore seeks to more systematically integrate supply- and demand-side measures so that skills development, entrepreneurship promotion, and market linkages reinforce one another. Similarly, emergency employment support can be better sequenced with recovery and enterprise development to strengthen pathways from temporary work into sustainable livelihoods.

Strengthening national ownership and institutional capacities is critical to sustaining results, particularly beyond project cycles. Deeper market systems analysis and sectoral diagnostics are needed to identify opportunities for productive transformation and guide investment toward high-potential growth areas. Improved monitoring and evaluation systems are also required to track employment outcomes over time, including earnings trajectories and enterprise survival. These lessons are informing UNDP's efforts to scale promising models, embed successful approaches within national systems, and strengthen public-private partnerships to unlock employment opportunities at scale.

Looking ahead, UNDP is well positioned to help countries harness the opportunities emerging from green, digital, and demographic transitions. The green and blue economies offer strong potential for job creation through renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, circular value chains, and ecosystem restoration. Digital transformation is opening new pathways for entrepreneurship, remote work, and productivity gains; however, it requires targeted investments in digital literacy, connectivity, regulation, and rights protections. UNDP will continue to support countries anticipate AI-driven disruption, promote digital entrepreneurship, and ensure that new forms of work provide adequate protections.

The expansion of the care economy presents significant employment opportunities, especially for women, while delivering strong social returns. Regional and sub-regional trade integration can stimulate productive capacity, diversify exports, and connect MSMEs to new markets. In crises, UNDP can strengthen anticipatory action, early recovery, and livelihood stabilization to prevent long-term scarring. Youth guarantee models, gender-responsive industrial policy, and local economic development approaches are promising avenues for more systemic employment outcomes. Across these areas, UNDP's convening power, long-standing country presence, and systems approach position it to support national efforts to build inclusive labour markets, accelerate productive transformation, and advance decent work for all.

Building Inclusive Social Protection and Health Resilience

DATA SNAPSHOT

- **52.4%** of the global population is covered by at least one social protection benefit, leaving **3.8 billion people** (47.6%) unprotected¹²⁶
- In **low-income countries**, only **9.7%** of people have access to any social protection benefit, compared with **85.9%** in high-income countries¹²⁷
- Coverage in the **20 countries most exposed to climate hazards** stands at only **8.7%**, leaving **364 million people** unprotected¹²⁸
- **4.7 billion people** in low- and middle-income countries gained access to social protection over the past decade, yet **2 billion people**—including over **1 billion in Africa and South Asia**—still lack any form of coverage¹²⁹
- **Women remain disproportionately excluded:** nearly **2 billion women and girls** worldwide are not covered by any social protection scheme¹³⁰
- **60% of the global workforce**—and **90% in low-income countries**—works informally, often without access to social insurance, unemployment protection, or paid leave¹³¹
- **Women are 30% less likely** than men to have access to social protection, with only **28%** legally covered by comprehensive schemes compared with **39%** of men
- The global **care economy** represents nearly **10% of global GDP**, yet remains largely unrecognized and unpaid¹³²
- **Half of the world's population** lacks access to essential health services, and nearly **100 million people** fall into extreme poverty each year due to out-of-pocket health spending¹³³
- **Universal social protection floors** that include health and income security could prevent over **180 million people** annually from sliding into poverty during crises

Social protection lies at the heart of social development. It is both a human right and a policy instrument that underpins poverty eradication, decent work, and social cohesion. When world leaders adopted the Copenhagen Declaration in 1995, they recognized social protection as one of the three pillars of social progress. Three decades later, the 2025 Second World Summit for Social Development reconvenes amid renewed urgency: multiple crises - economic, climatic, demographic, and technological - are widening inequalities and exposing the fragility of systems meant to protect the most vulnerable.

ILO highlights that only 52.4 percent of the world's population is effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit, leaving 3.8 billion people unprotected. Coverage has improved from 42.8 percent in 2015, yet at the current pace, universal coverage would not be achieved until 2073. The disparities are stark: while high-income countries approach near-universal coverage (85.9 percent), low-income countries protect less than 10 percent of their populations.¹³⁴

The past decade has also seen new pressures emerge. Repeated global shocks, from the COVID-19 pandemic and climate-related disasters to energy crises and conflicts, have shown how easily progress can unravel. These events reinforced social protection's dual role as a stabilizer and a catalyst: it shields households against shocks while sustaining demand, trust, and inclusion in times of disruption. Yet they also revealed systemic weaknesses: fragmented registries, inadequate fiscal buffers, and digital divides that exclude precisely those most in need. In the countries most exposed to climate hazards, only 8.7 percent of people are covered by any social protection, leaving hundreds of millions without support.¹³⁵ Across the 50 most climate-vulnerable countries, effective coverage reaches only 25 percent, leaving over 2 billion people without support.

Meanwhile, financing remains a critical constraint: low-income countries would need an additional 52 percent of GDP (USD 308 billion annually) to ensure even a basic social protection floor, including essential healthcare and minimum income security. This chronic underinvestment reflects and reinforces inequality. High-income countries dedicate around 25 percent of GDP to social protection (excluding health), compared to 2 percent in low-income countries. At the same time, gender gaps persist, with only 28 percent of women having legal coverage for comprehensive social security, compared to 39 percent of men.

It is against this backdrop that UNDP's work over the past decade has helped countries move from fragmented interventions toward integrated, nationally owned social protection systems. Guided by its *Social Protection Offer* UNDP's approach seeks to be systemic, focusing on the institutions, data, and financing that enable protection to function as a driver of inclusive growth and resilience. This work spans more than seventy countries, combining policy advice, digital innovation, and capacity development to embed social protection within broader governance, fiscal, and employment systems.

In **Bangladesh**, UNDP's long-standing support culminated in the formulation of the National Social Security Strategy, which introduced a lifecycle approach to protection (from early childhood to old age) and established mechanisms for better coordination across 30 ministries. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, this institutional foundation allowed the government, with UNDP's assistance, to deliver emergency cash transfers to five million households through mobile money platforms, demonstrating how digital and social systems can be combined for rapid, transparent delivery. Similarly, in **Viet Nam**, UNDP supported the development of the Master Plan on Social Assistance Reform and Development (MPSARD) through a number of policy research on life cycle social protection and social protection floor and developed the data management system for the implementation of MPSARD.

In **Tunisia**, UNDP worked with the Ministry of Social Affairs to improve interoperability between registries and automate eligibility assessments, enhancing efficiency and transparency. In **Kazakhstan**, more than 980,000 families previously lacked social income records, social protection, or regular access to Government services leaving over 3 million people without a social safety net.¹³⁶ Kazakhstan's introduction of the Digital Family Card, supported by UNDP, now provides families with a single digital interface to access social assistance and public services. Launched in 2022, the platform now covers all 5.9 million families in the country and has facilitated the delivery of more than 2.2 million social services.¹³⁷ Its companion mobile application serves as a single point of contact between citizens and government institutions, simplifying benefit applications and improving inclusion. This demonstrates how integrated data systems can transform access and accountability, enabling real-time identification of vulnerable population groups and streamlining access to services.

UNDP has also been instrumental in promoting adaptive and shock-responsive protection systems that link social protection to climate resilience and disaster risk management. In **Barbados** and **Saint Lucia**, it helped design universal adaptive social protection models that integrate early warning systems, vulnerability mapping, and financing mechanisms to enable rapid scale-up in response to hurricanes

and floods. In **India**, UNDP supported the integration of climate information into the design of rural infrastructure (e.g., water harvesting structures) created under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, connecting short-term income support with environmental restoration and local resilience-building. In **Ghana** and the **Dominican Republic**, data-driven vulnerability indices have been developed to guide the allocation of social protection resources to those most exposed to climate shocks. These experiences illustrate how protection systems can evolve from compensatory safety nets into forward-looking mechanisms that strengthen resilience and social cohesion.

