Global multidimensional poverty analysis 2020
FOREWORD

Stockholm, 19 May 2021

The document you hold in your hands is Sida’s first global analysis of multidimensional poverty in low- and middle-income countries. In a changeable context, we must constantly update our understanding of the state of multidimensional poverty and, in so doing, ensure that our development cooperation remains relevant – to those living in multidimensional poverty today and tomorrow, and to address the trends that risk increasing or deepening poverty.

This analysis was prepared during autumn 2020 under the leadership of the Chief Economist Team by a group of programme managers and thematic and policy specialists who work mainly with global development challenges. The work involved staff from various units within the Department for International Organisations and Policy Support, as well as the units Peace and Human Security and Capacity Development. While the main aim was to develop a common point of departure for in-depth reviews of global thematic strategies, the analysis is also useful to Sida’s ongoing work, not least when developing new cooperation strategies. Another result of performing the analysis was a dialogue between units and departments regarding synergies between global thematic strategies and how these contribute to reducing poverty and oppression.

This analysis complies with Sida’s general recommendations on analysing multidimensional poverty, which have been applied by Sida in most of our partner countries and regions. This type of analysis usually includes conclusions regarding who is living in poverty, what the different dimensions of poverty looks like and what causes the poverty, as a basis for reaching operational decisions. At a global level, however, the conclusions consist of a compilation of literature and studies describing some of the important aspects of poverty in its various dimensions, as well as some of the major trends in a global development context. Causal relationships between dimensions and between contexts and dimensions are underlined to demonstrate the interdependence of various manifestations of poverty and how the development context shapes people’s living conditions.

In a rapidly changing world, the work to recognise and understand the various faces of poverty is and will always be ongoing. This analysis should therefore not be viewed as a finished product nor as Sida’s final position on global multidimensional poverty. It should also be borne in mind that the groups highlighted in the report are only examples of those living in multidimensional poverty, even if the literature and studies do offer compelling evidence that they are among the very poorest. Focusing attention on these groups also makes plain the multidimensional nature of poverty and reveals just how intertwined the causal relationships are. Through a number of personas – fictional individuals based on fact – the multidimensional nature of poverty and the important role of intersectionality are thrown into even sharper relief.

Good reading,

Cecilia Scharp
Director of the Department of International Organisations and Policy Support
This analysis of global multidimensional poverty has been prepared by Sida during autumn 2020 to support the in-depth reviews of global thematic strategies. After an extended period of declining global multidimensional poverty, the trend is reversing, reinforced by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The decline in resource poverty was already slowing before the pandemic, the consequences of which have combined with conflict and climate change to cause an increase in extreme poverty on a global scale for the first time in a generation. Worldwide, three out of four people living in extreme poverty live in fragile, often conflict-affected countries. A large proportion of them live in rural areas, are young and have low levels of education. More women than men live in extreme income poverty. Africa is the continent on which the largest percentage of the population live in extreme income poverty. While the educational levels among adults has risen, average life expectancy has increased and people are living longer, healthier lives, at the same time, the percentage of people living in food insecurity has increased. The number of armed conflicts is at a historic high and developments in human security are mostly going in the wrong direction. Between 2015 and 2018, for example, the percentage of people living in extreme poverty in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) doubled as a consequence of the wars in Syria and Yemen. Until recently, there was a positive trend in opportunities and choice.

Access to healthcare, energy, water and sanitation increased, as did the percentage of children attending school; however, progress has been uneven and the greatest challenges are found in fragile and conflict-torn states that are falling behind globally. There is a negative trend in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in general and abortion rights in particular. After a long period of positive development in the dimension power and voice, the percentage of people living in a society in which they can influence their country’s political development has decreased. The space for advocates such as environmental defenders, human-rights activists and campaigning journalists is actively and increasingly restricted. There is increasing intolerance of and discrimination against minority groups, not least the LGBTQ+ community and indigenous peoples.

