

**Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the
Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027)**

ECE contribution

Still insufficient progress in advancing SDG poverty targets

The 2023 SDG progress report prepared by ECE showed that, with the exception of extreme poverty and access to basic services, targets to reduce poverty and income inequality are not on track to be achieved by 2030. The share of people living in poverty according to national definitions is decreasing in most ECE countries, but not quickly enough (target 1.2). In one third of countries with data, more than 20 per cent of the population still lives below the income poverty threshold (indicator 1.2.1). Measures of multidimensional poverty (indicator 1.2.2) consider various aspects of deprivation and indicate that the share of people experiencing poverty is higher than measured on the basis of income only. Those at the highest risk of poverty, such as persons with disabilities and families with young children, are well covered by social protection in the ECE region (indicator 1.3.1), but not everyone who would benefit from this type of support is receiving it. Across ECE countries, less than half of unemployed persons receive cash benefits (indicator 1.3.1).

The war in Ukraine has derailed progress in the countries directly affected and beyond, given the general deterioration in economic performance. Food and energy inflation, which have a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable, has undermined efforts to reduce poverty and improve living standards.

Human capacity development: addressing the non-income forms of poverty

Buildings have the largest potential for improving energy efficiency and mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. Decarbonizing the housing stock is very costly and creates a financial burden on inhabitants, often causing “energy poverty” among the lower-income population. In the ECE region, which includes most of the advanced countries in the world, almost 42 million people face arrears on their utility bills and more than 52 million people cannot keep their homes adequately warm. There is a need for implementing large-scale housing renovation programmes that are affordable for all. The UNECE-Housing Europe-UN-Habitat study ““#Housing2030: Effective policies for affordable housing in the UNECE region” contains a toolkit on affordable climate-neutral housing which can be used in mitigating potential negative social impacts of decarbonization strategies on

vulnerable sections of the society, particularly young people.

In the ECE region there are approximately 50 million people living in informal settlements, with a large percentage of them in the Southern and Eastern subregions. These settlements typically have dense populations, limited services such as water supply and sanitation, inadequate transport, unregistered residents, unsuitable housing with insecure tenure, and unregistered land rights. ECE has developed a COVID-19 Recovery Action Plan for Informal Settlements in the UNECE Region (Recovery Action Plan), which deals with both the challenges created by the pandemic and the pre-existing ones.

The future of food and sustainable agriculture

Higher energy prices and rising costs for other agricultural inputs, such as fertilisers, have created tensions in many countries in the region. In Georgia, significant energy price increases had a negative impact on food production capabilities and costs, thus weakening the competitiveness of producers and increasing their vulnerability. Reducing energy consumption by improving the efficiency of food production can help to reduce these pressures, while enabling producers and processors to ensure food safety and reduce their carbon footprint. In 2022-23, ECE assessed energy consumption by small businesses in rural areas of Georgia and produced recommendations to reduce energy costs and improve energy efficiency. This project was requested by the Government of Georgia to analyze the implications of the war in Ukraine on food and energy security, as well as poverty.

Reducing inequalities

In the ECE region, women are at a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion than men across all age groups, and the gender gap is largest among older persons. Inequality in older age is related to accumulated disadvantages in the labour market throughout the lifespan. One way to prevent and address these gender disparities is to promote technology skills and access for women of all ages. ECE work seeks to address generation and gender gaps in the region. In today's digital world, gender equality will not be achieved without bridging the digital divide. The 2022 Rome Ministerial Declaration calls on ECE member States to work towards age-friendly digitalization, enhance digital

skills and literacy among older persons, and ensure rights to access information and services through digital devices.

Modalities of Delivery: Building Momentum, Tracking Progress, Learning Lessons, Identifying Emerging Issues And Adapting Actions- Poverty measurement

ECE works on the measurement of poverty, understood as a multidimensional phenomenon, including through the group of the ECE Group of Experts on Measuring Poverty and Inequality. Topics under consideration over the last year included social policies and data, asset-based poverty and inequality, subjective poverty, use of alternative data sources, impact of global shocks on poverty and inequality and how to communicate statistics on poverty and inequality.

The COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, high energy prices, and rising inflation have impacted socioeconomic conditions across the region, bringing increased demand and new challenges for producing timely and relevant data and statistics on poverty, inequality, and economic wellbeing. Methods employed to meet policy, advocacy and other needs have been changing rapidly to meet those emerging demands.

Individuals missing from official statistics are also those who are most likely to be at risk of poverty and social exclusion. For example, those with the lowest incomes may not file taxes and are therefore excluded from tax records. Likewise, many income and living conditions surveys enumerate only people in private households, excluding vulnerable institutional populations. This prompts the need to look for alternative sources.

Non-income dimensions of economic well-being in measures of poverty and risk of poverty, such as assets, are important, as they provide a safety net for unexpected income changes. However, there are significant measurement challenges. In high-income countries, financial assets are more relevant but data on financial assets are often imperfect. In low- and middle-income countries, non-financial or real assets are more relevant, but few countries gather data on property ownership. ECE has explored ways in which these challenges can be addressed.