A major focus of UNDP's support has been the extension of coverage to the informal economy, where over 60 percent of the global workforce, disproportionately women and youth, remains outside formal systems. In **Cambodia**, UNDP supported the development of a registration platform for informal workers and businesses, enabling their legal recognition and access to key services including contributory health insurance schemes, financial inclusion, and skill development opportunities. As of September 2025, a total of 168,189 individuals had registered—60% of whom were women. In **India**, UNDP's Utthaan initiative supported thousands of waste pickers, most of them women, to obtain identification and access social insurance schemes, while in **Ecuador** and **Paraguay**, UNDP has worked with governments to link simplified enterprise registration with access to microfinance and social insurance, helping informal workers transition toward formality.

Gender equality and the care economy form another cornerstone of UNDP's work. In **Uruguay**, UNDP supported the establishment of the National Care System, a landmark reform that expanded access to childcare and eldercare services while creating thousands of formal jobs for women. Similar efforts in **Peru** and the **Dominican Republic**, carried out jointly with UN Women, UNICEF, and the ILO, have helped governments design and cost national care systems addressing the needs of children, persons with disabilities, and older persons. In **Argentina**, UNDP strengthened networks of early childhood care centres that not only improve child development outcomes but also free up women's time for paid work. These examples show how social protection, when integrated with care policies, can simultaneously advance gender equality, boost labour participation, and foster intergenerational well-being.

Digital transformation has been central to these achievements. UNDP's support for digital public infrastructure has enabled countries to modernize registries, improve targeting, and ensure secure and transparent payments. In **Nepal**, the Socio-Economic Vulnerability Information Management System (SEVIMS) allows local governments to identify and support vulnerable households with unprecedented precision. Across the Pacific, UNDP has worked with governments to build mobile-based systems that connect remote communities to cash transfers and essential health services, overcoming geographic isolation and administrative bottlenecks. By combining digital inclusion with strong governance and data protection safeguards, UNDP helps countries extend coverage while upholding privacy and accountability.

Financing remains the decisive factor in sustaining social protection gains. Through INFFs and Development Finance Assessments, UNDP supports governments in aligning budgets with social priorities, identifying fiscal space, and mobilizing innovative resources. In Sri Lanka, joint UNDP–UNICEF analysis has guided fiscal strategies to protect social spending during periods of macroeconomic stress. In **Viet Nam**, UNDP's analysis on “how progressive is social security in Viet Nam” recommends coverage expansion of social insurance and protection. In the **Cook Islands**, UNDP's DFS brought together public and private actors to align domestic and external finance behind universal social protection. These experiences demonstrate how careful fiscal design and policy coherence can transform social protection from a cost to an investment in human development.

Health Resilience and Systems Strengthening

Health is a cornerstone of social development and human security. The past decade has underscored that health crises are never confined to the health sector; rather, they are social, economic, and governance challenges that test the very foundations of inclusion and resilience. The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, exposed both the fragility of systems and the inequities in access to health care. It also demonstrated that societies with stronger social protection, digital infrastructure, and governance systems were better able to sustain service delivery and trust during crises.¹³⁸

UNDP's engagement in health reflects the conviction that health outcomes are shaped not only by healthcare services but by the broader development context — from poverty reduction and governance to climate resilience and gender equality. While technical agencies such as WHO set global standards and provide specialized medical guidance, UNDP's comparative advantage lies in strengthening the enabling environment, the governance, financing, and social determinants that make health systems equitable and sustainable. As highlighted in its Health Strategy 2023-2025: Connecting the Dots (UNDP, 2023)¹³⁹, UNDP supports countries to integrate health into national development planning, address inequalities, leverage digital innovations, and build resilient systems capable of withstanding shocks.

Over the past decade, UNDP has supported more than **60 countries** to strengthen health governance, supply chains, and system resilience. Through its long-standing partnership with the **Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria**, UNDP has helped deliver lifesaving medicines and diagnostics in complex and crisis-affected settings, from **Yemen** and **South Sudan** to **Haiti**, while simultaneously building national capacity for procurement, logistics, and monitoring.¹⁴⁰ In countries transitioning from emergency to development contexts, this role has helped re-establish national systems and restore public trust.

Country Case: Turning the Tide on HIV in Zimbabwe¹⁴¹

At the height of the HIV/AIDS crisis in 2000, Zimbabwe faced one of the highest infection rates in the world, with over 25% of the population living with HIV¹⁴², and AIDS-related deaths exceeding 130,000 annually.¹⁴³ The epidemic threatened the country's human capital, food security, and economic stability.¹⁴⁴ In response, UNDP partnered with the Global Fund in 2009 to launch a large-scale, sustained intervention. Over the past decade, more than USD 1 billion was invested in prevention, testing, and treatment. By 2023, 1.2 million people were on life-saving antiretroviral therapy, and Zimbabwe had achieved the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets three years ahead of the 2025 milestone.¹⁴⁵ New infections fell by 75%, including a 70% reduction among adolescent girls and young women.¹⁴⁶

UNDP's support extended beyond treatment to strengthening Zimbabwe's health system, retaining 27,000 health workers in 2024, supporting village health workers in remote areas, opening a medical warehouse in Masvingo to expand storage and improve distribution, and equipping over 1,000 health facilities with solar power. They now serve 65% of health facilities nationwide, avoiding over 16,000 tons of CO2 emissions annually. Today, Zimbabwe is on track to end AIDS by 2030.¹⁴⁷ It is a powerful example of how sustained investment, strong partnerships, and health system innovation can deliver a foundation for recovery and resilience.

Digital transformation has been one of UNDP's most significant contributions to health systems strengthening. In **India**, the **Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN)**, developed by UNDP and the Ministry of Health, revolutionized vaccine logistics by enabling real-time monitoring of cold-chain supplies. The platform has since been scaled nationally and replicated across multiple countries including **Indonesia**, **Sudan** and **Malawi** with pilots scheduled in **Zambia** and **Lao PDR** for improving vaccine availability, reducing wastage, and reinforcing public confidence in immunization systems.¹⁴⁸ Similar digital health

solutions have been implemented in **Guinea-Bissau**, where electronic malaria surveillance reduced response times¹⁴⁹, and in **Trinidad and Tobago**, where community-based digital platforms expanded access to primary care in remote areas.¹⁵⁰

In **Zambia** and **Uganda**, UNDP has supported ministries of finance and health to integrate health equity and social protection into national development frameworks, aligning fiscal and policy priorities to reach the most vulnerable. In **Paraguay**, UNDP's support to the national social protection system (Ñapu'ãke) has linked income support with nutrition and early childhood services, demonstrating how multisectoral policies can improve both health and inclusion outcomes.¹⁵¹

Health resilience is increasingly intertwined with climate adaptation. Through its **Climate Promise**¹⁵² and related adaptation initiatives, UNDP supports countries such as **Bhutan**, **Nepal**, and **Timor-Leste** to integrate health considerations into national climate strategies and adaptation plans.¹⁵³ This includes strengthening access to climate information and early-warning systems for climate-sensitive diseases, improving climate-risk data for public health planning, and helping ministries of health and environment to collaborate on strengthening climate resilient health systems. In **Bhutan**, for instance, UNDP has supported the integration of climate and health indicators into the National Adaptation Plan, while in **Nepal**, UNDP and WHO worked together to incorporate public-health preparedness and early-warning systems for floods and vector-borne diseases into local adaptation plans. In **Timor-Leste**, UNDP and WHO are working with national authorities to strengthen the resilience of health facilities and services in climate-vulnerable areas. By linking climate adaptation and health system preparedness, UNDP helps countries protect vulnerable populations from multiple, overlapping risks — from floods and heatwaves to disease outbreaks — and advance equitable, climate-resilient development.

Gender equality remains integral to UNDP's work in health. Through the **Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions**, health ministries in Latin America have adopted gender-responsive budgeting, improved access to sexual and reproductive health, and addressed gender-based violence as a public health issue. In countries such as **Colombia**, **South Sudan**, and **Ukraine**, joint programmes have enabled women survivors of violence to access justice, psychosocial support, and health services, linking rights protection with recovery and inclusion.