Multidimensional poverty manifests itself differently for different groups and individuals. It has greater depth and breadth among indigenous peoples and other minorities, the elderly, children, people with disabilities, migrants and those living in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, not least refugees and internally displaced persons. Multidimensional poverty has greater depth and breadth among women and girls than among men and boys, and in rural areas than in towns and cities. Growing up in a poor household creates worse conditions for shaping a life free from poverty; a grasp of intergenerational aspects and the cycle of poverty are essential to any understanding of poverty. Refugees and internally displaced persons generally live in multidimensional poverty.

Our analysis of global multidimensional poverty reveals structural causes. A two-tiered political and institutional context of weak and increasingly repressive institutions in combination with the informal structure of patriarchal social norms, patronage and elite capture contribute to trapping people in poverty. Repressive legislation, threats and harassment restrict peoples power and voice and discriminate against women and girls. The devastating effects of armed conflict on all dimensions of poverty are readily apparent in the analysis of the conflict/peace context. Among other factors, increasing food insecurity is driven by armed conflict, often exacerbated by climate-related disasters and increased pressure on vital ecosystems. Our analysis of the socioeconomic context demonstrates that economic development, especially in Africa, is insufficiently inclusive and fails to create productive jobs, while productivity in general needs to increase. In terms of the environmental context, the analysis shows that economic development driving the
reduction in poverty has partly come at the expense of depleted natural resources, increased pollution and climate change, undermining the conditions for sustainable development. It is estimated that at least four planetary boundaries have been crossed\(^5\). People living in poverty are often dependent on biodiversity and natural resources for their livelihoods, making them particularly vulnerable to climate change.

One of the universal values of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is leave no one behind. This analysis demonstrates that there are areas and groups in low- and middle-income countries that have indeed been left behind; development has not created the conditions for everyone to improve their living conditions. This is a matter of where one lives: often in rural areas, urban slums, not least in Africa, but also rugged terrain in mountainous and coastal areas. These are groups whose opportunities to escape from poverty are limited by norms and sometimes even by legislation: ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ persons, etc. And compared to men in the same living conditions, the multidimensional poverty in which women live is often deeper due to the discrimination they face both at home and in society in general.

In analysing multidimensional poverty – whether in individual countries or globally – it is easy to fixate on the here and now, on isolated facts, on what remains to be done and on new challenges the likely effects of which we can already forbode. The difficulties, the women and men, girls and boys who still live in various dimensions of poverty, dominate. And it is to them that Swedish development cooperation should be relevant and it is these women and men, girls and boys, their poverty and its causes that we should be studying in a multidimensional poverty analysis. That said, it is also important to look back on what has already been achieved, to see what has improved in low- and middle-income countries, so that we can understand what changes the lives of people living in poverty and what preconditions have actually made it possible for them to improve their lives. And what obstacles that remain, old as well as new.

\(^5\) Climate change, loss of biodiversity, land use, eutrophication
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SECTION 1. THE PURPOSE OF THE ANALYSIS

This version of the global multidimensional poverty analysis has been prepared during a brief, intensive period in autumn 2020 by a team comprised of members from all units of Sida’s Department of International Organisations and Policy Support (INTEM), as well as representatives of the Peace and Human Security Unit (FRED) and Capacity Development Unit (CAPDEV). Sida’s Chief Economist Team (CET) has compiled and built on the material and reasoning developed by the team. The analysis is not ‘complete’: it is an indication of how far we have progressed after six months work. INTEM’s Division for Thematic Programmes (TEMA) has also had the opportunity to provide input.

While the main purpose of the analysis was to provide one of the bases for the in-depth review of global thematic strategies completed in early 2021, it will also be used in forthcoming work to prepare strategy support.

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6 Karin Kronlid (CET) has organised the work with the support of Karin Andersson (ELO) the participation of Anna Åkerlund (TEMA), Annika Lysen (SOCIAL), Annika Mqgest Uggia (TEMA), Amanda Björkman (SOCIAL), Carl Tosteby (CET), Christel Rydström (GLOBEC), Erik Pettersson (FRED), Hanna Wolff (TEMA), Katarina Westman (CAPDEV), Lisa Mossberg (SOCIAL), Love Theodosiadi (GLOBEC), Louise Bermsjö (DEMO), Maria Liungman (MULTI), Minna Örnéus (GLOBEN), Pia Engstrand (SOCIAL), Susanna Gabie (CET) and Wanja Kaufman (GLOBEN).
SECTION 2. THE DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY

Sida considers poverty to have many dimensions – lack of resources, power and voice, opportunities and choice, and human security – that often interact to reinforce poverty. An individual lives in multidimensional poverty if they suffer from resource poverty and one or more of the other dimensions of poverty. Those who live in poverty do not enjoy their human rights to the full and lack the preconditions to live a dignified life and influence their own situation. Poverty manifests itself differently for different groups in different contexts. At country level, multidimensional poverty analyses face challenges in exhaustively describing poverty for the various groups and areas of a given country. When conducting a global analysis, the picture of the different dimensions of poverty must be painted in broader strokes. The following descriptions of the different dimensions of poverty therefore highlight a few important aspects of poverty in each dimension in order to illustrate the deprivations in the life situations of people living in poverty.

Lacking the resources for a dignified life

A person suffering from resource poverty neither owns nor has access to or power over the necessary resources to live a dignified life or to improve their own situation. In this context, resources can be both material and immaterial: a reasonable income, capital, an education, a trade or profession, good health. The most common metric of resource poverty is income, where the extreme poverty line is drawn at living on less than USD 1.9 per day (2011 PPP). Globally, extreme poverty has decreased steadily over the past 30 years, at least in relative terms (i.e. the proportion of people living in poverty has declined in relation to the total population). Women are overrepresented among those living in extreme poverty. Levels of education (e.g. years of schooling), health (e.g. life expectancy) and access to basic sanitation (e.g. access to water) follow largely the same pattern. While significant progress has been made in all parts of the world over recent decades, there are still major deficiencies that leave millions of people living in what we refer to as resource poverty.

The share of women, men, girls and boys living in extreme poverty (less than USD 1.9 per day) has decreased significantly over recent decades. As recently as 1950, over 60% of the world’s population lived in extreme poverty. Between 1990 and 2017, this figure fell from 36 to 9.2%. According to the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), resource poverty in more dimensions than simply income has decreased since 2000. More people in low- and middle-income countries are living longer and healthier lives and, as new generations grow into adulthood, the average levels of educational attainment in this part of the world is increasing. Life expectancy remains linked to income; in 2016, life expectancy was 18.1 years shorter in low-income countries (62.7 years) than in high-income countries (80.8 years), even if the gap has narrowed slightly. On average, life expectancy in low-income countries increased by 21% (11 years) between 2000 and 2016, compared to 8% (5 years) globally and 4% (3 years) in high-income countries. Global hunger has however increased since 2014 and, in 2019, 8.9% of the world’s population was malnourished.

Regional trends in income poverty

Share of population living below the ‘International Poverty Line’ of $1.90 per day, 2017

Source: ourworldindata.org

7 World Bank 2020 Poverty and Shared Prosperity: Reversals of Fortune
Global extreme poverty is increasingly a problem affecting one specific part of the world – sub-Saharan Africa. In 2018, 40.1% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa still lived in extreme poverty, while the corresponding figure for South Asia was 7.7–10.0% (2017), the Middle East 7.2%, Latin America 3.8%, East Asia and the Pacific region 1.2% and Europe and Central Asia 1.1%. The percentage of the sub-Saharan African population living in extreme poverty has decreased, from 55.7% in 1990 to 40.1% in 2018. However, despite the decrease in the percentage of people living in poverty in Africa, the absolute number of people living in poverty has increased. This can be explained by high population growth: at the same time as the percentage of people living in poverty has decreased in the region – which contains 27 of the world’s 28 poorest countries (all with poverty above 30%) – their numbers have increased from 278 million in 1990 to 433 million in 2018. Over half of people living in extreme income poverty in the world live in one of the following five countries: India, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bangladesh and Ethiopia.

Approximately two thirds of those living in extreme poverty globally live in middle-income countries, largely because many countries with large populations living in poverty have graduated from low-income status to middle-income status without significant reduction in poverty. The number of countries classified as low income has more than halved since 2000 and many now middle-income countries have large populations. The majority of those living in multidimensional poverty also live in middle-income countries. Currently, the percentage of those living in poverty in respective category is: low-income countries, 42%; lower-middle-income countries, 14%; and upper-middle-income countries, only 2%. Three out of four people living in extreme poverty live in fragile, often conflict-affected countries (cf. the section “Armed conflict undermines development and poverty reduction”).

