



Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

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Purview:

The [Economic and Social Council](#) is the principal United Nations organ responsible for coordinating economic, social and related works of 14 specialized agencies, 10 functional commissions and 5 regional commissions. ECOSOC accepts reports and recommendations from other United Nations bodies, including the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). Along with its coordinating role, ECOSOC gathers information and advises Member States on economic, social, humanitarian and human rights programs. ECOSOC also

coordinates between and collaborates with autonomous specialized agencies that work closely with the United Nations. These organizations include multilateral financial and trade institutions, such as the World Bank and the World Trade Organization.

Topics:

Strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all

Ever since the goal of achieving sustainable development for all was established at the [1992 Earth Summit](#), eradicating poverty has played an integral role in United Nations actions on this issue. The United Nations definition of poverty is multifaceted and includes more factors than a lack of wealth; it also includes other considerations such as hunger and malnutrition, access to public goods, social discrimination, and a lack of participation in decision-making. Despite progress since the Earth Summit, today about 8 percent of the global population [lives in extreme poverty](#)—making less than \$1.90 a day—even among those with a job. Poverty is also not distributed equally. Nearly one in five children live in extreme poverty. Women are [more likely to be living in poverty than men](#), and circumstances surrounding poverty impact women and men in different ways. As the Economic and Social Council coordinates economic, social and other related works of several specialized agencies in the United Nations system, the Council is well-suited to address the many facets of poverty. With respect to the Sustainable Development Goals, the Council oversees the results of past conferences and disseminating historical knowledge, particularly lessons learned under the previous Millennium Development Goals.

Since the turn of the century, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have guided United Nations development strategy. These programs, representing development goals for the 2000-2015 and 2015-2030 time periods respectively, both place the eradication of poverty as their [number one priority](#). However, the MDGs were adopted by the General Assembly in 2000 through a resolution that simply outlined the goals and values driving these goals without explicit directives for implementation. MDG1, [“Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger,”](#) included three targets to measure progress: reduce extreme poverty rates to below half of their 1990 levels,

achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, and reduce hunger rates to below half of their 1990 levels. These targets had varying success—in part because the MDGs outlined goals and values without providing explicit directives for implementation. Member States were successful at reducing global extreme poverty by half by 2010—five years ahead of schedule. Despite this, significant inequality still exists. Poverty remains most pervasive in [Southern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa](#), with the latter being the only region to not meet the target.

Progress on ensuring employment was rather mixed, with large setbacks due to the global economic crisis in 2007. The global employment rate dropped slightly between 1991 and 2015, and developing regions saw a larger drop than developed ones. Global youth have also seen job opportunities diminish, as employment rates for men and women between the ages of 15 and 24 dropped by 20 percent over that time period, although some of this drop can be attributed to more young people deciding to stay in school. Other measures of employment quality—such as reductions in the number of the working poor and prevalence of vulnerable employment—showed a more optimistic picture, however. In the [final MDG report](#), then-Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon reported that climate change and other environmental factors undermined the progress achieved in the global community, with poor people suffering the most, underscoring the fact that poverty and sustainable development are necessarily interlinked.

In 2012, at the twenty-year follow-up meeting to the Earth Summit, the United Nations set a vision for development after the MDGs in its document “[The future we want](#).” With the conclusion of the MDGs in 2015, the international community agreed to a series of landmark decisions regarding sustainable development: the [adoption of the SDGs](#), the [Addis Ababa Action Agenda](#), the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) and the [Paris Agreement on Climate Change](#). The SDGs were designed to build upon the successes of the MDGs and to address their shortcomings. The MDGs were often criticized for [not adequately including the developing world in negotiations](#) and [focusing on country, region and global averages](#). In contrast, the United Nations developed the SDGs in a [series of public workshops](#) from 2012 to 2015, and the wording of the goals and targets places much higher focus on the role of communities and governments. For example, the first SDG, “[end poverty in all forms everywhere](#),” targets halving the number—rather than the proportion—of people in poverty, and ensuring that all people have access to national social protection systems.

Current projections show the world is [not on track](#) to meet the poverty eradication goals, as the impoverished population continues to stay steady or even grow in dozens of countries. The SDG targets and indicators describe potential strategies going forward. Strong public institutions—and access to them—were shown to be [instrumental in poverty reduction](#) during the MDG period.

At their 2018 meeting, the Economic and Social Council [discussed the promotion](#) of equal access to public services, such as education and health care, and the importance of public participation in all-levels of government for achieving it. In addition, the Council emphasized the importance of pursuing economic policies that balance job creation, investment and social protection. Job creation is an integral part of ensuring poverty reduction; an estimated [600 million jobs](#) will be needed by 2030 to accommodate the growing global youth population. Further, as climate change intensifies, Member States will face increasingly serious environmental effects with unique consequences based on many factors, from geographic location to economic situation. Global poverty reduction strategies must take all of these factors into account, while further ensuring that national ownership of States' development is maintained.

Questions to consider from your country's perspective include the following:

- How can the United Nations facilitate regional cooperation in eradicating poverty?
- What effects will climate change have on poverty eradication?
- How can Member States stimulate sufficient job creation in order to achieve SDG 1?