The experience of recent years highlights that progress in social protection and health resilience is neither linear nor automatic. It requires coordinated policies, adequate fiscal space, and strong institutions capable of adapting to change. UNDP's contribution has been to help countries build these foundations, ensuring that protection and health systems are not parallel efforts but complementary pillars of inclusive development.

Integrating Policies and Systems for Coherent Social Development

UNDP's work across poverty reduction, employment, and social protection has demonstrated that progress in one area reinforces and depends on progress in others. The next section examines how UNDP has helped countries translate these interlinkages into coherent national strategies, integrating social, economic, and environmental policies to maximize collective impact.

During the last decade, the social-development landscape became increasingly complex. Countries faced converging crises, climate shocks, digital disruption, pandemics, fragile debt positions, and widening inequality. In such contexts, progress could no longer be achieved through sector-specific interventions alone. Social protection, employment, health, climate, and digital policies interact continuously, creating both synergies and trade-offs.

UNDP’s comparative advantage lies in its ability to help governments **connect these agendas**, breaking institutional silos and aligning policies, budgets, and institutions toward shared outcomes. Policy integration has thus become a defining feature of UNDP’s support for inclusive and resilient development, allowing countries to translate the broad vision of human development into coherent, costed, and implementable national strategies.

The Doha Political Declaration underscores this imperative, calling for “integrated, holistic, and people-centred approaches” to social development that bridge the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of sustainable development. Over the past decade, UNDP has operationalized this commitment through a set of analytical and coordination platforms, most prominently the **SDG Integration** and **SDG Push initiatives**, that enable governments to identify acceleration pathways and build coherence across planning, financing, and governance systems.

UNDP’s integration work combines data analytics, systems modeling, and institutional dialogue to help countries diagnose bottlenecks and design policy “bundles” that advance multiple SDGs simultaneously. The approach rests on three interlinked pillars:

1. **Analytical diagnostics.** Through SDG Push and Integrated SDG Insights, UNDP supports governments in mapping progress, quantifying interlinkages among goals, and assessing fiscal and environmental constraints.
2. **Coherent planning and budgeting.** Policy Alignment Mapping and Budget Allocation Tagging tools trace how national and sectoral policies, budgets, and financing instruments align with SDG and social-development targets.
3. **Institutional coordination.** UNDP facilitates multi-ministerial and multi-stakeholder platforms—bringing together ministries of planning, finance, labour, environment, and civil society—to ensure that diagnostic results inform real policy and budget decisions.

These efforts are complemented by **NDC × SDG Insights**, which link climate action with social and economic objectives, showing how low-carbon transitions can simultaneously generate jobs, improve health outcomes, and expand energy access.

POLICY INTEGRATION

Turning Complexity Into Coherence



Why it Matters:

The past decade has shown that social progress depends not only on effective programmes but also on coherent policies and financing. Poverty reduction, decent work, climate resilience, and digital inclusion succeed only when pursued together. UNDP’s integration approach enables governments to connect these agendas—to align strategies, budgets, and institutional mandates for greater cumulative impact.



UNDP’s Approach:

The past decade has shown that social progress depends not only on effective programmes but also on coherent policies and financing. Poverty reduction, decent work, climate resilience, and digital inclusion succeed only when pursued together. UNDP’s integration approach enables governments to connect these agendas—to align strategies, budgets, and institutional mandates for greater cumulative impact.



Scale and Reach

- ✓ **90 countries** applied SDG Push or SDG Insights diagnostics.
- ✓ Over **7,000 policies and programmes** mapped for alignment with SDG and social development priorities.
- ✓ More than **30 countries** used integrated modeling to inform budget and financing decisions.



UNDP's Approach:

- ✓ **Indonesia** identified a combined skills, renewable-energy, and social-protection policy package projected to lift **3.7 million people out of poverty by 2030**.
- ✓ **Namibia** applied SDG Push scenarios to design employment-intensive investments reducing poverty by **40,000 people** compared to business-as-usual.
- ✓ **Cambodia** used NDC × SDG Insights to align climate commitments (NDC 3.0) with inclusive-growth and social-protection priorities.
- ✓ **Egypt** integrated policy-alignment mapping into national planning processes, improving coherence between fiscal and social outcomes.



Lessons Learned:

- ✓ Integration must be **institutionalized**, not episodic, embedded in planning, budgeting, and monitoring systems.
- ✓ **Political and institutional coordination** are as critical as analytical tools.
- ✓ Linking integration work with **financing frameworks (INFFs), social-protection systems, and digital governance** yields the most durable results.



Looking Ahead:

UNDP's policy-integration platforms have become a defining feature of its development offer—helping countries translate complex global agendas into actionable, costed, and coherent national strategies that deliver across the three pillars of social development: poverty eradication, productive employment, and social inclusion.

Country Experiences and Results

Indonesia was among the earliest adopters of the SDG Push methodology. Using integrated modeling, UNDP and the Government simulated policy bundles combining investment in renewable energy, upskilling programmes, and expanded social protection. The analysis showed that such a combination could lift 3.7 million people out of poverty by 2030, narrow income inequality, and reduce carbon emissions—demonstrating the potential of integrated planning to deliver “triple wins.”

In **Namibia**, SDG Push scenarios guided national employment and social-protection strategies, projecting a reduction of 40 000 people in poverty relative to business-as-usual. The work also informed national budget discussions on job creation and green-economy investments.

Cambodia’s NDC × SDG Insights exercise explored the alignment of its climate goals and broader socio-economic objectives, informing the government’s NDC 3.0 development. The integrated model revealed that scaling climate-resilient agriculture and renewable energy could create significant numbers of rural jobs while strengthening food security and resilience. In addition, expanding climate-resilient and adaptive social protection for marginalized populations was added as an integral part of Cambodia’s climate commitments.

In **Egypt**, Policy Alignment Mapping and the SDG Insights framework were embedded in the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, strengthening the link between budget allocations and social-development outcomes.

These experiences illustrate how integration has moved beyond analysis to influence **national decision-making, budget allocation, and institutional coordination**, helping governments convert broad visions into actionable policy portfolios.

By 2025, UNDP’s integration tools had been deployed in over 90 countries, enabling governments to take stock of progress, identify accelerators, and model policy synergies. The approach has demonstrated that integrated, evidence-based planning can help countries:

- Target scarce fiscal resources toward policies with the highest combined impact on poverty, jobs, and resilience;
- Translate global commitments—such as the Doha Political Declaration and the 2030 Agenda—into nationally owned strategies; and
- Foster a culture of policy coherence and whole-of-government collaboration.

Challenges remain. Institutional inertia, limited data capacity, and the persistence of vertical sectoral planning still constrain impact. Integration requires political leadership and sustained technical engagement, not one-off diagnostics. Yet countries that have embedded integrated planning units or linked diagnostics to their INFFs are beginning to show durable improvements in coordination and results.

Policy integration is not a standalone pillar; it is the connective tissue that binds UNDP’s six areas of social-development support.

- In poverty and inequality, integration helps identify interventions that simultaneously raise incomes, expand services, and strengthen resilience.
- In jobs and decent work, it links labour, education, fiscal, and industrial policies for inclusive growth.
- In social protection and health, it connects fiscal policy, health-system priorities, and adaptive protection schemes.
- In digital transformation, integration ensures digitalization serves inclusion rather than deepening divides.
- In financing, integration embeds social objectives into macroeconomic and budget frameworks.

- In governance, it institutionalizes coordination, accountability, and citizen participation.

Through these linkages, UNDP has helped countries move from fragmented responses to systemic solutions capable of addressing the multidimensional nature of today's development challenges. The experience of 2015–2025 shows that policy integration is not an abstract concept but a practical enabler of inclusive and resilient societies. By helping countries align goals, policies, and financing within coherent systems, UNDP has advanced the transformation envisioned in both the Copenhagen Declaration and the Doha Political Declaration. Integration has become central to UNDP's value proposition—turning complexity into coherence and ensuring that progress in one area reinforces, rather than undermines, progress in others.