When the poverty threshold is raised to USD 3.2 per day, the percentage of the global population living in poverty increases to 24% and at USD 5.5, 44% (2017), but even at these thresholds the percentage living in poverty has decreased in recent years. At a higher poverty threshold, the concentration of global poverty shifts from sub-Saharan Africa to South Asia. When the aim is to reduce poverty by any definition, it is equally important to increase the number of people escaping poverty as it is to reduce the number falling into or back into poverty. The long-term, sustainable reduction of poverty therefore depends on understanding people’s vulnerability; a multidimensional approach to poverty provides us with the bigger picture of all parts of the context that require improvement in order to achieve real, sustainable change.

A snapshot of resource poverty

To a large extent, those who live in extreme income poverty are young, live in rural areas and have a low level of education. Despite the fact that only 48% of the global population lived in rural areas in 2018, four out of every five people living in extreme poverty lived in rural areas. Between 2015 and 2018, as extreme poverty has declined overall, it has become more concentrated in rural areas. In terms of age, around half of those living in extreme poverty are under 15 years of age (an age group that constitutes only 25% of the world’s population) and two thirds under 25 years of age, not least due to the high birth rate in poor households. This concentration of poverty among the young is most evident in sub-Saharan Africa; as incomes increase, the distribution of poverty shifts towards the elderly. Although women are also overrepresented among those living in poverty globally, this differs from region to region.

Women are underrepresented among those living in extreme poverty in Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and other high-income countries, while they are overrepresented in East and South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

In 2019, 2 billion people lived with moderate or severe food insecurity, of which just over 1 billion were in Asia, 675 million in Africa and 205 million in Latin America. 21% of children under the age of 5 are stunted by malnutrition, 7% are underweight and 6% overweight. Approximately 45% of deaths under the age of five are linked to malnutrition, the majority in lower-middle-income countries. Malnutrition can also result in impaired cognitive ability, poor educational performance and chronic disease, directly impacting the ability to support oneself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Saharan Africa</th>
<th>East Asia and the Pacific</th>
<th>South Asia</th>
<th>MENA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Severe food insecurity (% of population) 2018</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malnourished (% of population) 2018</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Development Indicators

When income is insufficient

While gainful employment is often a way out of poverty, this requires that the job is paying a living wage. Although the percentage of people who are working but who are still living in extreme poverty has decreased, in 2019 it was still 7.1%, with one in five workers earning less than USD 3.2 per day. In low- and middle-income countries, as many as two thirds of those of working age have insufficient skills to obtain qualitative employment, restricting their opportunities to fulfil their potential and, in many cases, to escape poverty. Almost two thirds of those living in extreme poverty work in agriculture, where the level of poverty is four times that of other sectors. Women constitute half of the agricultural workforce in developing countries, yet they are far less likely than men to own the land they farm. Women also receive lower wages for their labour and have greater difficulty obtaining loans to start and develop their own businesses.

“In DRC, The poverty rate among people who live of agriculture is the highest (84.1%). Most communities are vulnerable to shocks, such as armed attacks, structural weaknesses of poor basic services such as nutrition and education, land loss, destruction of crops.” (Sida’s analysis of multidimensional poverty in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2018)

Access to social security has increased in developing countries following a strong expansion over recent decades and today almost all low- and middle-income countries have some form of social security programme. The total number of recipients globally currently stands at around 2 billion. Approximately 4 billion people, or 55% of the world’s population, lack access to any form of social security programme. This lack of access is greatest in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. It is estimated that 18% of Africans have access to social security. Women, new mothers, children, the unemployed and people with disabilities are most likely to lack access to social security programmes. Access is especially low for children, with over two thirds (1.3 billion) lacking access globally, the majority in Africa and Asia. Social security for workers remains limited, with only 22% of the unemployed having access to

