

REGIONAL FORUM

ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE UNECE REGION

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POVERTY



Preparing social protection systems to respond to the poverty impacts of the climate crisis and green transitions

As of 6 March

Wednesday 13 March 2024, 15:00 – 18:00

Palais des Nations, Room XXVI

Background / Scenario

In the European and Central Asian region, the climate crisis, in addition to a number of other drivers like inequality, limited access to quality education and/or healthcare for example, is increasingly having an impact on the incidence and severity of poverty. Multiple crises such as displacement, natural disasters, conflict, increase in food and energy prices, amid persistent inflationary pressures, are threatening progress on SDG 1 and the global development agenda more broadly. A number of transitions must be prepared for to ensure they are equitable and leave no one behind. Integrated approaches like the UN Global Accelerator and other High Impact Initiatives, can provide policy changes to address green, digital, and social transitions.

Economic, social and health inequalities between rural and urban areas are also a growing issue and will be exacerbated by the climate crisis. Rural areas face critical challenges in the context of rapid urbanisation and population migration. These include digital connectivity, more limited infrastructure and services than cities, ageing populations, and the outward migration of young people. This context drives other challenges from health to livelihood insecurity, limited opportunities for education and potential loss of trust in institutions.

In cities, challenges like growing inequality, urban sprawl/unplanned development, and rising air pollution continue to impact household well-being, disproportionately impacting populations that are already economically or socially disadvantaged. There are also sub-regional disparities, in part driven by a changing climate and economic transitions, which have the potential to not only drive an increase in poverty but to increase conflict (e.g., disputes over scarce water).

This round table will allow participants to learn from each other and share information on the best ways to address the growing poverty impacts of the climate crisis in the region as well as explore the synergies and inevitable trade-offs of policies to accelerate progress towards meeting SDG 1.

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Guiding Questions:

Theme 1: Agile social protection systems to respond to crises

1. Social protection has a critical role to play in lessening the risks and impacts of climate change.
 - a. What lessons can you share in successfully putting social protection on the agenda for effective prevention and response to rising poverty in the face of climate change?
 - b. In your experience, what are the priority actions that need to be undertaken to ensure that social protection systems have the capacity to respond effectively to shocks and stresses of all kinds to prevent poverty?
2. Protecting and strengthening the resilience of countries in the region to the impacts of climate crisis will require substantial investments. However, it is far outweighed by the cost of inaction or delayed investments.
 - a. What can be done to finance social protection programs that build resilience and mitigate the risks of climate crisis to protect individuals and communities from poverty?
 - b. How are countries financing the investments required to adapt social protection systems to a changing climate?
 - c. How, if at all, are they leveraging existing climate finance mechanisms, such as the Loss and Damage fund, or institutional investors, funding to pursue critical reforms and/or support particularly climate-vulnerable individuals and communities?
3. How can coherent social protection and employment policies help people transition from brown to green jobs or from unsustainable/climate-vulnerable livelihoods to more resilient livelihoods?

Theme 2: Unequal poverty impacts of transitions

4. Women and girls will invariably bear the brunt of the climate crisis and necessary socio-economic adjustments for a green transition. How can we ensure that social protection is gender-responsive whilst mitigating the climate crisis and supporting a green transition too?
5. The climate crisis can reinforce existing intergenerational and geographic inequalities. How can we ensure that transitions are age, equity and geographically 'proofed'?

Programme

Moderator:

- **Mr. Paul Ladd**, Director, UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)

Speakers:

- **Ms. Nurana Hasanova**, Deputy Head of the Social Protection Policy Department of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, Azerbaijan
- **Mr. Khurshid Zafari**, Director of the Institute for Development of Social Protection under the National Agency for Social Protection, Uzbekistan
- **Ms. Ema Meçaj**, Youth activist and representative of the United Nations in Albania Youth Advisory Group (UN YAG)
- Civil Society representative *tbc* (ECE-RCEM)

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15:00 – 15:15	Welcome and setting the scene
	Theme 1: Agile social protection systems to respond to crises
15:15 – 16:00	Moderated interventions from speakers
16:00 – 16:30	Interactions within the panel and interventions from the floor
16:30 – 16:45	Health Break
	Theme 2: Unequal poverty impacts of transitions
16:45 – 17:15	Moderated interventions from speakers
17:15 – 17:45	Interactions within the panel and interventions from the floor
17:45 – 18:00	Concluding remarks, key messages and closing

Organized by the Issue-based Coalition on Social Protection for Europe and Central Asia (Co-Chairs: ILO, UNICEF, UNDP, WHO).