Harnessing Digital Transformation for Inclusion

DATA SNAPSHOT

- **5.5 billion people** use the internet in 2024¹⁵⁵, **yet 2.6 billion remain offline**¹⁵⁶
- **Only 27%** of the population uses the Internet, while nearly **90% of people** in developed countries have access to the Internet¹⁵⁷
- Although more women in low- and middle-income countries are using mobile internet than ever before, persistent gender gaps in access prevail, with women still **19% less likely** than men to use it, and of the 900 million women offline, nearly two-thirds are concentrated in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, where gender gaps are widest¹⁵⁸
- Mobile money reached **two significant milestones in 2024**, surpassing two **billion registered accounts and over half a billion active monthly users across the globe**. The industry took **18 years to achieve one billion registered accounts** and 250 million active users from 2001 but **doubled in size in the following five years**¹⁵⁹
- IMF projects AI will boost global GDP by approximately 0.5% annually between 2025 and 2030¹⁶⁰

Over the past three decades, digital transformation has emerged as one of the most defining shifts, fundamentally reshaping societies and advancing social development. While the Copenhagen Declaration of 1995 did not yet envision digital technology as a pillar of social development, today it has become indispensable for advancing inclusion, equity, and resilience, with the Doha Political Declaration of 2025 explicitly recognizing it as a key accelerator. The expansion of mobile money, e-governance, and online learning platforms has created new pathways for empowerment, participation, and financial inclusion, while digital health and e-cash transfers proved essential during the COVID-19 pandemic.

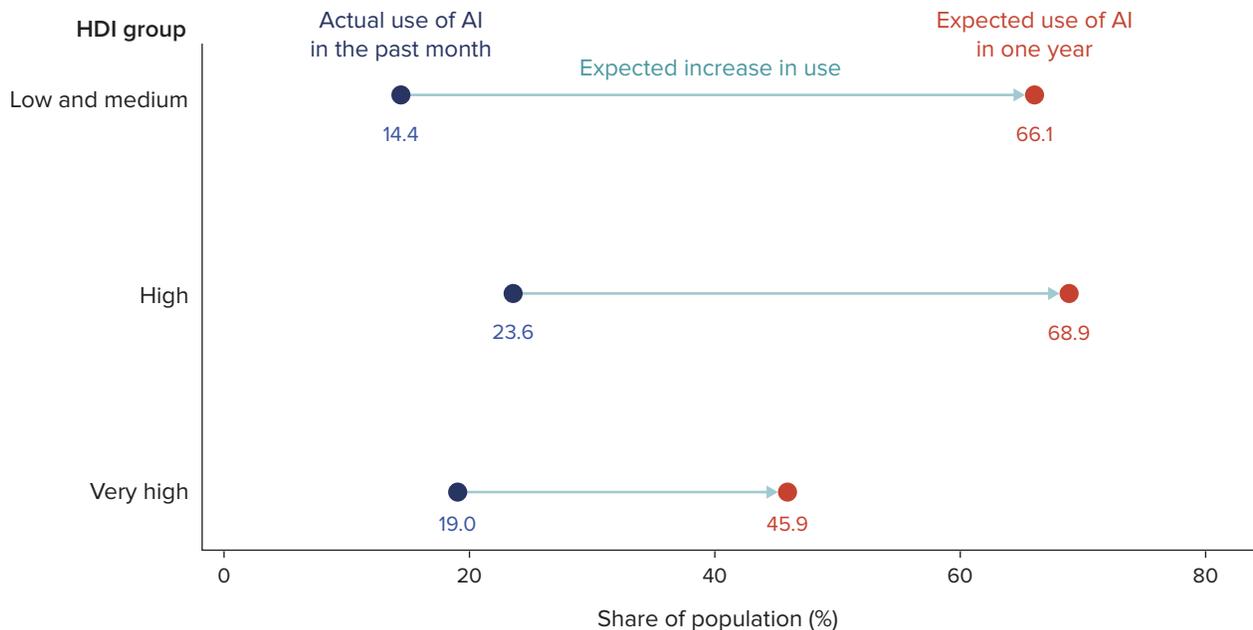
Nevertheless, although nearly 5.5 billion people (nearly two-thirds of the world's population) are now online as of 2024, 2.6 billion still remain offline.¹⁶¹ In landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), only 27% of the population uses the Internet, while nearly 90% of people in developed countries have access to the Internet.¹⁶² Although more women in low- and middle-income countries are using mobile internet than ever before, persistent gender gaps in access prevail, with women still 19% less likely than men to use it, and of the 900 million women offline, nearly two-thirds are concentrated in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, where gender gaps are widest.¹⁶³ To ensure these transitions close rather than widen divides, global efforts must focus on scaling digital public infrastructure, expanding digital finance, and promoting responsible artificial intelligence. When designed inclusively, digital technologies can empower vulnerable groups, strengthen governance, and improve service delivery to eradicate poverty, foment decent jobs and livelihoods, and foster social inclusion.

UNDP has been at the forefront of this transformation. Between 2014 and 2022, UNDP invested nearly USD 4 billion across 578 digitalization projects covering governance, social protection, crisis response, and inclusive growth¹⁶⁴, while supporting over 90 countries in deploying digital legal identity systems, strengthening civil registries, and enabling digital financial services.¹⁶⁵ Platforms such as Digital X, a curated marketplace of digital solutions, and Digital Readiness Assessments have guided governments in building inclusive and rights-based digital ecosystems. This programmatic footprint has been underpinned by UNDP’s successive Digital Strategies, ensuring that technological advances translate into equitable social development gains and actionable solutions for people-centered digital inclusion. Beginning with the 2019 Digital Strategy¹⁶⁶, which established digital as a strategic priority for UNDP’s development offer, followed by the 2022–2025 Digital Strategy¹⁶⁷, which broadened the focus to rights-based approaches, digital public infrastructure, and responsible AI, marking a significant shift from leveraging digital technologies as a tool for efficiency to embedding it as a core accelerator for sustainable development and social inclusion. In addition, UNDP’s 2025 Human Development Report, *A Matter of Choice: People and Possibilities in the Age of AI*, focuses on identifying development pathways that harness AI and digital technologies to accelerate inclusion across economies and societies.¹⁶⁸

In parallel, UNDP has embraced an organizational transformation, evolving into a “digital-first” institution by digitizing internal systems, strengthening staff digital capacity, and scaling innovative partnerships. This dual focus, helping countries accelerate digital transformation while reimagining its own institutional practices, has positioned UNDP as a global leader in people-centered digital inclusion.

FIGURE 7

About two-thirds of survey respondents in low, medium and high Human Development Index countries expect to use artificial intelligence (AI) in education, health and work within one year



Note: Based on pooled data for 21 countries. For actual use in the past month, the following responses to the question, “In the past 30 days, have you ever interacted with artificial intelligence, such as chatbots, in any of the following ways?” were used to calculate the average use of AI for education, health and work: “education” is based on the response “educational platforms of learning apps,” “health” is based on the response “health care services or applications” and “work” is based on the response “work- related tools or software.” For expected use in one year, the following responses to the question, “Over the next 12 months, how likely are you to use an artificial intelligence tool for the following?” were used to calculate the average use of AI for education, health and work: “education” is based on the response “for education and training,” “health” is based on the response “for medical advice” and “work” is based on the response “for work tasks”. Expected increase in use is the difference between expected use in one year and actual use in the past month.

Source: UNDP 2025 Human Development Report

Country Experiences¹⁶⁹

In **Cambodia**, UNDP helped scale the IDPoor system, a digital platform that identifies households in poverty and enables targeted cash transfers. During COVID-19, this system provided rapid relief to 2.7 million people, including many women-headed households and marginalized groups. The program reduced exclusion errors and created the infrastructure for more adaptive social protection, transforming a crisis response into a long-term governance tool. By embedding digital targeting into national social policy, Cambodia demonstrated how inclusive digital platforms can accelerate poverty reduction and resilience. UNDP's direct support for the On-Demand Identification of Poor Households programme led to an additional 289,435 households registering for social assistance benefits since 2020.¹⁷⁰

In **Honduras**, UNDP worked with municipalities to digitize public services and create online citizen engagement platforms. This digital transition reduced processing times for essential documents, such as permits and certificates, from weeks to days, while improving transparency and accountability. The reforms enhanced citizens' trust in local institutions and allowed more equitable access to services, particularly for those in rural or disadvantaged areas. By digitalizing governance at the local level, Honduras not only improved efficiency but also fostered greater social inclusion and participation.