20 Agriculture refers to farming, fisheries and forestry.
22 FAO, N/A. Why is gender equality and rural women’s empowerment central to the work of FAO?
unemployment benefits. Social security systems are not only important to those without any other means of support, but they also help to meet basic needs when exposed to shocks or temporary reductions of income. Those living in poverty are both more exposed to shocks and, because they do not have savings, they are more likely reduce their consumption as a result.\textsuperscript{24} Lack of social security and services such as parental benefits, childcare and care for the elderly affect women more systematically, as they are forced to refrain from gainful employment during their reproductive years when they must care for their family instead. These responsibilities tend to be most pressing during the years when women would otherwise be best placed to earn income, something reflected in the overrepresentation of women between 25 and 34 years of age among those living in extreme poverty.

**Health and its links to poverty today and tomorrow**

Not only is poor health a form of poverty in itself, and a consequence of income poverty, but it is also an underlying cause of income poverty. For the individual, good health is a prerequisite for productive labour and physical, intellectual and emotional growth. The development of the society in turn is slowed by ill health, disease and pandemics that hamper economic growth and development.\textsuperscript{25}

Women and girls are affected both directly by disease and health problems and indirectly as they frequently carry the burden of caring for sick members of the household, resulting in lost opportunities of education, employment, etc. Women are more likely to suffer from ill health, while at the same time they have a longer life expectancy (75.3 years for women, 69.8 for men). In low-income countries, the most common causes of death for women in the age group 15–49 are HIV/AIDS and childbirth\textsuperscript{26}. Over 90% of all maternal mortality occurs in low- and lower-middle-income countries as the result of preventable factors during pregnancy or childbirth. Almost 8% of global maternal mortality is related to unsafe abortions, 99.5% of which are performed in developing regions. Unsafe abortions are most common in countries with restrictive abortion legislation\textsuperscript{27}. The health of men is affected by social norms such as higher risk propensity (alcohol, drugs) and failure to seek medical care to the same extent as women\textsuperscript{28}.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total fertility rate [births per woman] 2018</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Development Indicators

Out-of-pocket expenditure on healthcare drives people into extreme poverty, most commonly in middle-income countries and Southeast Asia. The percentage of the global population that spends over 10% of their household budget on medical expenses has risen steadily (12.7% or 927 million people in 2015) and is forecasted to reach 1 billion people by 2030. Most of them live in middle-income countries. For 209 million people, medical expenses amounted to over 25% of their household budget. Between 2000 and 2015, the number of people falling into extreme poverty due to medical expenses decreased from 123.9 million to 89.7 million. This decrease coincided with a reduction in the total number of people living in extreme poverty.\textsuperscript{29,30}

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\textsuperscript{26} IHME, N/A, *Global Burden of Disease*, *Health data*.


\textsuperscript{30} WHO. (2020). *Monitoring Health for the SDGs*. Source: ourworldindata.org
Deaths related to air pollution are often the result of the combined effects of indoor and outdoor air pollution on individual’s health. In low- and middle-income countries, where the correlation is strongest, people often cook and heat water over open fires, leading to respiratory diseases, not least for women and children, who spend more time in the home.31 Among other things, air pollution can cause cardiovascular disease and respiratory diseases. Worldwide, 7 million deaths a year are related to air pollution.32

Lack of clean water has serious consequences for human health; WHO estimates that 88% of all diarrhoea cases globally are related to a lack of drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).33 Statistics from Our World in Data show that unsafe water is responsible for 1.2 million deaths every year, 6% of deaths in low-income countries are the result of unsafe water sources, 666 million people (9% of the world’s population) lack access to clean water, and 2.1 billion people (29% of the world’s population) lack access to safe drinking water. The majority of deaths caused by unsafe water sources occur in sub-Saharan Africa, the Hindu Kush Himalaya region, and Southeast Asia.34 Chemicals also pose a threat to human health35.