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[Top ↑](#)

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[Top ↑](#)

Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

The conflict over the Occupied Palestinian Territories disproportionately affects those groups at the margins of society. [Women are especially vulnerable](#) to the consequences of conflict, due to decreased access to health services, increased prevalence of gender based violence and lack of opportunities for women in the region to gain social mobility. All of these issues are perpetuated not only by the conflict, but also by societal attitudes towards women and by a lack of basic infrastructure and services. Nearly a quarter of married Palestinian women reported experiencing [domestic violence in 2005](#) and over three in five experienced psychological violence that same year. However, the [United Nations](#) has [repeatedly](#) cited the [Israeli occupation of Palestine](#) as the primary factor in exacerbating the plight of Palestinian women. 10 percent of pregnant women spent 2-4 hours on the road before reaching a medical centre or a hospital, while 6 percent spent more than four hours, delays the Palestinian Ministry of Health attributes at least partially to Israeli checkpoints. This hardship is estimated to have contributed to an 8.2 percent increase of home deliveries. In early 2019, the Gaza Ministry of Health reported that health services in the Gaza Strip were [on the verge of collapse](#) due to energy shortages, Palestinian political divides and the Gaza blockade.

United Nations humanitarian work in Palestine dates back to the aftermath of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and the founding of the [United Nations Reliefs and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees \(UNRWA\)](#) in 1949. The first United Nations response to the status of Palestinian women took place in 1975 at the [First World Conference on Women, where States adopted a resolution calling for action to protect the human rights of Palestinian women](#). While controversial, the issue was considered again at the Second World Conference. Most speakers supported providing special assistance to Palestinian women, but debate devolved into a [chaos of condemnations](#) of all parties involved without resolution. However, the international community decided this issue was worth continuing to investigate; in 1984, the year before the Third World Conference on Women, the United Nations Economic and Social Council adopted its first resolution [on the subject](#), requesting the Secretary-General to prepare an [updated version](#) of the report that was used at the Second World Conference. In 1989 the Council took [further action](#) by strongly condemning Israel's actions during the First Intifada, including the use of blunt violence against civilians. The Council specifically

highlighted the effect on women in the occupied Palestinian territories. Additionally, the United Nations echoed the sentiments of the [Forward Looking Strategies](#) adopted at the Third World Conference, which called for an end to Israeli settlements in Palestine and for the creation of special projects to aid Palestinian women.

The 1990s saw dramatic changes for women in Palestine. In 1993, the [Oslo Accords](#) established a framework to end the Palestine-Israel conflict and created the [Palestinian National Authority](#) as an interim government over much of the Palestinian territory. This organization would later become the recognized government of the State of Palestine. Women, already strongly organized through their role in the First Intifada and the peace process, developed [civil society organizations](#) such as the Women's Affairs Technical Committee and the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling. The [first legislative elections](#) in 1996 saw five women elected to the 88-seat Palestinian Legislative Council, and in the executive race Samiha Khalil ran opposed to Yasser Arafat, winning 11 percent of the vote. However, improvements in general quality of life were unsteady; the [standard of living](#) in the Gaza Strip declined by half between 1993 and 1994. The Second Intifada in 2000 and subsequent five-year conflict and the rise of political conflicts between the Palestinian political parties Fatah and Hamas continued to destabilize the status of women through the turn of the century. In 2006, the size of the Legislative Council was expanded with a quota of 10 percent women representatives enacted for the Legislative Council. Despite efforts to elevate the role of women in politics, political representation has stayed near the quota level.

Palestine has lagged in ensuring legal protections for women. In 2018, [Palestine repealed its laws](#) allowing rapists to avoid prosecution by marrying their victim. However, Palestine still lacks laws specifically criminalizing domestic violence, even an estimated 30 percent of married women in the West Bank and 51 percent in the Gaza Strip have [experienced domestic violence](#). Ensuring legal justice for honor killings has proven difficult as well, with an attempt in 2011 leaving a loophole that was not closed until 2018. Even enforcing laws is a complex matter, with Israel maintaining criminal authority in rural areas of the West Bank and civil authority in East Jerusalem while Hamas asserts control over the Gaza Strip. Palestinians living in the Israeli-managed areas are often [disinclined to report crimes to Israeli authorities](#). In 2014, Palestine acceded to the [Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#),

becoming the only State in the region to do so [without reservations or declarations](#).

The United Nations has provided assistance to Palestinian women through [several organizations in the United Nations system](#), although the bulk of work is done through UNRWA. UN-Women and the International Labour Organization have worked with the Palestinian government to enhance equitable legislation, while the United Nations Children's Fund helps UNRWA provide education and healthcare across the Occupied Palestine Territory. However, the ability to continue such projects is now uncertain due to the 2018 [decision of the United States](#) to cease its funding of UNRWA, a \$300 million shortfall.

Questions to consider from your country's perspective include the following:

- How can the United Nations support enforcement of existing Palestinian laws protecting women?
- What role should the United Nations play in supporting political rights and political representation within States?
- What steps can the United Nations take to support improved maternal health outcomes?

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[Top ↑](#)

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