In **Afghanistan**, UNDP and UNCDF introduced digital payments for humanitarian cash transfers in a fragile and high-risk context. More than 15,000 beneficiaries, including nearly 3,000 women, received faster, more secure, and cheaper transfers. Transaction times dropped from seven to two days, and delivery costs fell by 30%. For many women, digital wallets provided safer access to financial resources than cash-based systems, reducing risks of theft and discrimination. This experience shows that even in crisis settings, digital finance can improve dignity, efficiency, and inclusion for vulnerable populations.

In **Moldova**, UNDP supported the government's rollout of the Government e-Transformation Strategy, which digitized core administrative services, including tax declarations, licensing, and civil registries. Citizens gained online access to over 100 public services, reducing travel and wait times while increasing transparency. The digital platform M-Connect integrated government databases, enabling more efficient data sharing and cutting bureaucratic bottlenecks. Importantly, these reforms reduced opportunities for corruption and increased accessibility for rural residents, persons with disabilities, and women entrepreneurs. Moldova's progress highlights how e-governance, when supported by inclusive design, can strengthen trust in public institutions and improve equity in service delivery.

In **Ukraine**, UNDP supported the rapid expansion of the Diia platform, which allowed citizens to access more than 50 public services, including ID cards, business registration, and social benefits, through mobile devices. Amid the ongoing war, this digital platform became a lifeline, enabling displaced persons to receive emergency assistance, register for social protection, and access essential services despite damage to critical physical infrastructure. Over 18 million Ukrainians, nearly half the population, used Diia in 2023, illustrating how digital solutions can sustain governance and service delivery under conditions of conflict and displacement. UNDP's technical and policy support ensured that Diia prioritized inclusivity, protecting privacy, and enabling access for vulnerable populations.

Looking forward, UNDP will continue to harness digital transformation as a core accelerator of social development. The Doha Political Declaration of WSSD2 calls for inclusive, rights-based digital transitions that expand opportunities for all, while the UNDP Strategic Plan 2026–2029 underscores digitalization, alongside green transitions and social resilience, as a key accelerator of prosperity. As UNDP's initiatives on AI and digital transformation expand, it is essential to adopt a people-centred approach (as recognized in the 2025 Human Development Report), since development in the age of AI depends not only on the capabilities of digital systems but also on the choices we enable for people and societies.¹⁷¹ This entails designing digital systems that support agency, fairness, and capability expansion, especially for those marginalized by existing inequalities.

By expanding digital literacy, skills training, and human capital development, UNDP can address the disproportionate risks faced by youth and other vulnerable population groups of exclusion from the digital economy. The HDR further recommends a life-stage approach, acknowledging that digital transformation impacts children, youth, adults, older persons, and people with disabilities differently, so inclusion strategies must be tailored accordingly.¹⁷² UNDP will also need to support countries in undertaking AI landscape assessments, ensuring that AI and its rapid development strengthen social inclusion rather than exacerbating inequalities, while helping governments design policies on training, forecasting, and labour market transitions.

Financing Social Development

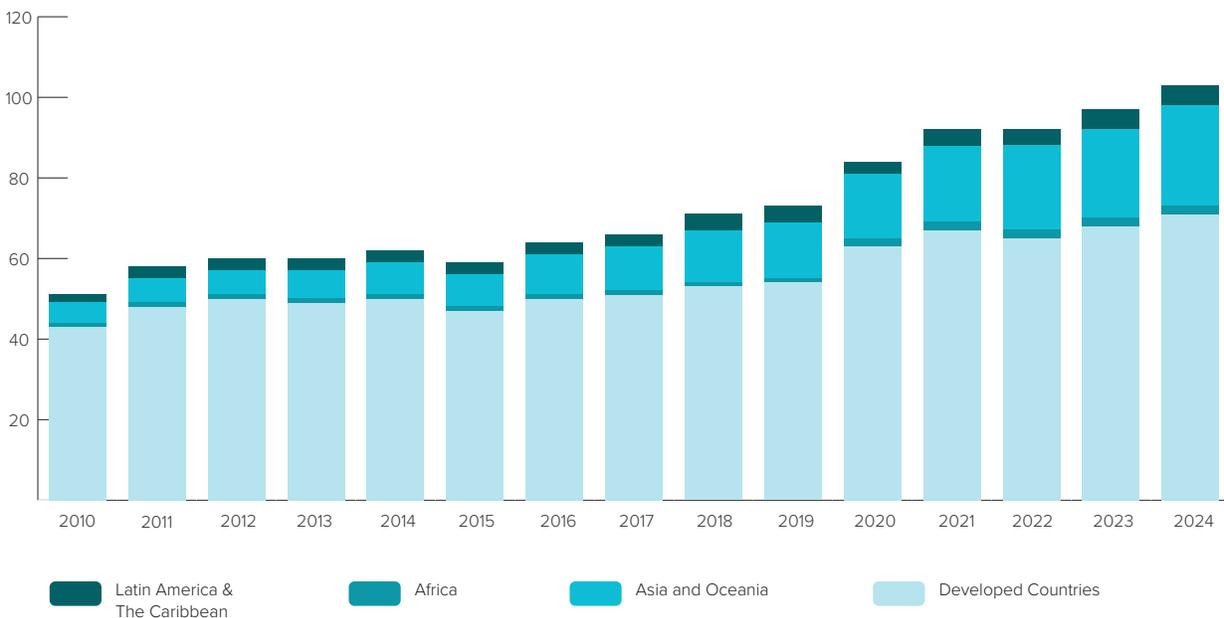
DATA SNAPSHOT

- Since 2010, developing countries' **debt has grown twice as fast** as that of advanced economies¹⁷³
- In 2024, global public debt reached an all-time high of **USD 102 trillion, up from USD 97 trillion in 2023, with 3.4 billion people** now living in countries that spend more on debt interest than on either health or education¹⁷⁴
- While Official Development Assistance (ODA) remains vital, international aid from official donors **fell in 2024 by 7.1%** in real terms compared to 2023, the **first drop after five years** of consecutive growth¹⁷⁵
- The world has surpassed an important milestone: for the first time, more than half the world's population (52.4 per cent) are covered by at least one social protection benefit. Yet, the remaining 47.6 per cent are left unprotected, without access to any social protection¹⁷⁶
- More than **85 countries** have adopted Integrated National Financing Frameworks to align finance with the SDGs (INFF Facility 2024)¹⁷⁷
- Developing countries face a \$4.3 trillion annual financing gap for sustainable development, including \$1.8 trillion for climate needs¹⁷⁸

Over the past thirty years, the financing landscape for social development has evolved dramatically, from the aspirations of the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration, which called for mobilizing resources to eradicate poverty and promote equity, to the 2025 Doha Political Declaration, which urges renewed international cooperation to close widening financing gaps. Despite major advances in global income and financial integration, progress has been uneven. Since 2010, developing countries' debt has grown twice as fast as that of advanced economies (see Fig. 8).¹⁷⁹ In 2024, global public debt reached an all-time high of USD 102 trillion, up from USD 97 trillion in 2023, with 3.4 billion people now living in countries that spend more on debt interest than on either health or education.¹⁸⁰

While Official Development Assistance (ODA) remains vital, international aid from official donors fell in 2024 by 7.1% in real terms compared to 2023, the first drop after five years of consecutive growth.¹⁸¹ Meanwhile, fiscal pressures intensified after successive crises, COVID-19, climate shocks, and geopolitical disruptions, constraining social spending precisely when it is most needed. Nevertheless, it is estimated that developing countries face a \$4.3 trillion annual financing gap for sustainable development, including \$1.8 trillion for climate needs.¹⁸²

The international community has repeatedly reaffirmed that sustainable finance underpins social progress. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) of 2015 established a framework for aligning all sources of finance, public, private, domestic, and international, with the SDGs. Building on this, the Seville Commitment on Financing for Development (2024) and the Doha Declaration (2025) renewed

FIGURE 8**Global Public Debt, by Regions 2012-2024** (in trillions)

Source: UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) calculations based on IMF World Economic Outlook (April 2025).