It is estimated that some 3.8% of the world’s population over 15 years of age live with a serious disability that requires support from health services. This percentage is even higher in low- and middle-income countries. In some southern African countries, only 26–55% of people with disabilities received necessary medical rehabilitation and only 17–37% have the adaptive equipment they needed (wheelchair, prosthesis, hearing aid, etc.).36 Aside from poorer physical health, people with disabilities are more likely to have impaired mental health. Mental ill health is also often a consequence of other forms of poverty. Of those who have lived in war zones, 30–70% have symptoms of post-traumatic stress and depression.37

“*If I had gone to school, I would have got a job and I would have obtained a husband who has a salaried job.*” (Voices of the Poor38, Uganda)

**Literacy and numeracy have increased but significant inequalities remain**

In 2018, as many as 35% of those over the age of 15 and living in extreme poverty had no schooling (compared to 9% of the non-poor). A further 35% had only some education. Lower levels of educational attainment is primarily found in rural areas, where 39% of adults living in extreme poverty have no formal education.

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35 IPEN. (2020). Women, Chemicals and the SDGs.
37 James Leckman; Catherine P. J; Rima Salah. (2014). Pathways to Peace.
education, around double the figure in urban areas. While literacy rates are at an all-time high, inequalities remain, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, which has a low level of educational attainment compared to other parts of the world (for example, literacy rates in Burkina Faso, Niger and South Sudan are under 30%). With the exception of Afghanistan, all countries outside Africa have a literacy rate above 50%. While there is an obvious correlation between education and the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from economic development, other dimensions of poverty such as lack of democracy and human rights are also linked to education; for example, in terms of access to information, the ability to express oneself and awareness of rights and obligations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Saharan Africa</th>
<th>East Asia and the Pacific</th>
<th>South Asia</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>97.3</td>
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MENA

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<tr>
<th>Latin America and the Caribbean</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85.1</td>
<td>72.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94.7</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Development Indicators

The effects of COVID-19

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was estimated that 8.4% of the world’s population lived in extreme poverty. If GDP falls by 5% during 2020 (the current forecast is -4.6%), this figure is expected to rise to 9.1%, thereby setting back global efforts to eradicate poverty by three years. This will leave 88 million more people a year living in extreme poverty than would have been the case without COVID-19, over 75% of them in middle-income countries.

According to a report by the World Bank, between 7 and 24% of households in low- and middle-income countries included in the study have lost job opportunities resulting in a group of ‘new poor’ who were not living in poverty before the pandemic but who have now fallen into poverty. Jobs in the informal sector are at most risk. According to the report, “the new poor are likely to be engaged in informal services, construction, and manufacturing, rather than agriculture”, with women and young people disproportionately affected. So, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment differs noticeably from one type of job to the next and between women and men and levels of education, which may have long-term ramifications for equal opportunities, gender equality and poverty. It seems likely that the economic consequences will be greatest for the most vulnerable, given that the casual urban workforce, migrant labourers and women are among the groups that have been particularly hard hit. These groups rarely have access to a functioning social safety net, have tighter margins and are unlikely to be prioritised in any stimulus packages. This situation also affects women disproportionately, both due to their large representation in the sectors most affected by the pandemic and because they are more likely to shoulder the increased burden of unpaid labour in the home.

The new poor created by the pandemic also differ from the more chronically poor in that they have a higher level of education, although not as high as the non-poor. Social security systems have undergone a massive expansion during 2020 in response to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, with over 190 countries either expanding the system to include new groups or increasing the size of benefits. This may prove to be a historically positive development in terms of access to social security, which even under normal circumstances is a vital measure for inclusive economic development that reaches those outside the labour market.

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Many are deprived of power and voice

Persons who are poor in the dimension power and voice are deprived of the opportunity to articulate their concerns, needs and rights and to participate in decisions related to matters that concern them. Power is an interpersonal relationship that allows us to better understand sociocultural hierarchies and relationships. Gender is one dimension, as are age, caste, religion, ethnicity and sexual identity. The poverty suffered by the individual can be increased by mutually reinforcing forms of discrimination. Power and voice has strong links to the other dimensions of poverty. Despite the complexity involved in measuring poverty in this dimension, there are some clear patterns: women, minorities and LGBTQ+ persons tend to lack power and voice, both within the household and at a societal level. These patterns are reinforced by intersectionality.

