



UN Commission on Social Development

In February 2026 the **UN Commission on Social Development**, composed of representatives of the 46 countries making up the Commission and tasked with the monitoring of this aspect of the **UN’s development work** met in New York. Elected by ECOSOC for 4 year terms and spanning all the regions of the world, the Commission focuses on improving human well-being, social equity, and inclusion and tackles issues relating to **poverty eradication, productive employment, and social inclusion**. Over a period of 10 days they addressed the 2026 priority theme: **Advancing Social Development and Social Justice through Coordinated, Equitable, and Inclusive Policies**. In this issue of News from the UN we share some ‘echoes’ from key events attended during the Commission.

Social protection

Social protection or social security is considered by the UN to be a **universal human right**. It consists of policies and programs designed to reduce or prevent poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion throughout a person's life. These measures ensure access to essential services and income security to cover risks associated with shocks at critical moments from childhood to old age. They include measures such as unemployment benefits, health insurance, disability allowances and pension benefits. → Watch [the video](#).



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Social Protection Gaps

- Only **52.4%** of the world's population is covered by at least one social protection benefit but **47.6%** of the global population are entirely unprotected
- While **high-income countries** often provide broad coverage (**85.9%**), only **9.7%** of people in **low-income countries** have access.
- Approximately **7 out of 10 children** in the world lack social protection coverage. Low-income nations increased coverage from **4.5%** in 2015 to **8.7%** in 2023.
- **2 billion women and girls** lack any access to social protection.

Addressing Homelessness through Inclusive Social Protection



Image by Apollo22 from Pixabag

On February 12, the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the UN, in conjunction with the **International Presentation Association** and the **NGO Working Group to End Homelessness** hosted a virtual side event at CSocD64, *Upholding Human Dignity: Addressing Homelessness through Inclusive Social Protection*. Participants were reminded that all member states renewed their commitments to the **Copenhagen Declaration** and **Doha Political Declaration** including ending homelessness. All panelists agreed that recognition of the inherent dignity, value and worth of every human being is central to these agreements and is the foundation for justice and peace.


According to the UN, over **2.8 billion people** lack adequate housing and over **318 million people** worldwide are **completely homeless**. However, homelessness can't be addressed in a vacuum. It intersects with other issues such as poverty, income inequality, gender inequality, decent work, migration and climate change. However, as one person who has experienced homelessness said, the solution must always start with “**housing first**.” Once a person is housed, other issues can be addressed. Attitudes must shift from from “**managing**” homelessness to **preventing** it, and not to view providing housing as an economic burden but rather as an investment in both individuals and society. Housing must be viewed as a basic human right. → [Read more](#)

Building Just and Resilient Societies through Social Protection, Early Childhood Care & Education

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) affirms children’s right to life, to full development and to thrive. During a CSocD 64 side event hosted by several organizations including the **World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP)** and the **NGO Committee on Migration**, several panelists discussed how integrated social protection and **early childhood care and education (ECCE)** can safeguard children’s rights, reduce inequalities and strengthen families from birth. Amid rising displacement and other global crises, investing in universal, family-centered policies has never been more critical for **building resilient, peaceful and cohesive societies**.



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(contd.) According to OMEP, **children under 18 represent 30%** of the world's population; and are disproportionately impacted by overlapping crises, including climate change, forced displacement, poverty, conflict, trafficking and health emergencies. Dr. Catherine Brick, Professor of Anthropology, Health and Global Affairs at Yale, stated that children's early experiences, including toxic stress, are embedded in their genomes and persist across generations. Fragmented responses to chronic stress and prolonged adversity don't help. Holistic action and policies promoting reliability, integration and focus on family systems are needed.  [Read more.....](#)

Two examples of systemic solutions that could help include a universal cash benefit for children and an intercultural framework approach to **ECCE**. A universal cash benefit for children that would address poverty, promote socio-economic development and save lives. Prior to April 2025, 58 countries had some form of this benefit. Recognizing forced migration as a global issue, an intercultural approach to ECCE could help counter the global North's monolingual, Eurocentric, colonialist framework perpetuating marginalization and exclusion. As educators are often some of the first to serve children of immigrants, there is a need for more inclusive and culturally sensitive approaches.

Civil Society Forum

The Civil Society Forum was a highlight of the annual **Commission for Social Development (CSocD64)** at the UN this year. Fresh off the conclusion of the **Second World Summit for Social Development held in Doha, Qatar in November**, representatives reaffirmed member states' commitments to eradicate poverty, expand universal social protections, promote decent work and inclusion and strengthen the connection between social justice peace and sustainable development. Panelists addressing **different SDGs** agreed that the time has come to act on these commitments.



Credit: RSHM

Stefano Guerra, First Councilor of the Mission of Portugal to the United Nations was elected Chair of the forthcoming **65th session of the Commission**.

While progress has been made towards some goals, progress towards other goals is falling behind. Barriers include aging populations, technological changes, climate impact, debt burdens, as well as war and conflict. Clearly, fragmented approaches to individual issues do not work. Political will is needed for governments to work together with civil society, communities and businesses to implement systemic changes. For example, **South Africa had incorporated universal social protection** into its Constitution. Additionally, a shift in narrative is needed. Solutions must be people-centered. Social development is an investment not a cost. Social protection and care systems hold society together. Civil Society feels the tension between the **"words"** and the **lived reality**. With less than four years left to achieve the target date of 2030 for the **Sustainable Development Goals**, inclusion must become routine – not the exception.



Credit: RSHM


The Lessons of Silence : Between Fear and Hope

Colegio Sagrado Coração de Maria in Fatima commemorated **International Holocaust Remembrance Day** in a meaningful way this year. AS a school that prioritises the holistic education of its pupils, they undertook a special project designed to learn the **lessons of silence**. Input from experts expanded the students' understanding of the Holocaust and a 9th grade display project recalling the victims of the Holocaust and concrete details of

their lives helped to bring home the lessons. The social media post noted:

"There are silences that disarm us. Between fear and hope, we choose to be the voice that rises against discrimination. We are moved by the belief that we can be multiple colors, multiple religions, but one humanity. We learned that the world we want to build is in our hands. We were all challenged to be seeders of peace and not look at others with indifference. Because all lives matter! Because from the lessons of silence, we learned that



the world we want to build is in our hands. We prayed with confidence that the future we now build will be better."  [Read more.....](#)

Distribution

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