Note: Figures represent nominal values in current dollars. Public debt refers to general government domestic and external debt throughout the document. General government consists of central, state and local governments and the social security funds controlled by these units.

calls for fairer financial governance, debt relief, strengthened international tax cooperation, and scaled-up concessional finance for the poorest and most vulnerable countries. Together, they recognize that achieving inclusive, people-centered development requires expanding fiscal space for social investments, in education, health, jobs, and protection, through both domestic resource mobilization and global solidarity.

UNDP's Catalytic Role in Financing Transformation

UNDP has been at the forefront of efforts to reshape how development is financed, advancing a vision where finance becomes a strategic enabler of the SDGs. Guided by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and consistent with the Seville Commitment, UNDP supports countries to strengthen public financial management, transparency, and debt sustainability while aligning national budgets with social and environmental outcomes. Its flagship mechanism, the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF), developed with UN DESA, OECD, EU, UNICEF, and others, has become a cornerstone of this work. INFFs help governments connect national development strategies with comprehensive financing plans that mobilize domestic revenue, attract private investment, and optimize public expenditure.

As of 2024, more than 85 countries had embarked on the INFF process, integrating social spending priorities, climate resilience, and gender equality into national financing architectures, with country-led initiatives, typically led by the Ministry of Finance, that bring together stakeholders from across the public sector, private sector, civil society, partners and beyond.¹⁸³ In addition, 13 national and subnational governments have an operational financing strategy, and more than 50 countries are implementing reforms shaped through their INFF.¹⁸⁴ Analysis of reforms implemented by 17 of these countries finds \$16 billion in new finance leveraged for investment in sustainable development and alignment and scope for alignment of more than \$32 billion.¹⁸⁵

Beyond INFFs, UNDP facilitates Development Finance Assessments (DFAs), strengthens public-sector debt management capacities, and promotes gender-responsive and climate-sensitive budgeting. In addition, UNDP Sustainable Finance Hub's Insurance and Risk Finance Facility (IRFF) works across 39 countries in supporting governments, insurance industry partners, and communities in developing innovative insurance and risk financing mechanisms to strengthen the financial resilience of countries, households, businesses, nature, and food systems.¹⁸⁶ UNDP is a founding partner and the administrative host of the Taskforce on Inequality- and Social-related Financial Disclosures (TISFD), which is developing a set of recommendations to advance the integration of inequalities and related system-level risks in such disclosures. TISFD's work will contribute to strengthening corporate leadership and accountability for the role of the private sector in advancing inclusive development as called for in the Seville Commitment. These initiatives translate the principles of Addis Ababa and Seville into practical national reforms and international initiatives that enhance fiscal resilience, accountability, and inclusion, ensuring that finance works for people and the planet, not against them.

Country Experience: - Lesotho: Aligning Finance with Inclusion and Equality

In Lesotho, UNDP's support to the government's INFF, implemented with UNICEF and IOM¹⁸⁷, has helped transform the country's financing architecture amid declining revenues and fiscal constraints. Facing a 3.3 billion maloti financing gap in its National Strategic Development Plan II¹⁸⁸, the INFF process enabled Lesotho to prioritize gender equality, social protection, and climate resilience within its budget frameworks. Building on a 2021 Development Finance Assessment¹⁸⁹ that identified women's economic empowerment as a key lever for sustainable growth, UNDP helped integrate gender-responsive budgeting into core ministries, reform labour regulations, and institutionalize civil-society participation in budget oversight.¹⁹⁰ These efforts have not only mobilized new resources for women- and youth-focused programmes but also strengthened fiscal sustainability and transparency, demonstrating how integrated financing can drive inclusive social transformation.

Other countries have also demonstrated the transformative power of integrated financing: Malawi has linked its INFF to sub-national service delivery and health financing; Kazakhstan is improving the efficiency and governance of public funds; and Burkina Faso is using its INFF to coordinate all internal and external resources in support of national development plans. Together, these examples show that UNDP's financing support is building the fiscal foundations for inclusive growth, social protection, and resilience.

Looking forward, financing social development will remain central to UNDP's mandate and to the delivery of the Doha Declaration and the 2030 Agenda. The UNDP Strategic Plan 2026–2029 identifies Transforming Development Finance as a cross-cutting enabler and positions Effective Governance as a key accelerator for mobilizing and managing resources transparently and equitably. UNDP will continue supporting countries to operationalize INFFs, implement debt-sustainability strategies, and expand innovative financing, such as blended finance, impact investment, and social bonds, to channel resources toward people-centered priorities. It will also promote the principles of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Seville Commitment, advocating for reforms to the global financial architecture that expand fiscal space, enhance debt relief, and strengthen international tax cooperation.

In a world confronting climate stress, demographic shifts, and growing inequalities, the ability of governments to mobilize and allocate finance effectively will determine whether the promise of social development can be fulfilled. UNDP's enduring mission is to ensure that financing becomes the bridge between global ambition and local opportunity, transforming fiscal systems into engines of inclusion, justice, and resilience for all.

Strengthening governance for inclusion and accountability

DATA SNAPSHOT

- **5 billion people** worldwide still lack effective access to justice services, leaving disputes over livelihoods, housing, and land unresolved.
- **18 countries** have enacted restrictions on civic space, constraining freedoms of association, assembly, and expression.
- **1.3 billion people**—or 16% of the global population—live with disabilities, facing unemployment rates **twice the global average**.
- **260+ companies** in Thailand have integrated human rights into their ESG frameworks through UNDP support.
- **61 million people** in Bangladesh now have access to justice through UNDP-supported Village Courts, yielding a benefit–cost ratio of **18:1**.
- **In Nigeria**, the National Human Rights Commission—supported by UNDP—**resolved 200+** cases and trained **2,000 individuals** on rights protection in 2023–2024.
- UNDP’s **Social Innovation Platforms** have engaged **200,000** people across Asia-Pacific in community-driven governance, mobilizing **USD 1.7 million** for local resilience and environmental action.
- Through **Tadamon Crowdfunding Academy**, civil society organizations from **30 Arab States** raised **USD 2.2 million** across **80 campaigns**, strengthening civic participation and transparency.
- UNDP and partners’ Legal Identity for All initiatives in Namibia and Somalia are extending secure ID coverage to vulnerable populations—critical for access to social services, voting rights, and economic participation.
- UNDP’s work on **SDG 16** data with national statistical systems in 100+ countries has improved the measurement of justice, inclusion, and institutional performance—ensuring accountability underpins social development.

UNDP has consistently framed effective, inclusive, and accountable governance as an enabler of social development and its goals of poverty eradication, better employment opportunities, and social inclusion. Without governance systems that mediate competing interests, uphold rights, and deliver opportunities and inclusive, quality public services, these goals cannot be realized. This vision resonates with the Doha Political Declaration of the Second World Summit for Social Development, which reminds us that bold and effective social policies are required to achieve social development for all, and that these can only be realized through people-centered and integrated approaches that are supported by effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Over the past decade, UNDP’s perspective has both broadened and deepened in these directions, understanding governance not only as the engine of the state that delivers goods and services, but also increasingly as the wider ecosystem that shapes trust, participation, resilience, and therefore opportunities. This has meant focusing efforts on areas that ensure the dividends of growth and social policies are shared with everyone, particularly with marginalized groups, while enabling these very groups to drive change. For example, in **Bhutan**¹⁹¹ and **Ethiopia**, UNDP is piloting innovative approaches to reimagine how public infrastructure and services are designed and delivered for, by, and with persons with disabilities, with more than 3,000 people and their households set to benefit from improved access to services.