Without understanding the inter-relational nature of power, we cannot understand how power and voice are distributed in society. In other words, power is the ability of a person or group of people to influence the actions of others. All people have agency, the ability to act in accordance with their own aspirations and purposes in spite of various structural obstacles. When we understand power and voice relationally, we shine a light on the conditions under which the individual is unable to influence their life situation or make their voice heard. Or on the situations in which the individual or group is punished for attempting to make their voice heard. This may vary depending on the context: an individual with power and voice in one context – as the ‘man of the house’ for example – may lack power and voice in another context, such as the workplace. Power may be wielded legally, or even semi-legally or illegally, by various groups in society: the economic and political elites who control the state apparatus; religious bodies; and agents of patriarchy such as village elders, village councils; or even strongmen and mafia-like organisations etc. The middle class, those with a higher education and civil servants often have greater power than those working in the informal sector; while even citizens with the right to vote can also be said to have a certain amount of power. In households, the husband/father, boy/son and mother-in-law may all have varying degrees of power. Poverty of power and voice implies that people are unable to hold those in power to account or demand the recognition of their right to healthcare, sexual and reproductive health, education, security, gainful employment, etc., thus entrenching poverty in the dimensions opportunities and choice, resources, and human security.

Which members of society lack power and voice?

While lack of voice and power is a form of poverty in and of itself, it also affects the other dimensions of poverty. The inequitable division of power and voice within a society leads to decisions that benefit the economic and political elite, disadvantaging those without and reinforcing poverty in all its dimensions. A lack of power and voice decreases people’s ability to escape poverty and makes it more difficult for them to hold politicians accountable for their policies. While this is important at national level, it can be even more significant locally.

“‘The leaders have the power, but they have no interest in the community. And what the people want is that the leaders work for their communities, the people don’t want promises.’” (Venezuela, Voices of the Poor)

Those without the formal attributes for inclusion in the official system – ID card, citizenship, a job in the formal sector, land rights (often women) – lack power and voice in society. Although there is little reliable data, the number of people without a legal identity is estimated to be in the hundreds of millions. Those without a legal identity are predominantly resource-poor members of indigenous peoples and other minorities. Approximately 40% of the world’s children are still unregistered when they reach the age of five, a figure that rises to 71% in the least developed countries. In South Asia, there are some 23 million unregistered births each year, corresponding to over 60% of children born in the region. In sub-Saharan Africa, less than half of children are registered at birth each year, excluding them from the formal economy and state services. Similarly, when not granted citizenship, refugees may have limited power and voice in the country in which they have sought asylum.

Those suffering from resource poverty often lack power and voice. Women and men who are illiterate, who lack access to information (digital and analogue) or who are unable to assimilate information have

limited power and voice as their situation prevents them from participating in society in an informed manner. A review of Sida’s analyses of national and regional multidimensional poverty shows that the rural poor often have very limited access to the media and formal information issued by public authorities and the like, something else that reinforces all dimensions of poverty. While resource poverty appears to restrict most forms of political participation, it does open the way to manipulating elections. There is evidence that vote buying in sub-Saharan Africa is primarily targeted at those who lack resources, further reducing political influence in real terms. There is also a downward curve in socioeconomic and political equality; the share of political power in the hands of poor people has decreased significantly over recent years. These inequalities also undermine the ability of people living in poverty to join and be represented by political parties, thereby affecting political priorities. This poses long-term risks to the legitimacy and efficacy of democratic governance.

Poverty of power and voice also implies scarce recourse to justice and the legal sector, often leaving those living in poverty without the means to demand and fight for their rights. This can, for example, lead to long periods of detention awaiting trial or a failure to investigate or prosecute reported crimes.

“Discrimination prevalent against women, members of LGBTQIA+ community, minority groups (e.g. Roma), often including limited opportunities to power and voice. Women from minority groups are doubly deprived in this dimension from an intersectional perspective, being both women and minority.” (Sida’s analysis of multidimensional poverty in Kosovo 2017)

Discriminatory legislation also makes it difficult for members of religious and ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples to access power and voice (cf. “Poverty is lack of opportunities and choice” for an analysis of indigenous peoples and access to natural resources). Yet another limitation is imposed by discriminatory norms that counteract the enforcement of rights and circumscribe the power and voice of certain groups, especially women, young people, the elderly, widows, LGBTQ+ persons and people with disabilities. Certain groups in society also emerge as clearly discriminated against. LGBTQ+ individuals as a group are often forced to choose between oppression and hiding their sexual identity, restricting their opportunities to a voice and personal realisation. The review of Sida’s national and regional multidimensional poverty analyses also highlights the vulnerability of LGBTQ+ persons as a group in this dimension.