It has also meant rethinking public finance models, recognizing that increases in revenue are only impactful if systems are accountable and resources are used inclusively and effectively rather than lost

through illicit financial flows or corruption. For instance, in **Namibia**¹⁹², UNDP is supporting the government to build more effective and inclusive e-governance systems that improve access to public goods, reduce corruption risks and ensure resources are redirected toward inclusive social and economic development.

UNDP also works with parliaments to strengthen inclusive representation and align fiscal oversight with just green transitions and social protection through its ParIDeliver initiative. Building on this work, and in collaboration with the Ford Foundation, UNDP has explored how civic participation in Just Energy Transitions can translate into just outcomes, identifying challenges and opportunities that will inform forthcoming guidance and country-level programming. Tools such as the UNDP's **Handbook for Parliamentarians on Advancing the Human Rights and Inclusion of LGBTI**¹⁹³ have also equipped legislators to open decision-making to marginalized voices.

The last decade has seen rising inequality, climate shocks, escalating violence, and shrinking civic space threatening social cohesion worldwide, highlighting governance's role in sustaining the social contract and peace. UNDP has responded by aligning its governance efforts with social development goals, including by empowering marginalized groups to shape and take part in decision-making. In Timor-Leste, this has meant fostering participatory platforms¹⁹⁴ that connect youth and local authorities in inclusive urban planning, strengthening resilience through dialogue, collaborative decision-making, and skills development. In **Kenya**, the **Amkeni Wakenya**¹⁹⁵ initiative has supported more than 400 civil society organizations to engage with governance challenges in the extractive sector, helping communities claim their rights and advance social justice.

In fragile and crisis-affected contexts, governance has also been central to sustaining social development gains. In **Ukraine**, UNDP has established **30 Social Adaptation Spaces**¹⁹⁶ that provide psychosocial support, training, and inclusive services for IDPs and other marginalized groups, while strengthening community-based service delivery through the training of more than 900 local professionals. In Yemen, the EU-UNDP Insider Mediation Project has enabled communities to resolve water-related disputes (one of the main drivers of local conflict) by linking grassroots mediation with national peace strategies and fostering partnerships with local organizations.

Beyond fragile settings, UNDP is also advancing community-driven innovation at scale. Since 2019, **Social Innovation Platforms (SIP) in Asia-Pacific**¹⁹⁷ have supported over 500 villages in Indonesia, Pakistan, and Thailand, and since 2024 have engaged more than 200,000 people across Bangladesh, India, the Maldives, Nepal, and the Philippines under the ADB–UNDP SDG Localization Initiative. SIP has enabled communities to influence planning, budgets, and service priorities, for example mobilizing USD 900,000 for slum resilience in Dhaka and USD 750,000 for environmental initiatives in Dhangadhi.

Across these experiences, UNDP has understood governance as de-risking investments in health, education, jobs, and social protection, ensuring outcomes are equitable, rights-based, and sustainable.

UNDP has made significant investments in advancing the measurement and monitoring of SDG 16, recognizing that reliable governance data are essential for understanding the social conditions that enable or constrain inclusive development. As co-custodian for several global SDG 16 indicators, UNDP works closely with national statistical systems, civil society, and international partners to generate reliable and disaggregated data on participation, inclusion, discrimination, justice, and trust in institutions, the factors that underpin social cohesion and equality. The SDG 16 indicators and complementary measures developed by the Praia Group on Governance Statistics provide governments and partners with tools to assess not only institutional performance but also how governance quality shapes people's opportunities and well-being. By building statistical and institutional capacity, UNDP ensures that commitments to social development are backed by robust evidence and accountability.

By integrating governance statistics into social policy analysis, UNDP's measurement work bridges the gap between institutional performance and human outcomes. Data on access to justice, equality before the law, participation in public life, and perceptions of corruption offer concrete entry points for strengthening the social contract and improving service delivery. When linked with data from health, education, and employment sectors, governance statistics enable a multidimensional understanding of social development, one that connects social outcomes to the quality of governance that sustains them. Governance is thus seen both as a goal in its own right and as a multiplier for all other social development goals, advancing a framework in which progress in governance and social development are mutually reinforcing and fully aligned with the vision set out in Doha.

Other Examples

In **Panama**, innovative applications of artificial intelligence¹⁹⁸ have been used to facilitate collaborative urban planning. In **Colombia**, foresight approaches¹⁹⁹ have allowed youth and public institutions to jointly imagine more inclusive and sustainable governance scenarios.

In **Mexico**, UNDP's support has strengthened mechanisms for indigenous consultation.²⁰⁰

In the **Arab States**, programs like the **Tadamon Crowdfunding Academy**²⁰¹ supported CSOs from 30 countries to raise over \$2.2 million through more than 80 crowdfunding campaigns, fostering the sustainability of civil society organizations.

Afghanistan: Since 2021, UNDP and partners have reached 25 million people across Afghanistan through integrated, area-based recovery efforts that restore essential services, revive small business and create livelihood opportunities. These initiatives have delivered clean energy, healthcare, education and emergency employment in some of the country's most vulnerable provinces, helping strengthen community resilience in a complex and fragile context.²⁰²

Lebanon: In response to the prolonged Syrian crisis and the significant influx of refugees, UNDP supported 245 refugee-hosting municipalities to address growing social and economic pressures. By partnering with local governments, communities and businesses, UNDP and partners expanded access to basic services and livelihood opportunities, benefitting over 2.9 million people. Integrated local development plans focused on the poorest areas, applying participatory and conflict-sensitive approaches to foster social cohesions, service delivery and economic recovery. UNDP also advised on social development policies and completed a rapid poverty assessment to strengthen institutional responses.²⁰³

Peru: Amid a challenging context, UNDP launched Weaving Citizenship in Peru—an innovative approach to bring diverse voices together, foster dialogue in times of crisis, and build consensus toward new social pacts. The goal was clear: rebuild citizen trust, prevent violence, and open spaces for civic activism. But the most powerful impact came along the way. Young people, women, and Indigenous communities from the Peruvian Amazon—groups traditionally excluded from public debate—found a space to speak and be heard. Universities became the epicenter of this transformation. There, over 600 young people and local civil society organizations gathered to exchange ideas, disagree respectfully, and co-create solutions. Local media and vulnerable populations also joined, creating a plural and representative environment. In total, 1,392 participants from 310 organizations across the public and private sectors, civil society, academia, and media took part in the dialogues. Together, they shaped a 12-topic agenda rooted in territorial realities: insecurity, corruption, social conflict, health, education, migration, productivity, competitiveness and innovation, disaster risk management, freedom of expression, environment, political representation, employment, and informality. Throughout these conversations, 89 concrete challenges were identified, along with 76 proposed solutions. Difficult contexts like the current one—with high levels of distrust and polarization—require greater efforts to create safe

spaces that bring people together, foster dialogue, and encourage mutual listening in the hope of reaching consensus. Weaving Citizenship represents a step in that direction.

Mali: UNDP is strengthening effective governance and social inclusion through its Insider Mediation approach, which supports traditional land commissions (COFOs) to resolve intercommunal tensions and land disputes. By providing advocacy, training, and financial support, UNDP enabled COFOs to resolve 31 local conflicts in 2025. The initiative also fostered collaboration between customary and formal justice systems, with courts in Niore integrating insider mediators into legal processes. This locally led model enhances access to justice, promotes inclusive governance, and builds community resilience in fragile settings.

In **Nepal**, young people are shaping local climate governance through structured platforms like Youth Advisory Committees (YACs). In Madi municipality, the YAC successfully contributed to amend two critical policies: the Madi Municipality's Sanitation Procedure 2076 BS and the Madi Municipality's Disaster Risk Reduction Act 2075 BS to address youth-specific needs and disaster-related challenges better, marking a breakthrough in inclusive, localized policy reform. Through the Youth Empowerment in Climate Action Platform (YECAP), these youth leaders were further equipped with advocacy tools and capacity-building support, enabling them to influence governance processes and embed climate adaptation strategies into municipal law.

The **Regional Youth Parliament on Climate Action (RYPCA)**, made possible through YECAP, was created to bring youth leaders into climate governance spaces across Asia and the Pacific to strategize, identify entry points, and advance youth-inclusive climate governance in their countries. It brought together 15 young parliamentarians, civil servants, and youth advisors to share strategies and challenges in navigating climate governance. This was part of a broader engagement that received over 900 youth applications, alongside 1,400+ youth completing certified learning tracks on Climate Governance & Youth Participation, Climate Security, and Climate Justice, fostering more informed and engaged youth leadership across the region. In a digital engagement on climate governance, over 1,000 youth across 35 countries shared their perspectives on the enablers that make meaningful participation possible and ensure voices in the room, around the room, and outside the room are represented.

Co-created in 2017 by UNDP and Citi Foundation, **Youth Co:Lab** is the largest youth social entrepreneurship movement in the Asia-Pacific. It aims to establish a common agenda for countries in the APAC region to invest in youth, accelerating the achievement of the SDGs through leadership, social innovation, and entrepreneurship.

- Reached over 300,000 young people across 28 countries and territories in Asia-Pacific
- Supported 28,000+ young people through national innovation activities and helped create or strengthen 3,200 youth-led startups and social enterprises.
- Mobilized over 1,000 local and regional partners across the region to advance the youth empowerment agenda and built the capacity of 100+ incubators and accelerators across the region, making entrepreneurship support services more inclusive and accessible for youth.
- Supported 25 governments, ministries, and national institutions to co-develop ecosystem diagnostics, policy mappings, and localized insights that serve as strategic intelligence hubs to support evidence-based decision-making by identifying systemic barriers, revealing investment gaps, and uncovering opportunities for youth-led innovation.

In **Bangladesh**, investment in village courts yielded benefit–cost ratios of up to 18:1 (i.e. 18 dollars in economic and social benefits for every 1 dollar invested). UNDP helped establish village courts in 66% of local government units, increasing access to justice for 61 million rural residents. These initiatives can unlock wider development progress by resolving legal barriers to health, education, livelihoods, or economic participation (for example through civil documentation, access to alimony, or land rights).²⁰⁴

In **Namibia** and **Somalia** UNDP is contributing to an important enabler for social development: the advancement of a ‘Legal Identity for All’ (LIA) agenda. To this end, it is leveraging digital technologies as a means to facilitate the safe and reliable mass registration of vulnerable populations in the national ID system, providing ‘proofs of concept’ (including innovative modalities of delivery) that other partners, such as the national government and the World Bank, can help scale up. These initiatives, in turn, will pave the way for improved access to basic public services, greater economic inclusion and more robust safeguards to protect the human rights of vulnerable populations (including IDPs and refugees).

UNDP’s support to **Nigeria’s National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)** has reinforced its role as the country’s primary guardian of rights, enabling stronger protection, monitoring, and advocacy across multiple fronts. Between 2023 and 2024, the NHRC launched a Human Rights Monthly Dashboard and Observatory, providing real-time data on violations, including gender-based violence, and significantly enhancing transparency and accountability. State-level Business and Human Rights forums created new working groups that link economic governance with rights protection, embedding human rights standards into trade, investment, and business practices. Public advocacy campaigns and interactive forums with the military, police, and civil society expanded awareness of rights protections for thousands of community members, while satisfaction surveys demonstrated growing public trust in the Commission’s work. Alongside these institutional gains, the NHRC also exercised its quasi-judicial mandate to resolve over 200 human rights cases and trained more than 2,000 people on complaint procedures and remedies. This integrated approach shows how UNDP support can help NHRIs not only broaden access to justice but also consolidate a culture of human rights that underpins inclusive and sustainable social development.

UNDP’s support to the **Public Defender’s Office (PDO) in Georgia** has strengthened the protection and promotion of fundamental rights by positioning access to safe water as a human right. In 2024, the PDO developed a special report on the right to water, setting out ten rights-based recommendations to Parliament, central government, and local self-governments to guide policy reform and accountability. More than 300 community members, including women, older persons, and marginalized groups, engaged in consultations that ensured their lived experiences informed national-level findings and recommendations. The initiative also enhanced institutional expertise, with over 20 PDO staff trained in water-related rights and equipped with monitoring tools to sustain rights-based oversight. By reframing access to water as an enforceable right rather than a service provision issue, the project has helped build stronger accountability mechanisms and empowered communities to claim entitlements essential for social inclusion, resilience, and equitable development.

Looking Ahead: Delivering on the WSSD2 Commitments

Despite significant progress on human development over the past three decades, continued progress remains fragile with our world facing growing inequalities, conflict, economic uncertainties, geopolitical tensions and trade barriers, digital disruption, demographic transitions, and the climate crisis. Thirty years after WSSD in Copenhagen, the Doha Political Declaration of WSSD2 (2025) renews the world's commitment to putting people at the center of development through the three core pillars of social development, namely eradicating poverty, achieving full and productive employment, and fostering social integration.

Moreover, the Doha Political Declaration reaffirms these principles in today's multidimensional risks and interconnected challenges, calling for a renewed social compact that protects people from shocks, rebuilds trust in institutions, and ensures that digital, demographic, and green transitions work for everyone. The Declaration also places a strong emphasis on addressing food security and health, leveraging digital transformation and AI for inclusion, strengthening resilience against shocks and crises, achieving gender equality, and streamlining financing for social development.

UNDP's engagement over the past three decades has shown transformative results in advancing social development through integrated solutions, and a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, linking governance, financing, and inclusion to advance people-centered development. Acting as an integrator across the UN system and working with governments, international financial institutions, the private sector, and civil society, UNDP has supported countries to translate global commitments into coherent national strategies on social development. In addition to pioneering thought leadership on redefining progress beyond GDP through its Human Development Reports since 1990, UNDP has supported countries and regions in implementing lasting solutions across multiple dimensions of social development, poverty reduction to rights and inclusion, decent jobs and livelihoods, social protection and health resilience, digital transformation, innovative and sustainable financing, and effective, accountable governance. Moreover, UNDP has demonstrated how integrated approaches can generate transformative results for people and societies.

Delivering the WSSD2 commitments will also depend on how effectively global partnerships translate vision into results. UNDP will continue to play a central role in this effort, working closely with the UN Commission for Social Development to monitor follow-up and ensure that the Doha Declaration informs national policies and multilateral dialogues. Aligned with the priorities of Copenhagen and the Doha Political Declaration, the UNDP Strategic Plan 2026 – 2029 places a strong emphasis on ensuring prosperity for all, effective governance, crisis resilience, and a healthy planet, while leveraging AI and digital transformation, fomenting gender equality, and mobilizing public and private capital for inclusive and sustainable development.

Building on these priorities, UNDP will scale its support to help countries accelerate financing and innovation for social development. Through initiatives such as Integrated National Financing Frameworks, green bonds, blended finance, and the Insurance and Risk Finance Facility, UNDP will help countries mobilize sustainable finance and unlock new resources for social development investments. UNDP will harness digital and AI-driven technologies to close divides, improve access to services, and

expand skills development and opportunities, ensuring that new technologies become instruments of inclusion rather than widening digital inequalities. At the same time, UNDP will work with governments to build integrated social protection systems that safeguard people from shocks, strengthen resilience, reduce vulnerability, and create inclusive pathways for prosperity. Underpinning all these efforts will be rights-based, participatory governance, ensuring that institutions are transparent, accountable, and responsive to citizens' needs.

The road ahead requires collective resolve. Achieving the ambition of Doha and advancing social development well beyond 2030 will depend on a renewed global compact, one that mobilizes financing, technology, and solidarity at scale. UNDP calls for a whole-of-society approach for social development, bringing together governments, businesses, workers, youth, and communities to co-create inclusive and resilient futures. As the world enters a new era of complexity and interdependence, the mission first articulated in Copenhagen, to ensure that every person can live in dignity, security, and equality, remains unfinished. The Doha Declaration gives that vision renewed clarity and urgency. Through its partnerships, expertise, and on-the-ground presence in over 170 countries, UNDP stands ready to continuously support people and societies in navigating multifaceted challenges and translating social development priorities and commitments into transformative action towards lasting progress.

ENDNOTES

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