Powerful social norms continue to place greater obstacles in the way of women who seek to engage and make their voices heard. Female leadership and political participation is restricted from local to global level, which in turn bypasses women’s political influence. According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2020, the widest gender gap is found in the area of political empowerment. Globally, only 25% of members of parliaments and 21% of government ministers are women. In certain countries – Vanuatu and Papua Nya Guinea, for example – women are not represented at all. Women are also underrepresented in other leading positions in both the public and private sectors and in academia. Women are also less likely to vote than men. Many women who do hold decision-making roles are also subjected to gender discrimination, threats and violence.

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In many countries, low voter turnout among young people and suspected voter apathy are sources of concern. There are significant differences in voter turnout between the 25-and-under age group and those who are 26 and over.\textsuperscript{52} This disparity appears to be universal; studies have shown that age has a significant impact on voter turnout across Asia, Africa and Latin America.\textsuperscript{53} Studies of voter turnout in Africa have also shown that income poverty does not limit voting in African democracies and that a simpler electoral system, including fewer choices (closed lists and/or fewer parties), has a positive impact on voter turnout among those living in poverty.\textsuperscript{54}

Migrant workers, especially those exploited by contract slavery and human trafficking, lack power and voice in society and in their working life. Modern slavery occurs all over the world, most commonly in Africa (7.6 per 1,000 people), followed by Asia and the Pacific region (6.1 per 1,000) and Europe and Central Asia (3.9 per 1,000). These figures should be taken with a pinch of salt as there is insufficient data in some regions, including the Arab states and North and South America. Forced labour is most common in Asia and the Pacific region, where 4 in every 1,000 people are victims, followed by Europe and Central Asia (3.6 per 1,000), Africa (2.8 per 1,000), the Arab states (2.2 per 1,000) and North and South America (1.3 per 1,000). Allowing for the limitations imposed by available figures, forced marriage appears to be most common in Africa (4.8 per 1,000), followed by Asia and the Pacific region (2.0 per 1,000). Employers and recruiters employ various forms of coercion and extortion to prevent workers escaping from their situation, including withholding wages (24%), threats of violence (17%), physical violence (16%) and threats against the family (12%). Sexual violence was reported by 7% of women. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that migrant workers outside their own country often have no legal protection, union representation, knowledge of where they can turn for help or the necessary language skills to search for information or make themselves understood. Of the 40 million people who are victims of modern slavery, 71% are women and 25% children, while 15 million of these live in a forced marriage. Women and girls constitute 99% of forced labour in the sex industry and 58% in other sectors, as well as 40% of those in state-imposed forced labour and 84% of those living in a forced marriage.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{52} A. Solijonov. (2016). Voter Turnout Trends around the World. \textit{IDEA.}
\textsuperscript{55} ILO. (2017). \textit{Global estimates of modern slavery.}
and girls in a position of dependence on male members of the household. This also affects the ability of women and girls to make themselves heard in public. The division of power within the home affects household decisions on the use of resources. Power in hands of a woman in the household has a positive impact on the health of the entire family, as well as on her influence over reproductive decisions. The greater a woman’s power, the better the situation for children, especially the health and schooling of girls.

**Advocacy bearers**

Human rights defenders (HRD) are people who, either individually or collectively, work peacefully on behalf of others to promote and defend internationally recognised human rights. HRDs encounter threats in many forms (physical, psychological, economic and social) and are subjected to attacks, murder, disappearance, torture and assault, arbitrary arrest, surveillance, administrative and legal harassment and stigmatisation. This is a function of the interaction between multiple factors, such as poor governance, the absence of the rule of law and the tensions regarding development and economic issues triggered by a wide range of political, economic, religious, state and private stakeholders. Journalists working in low- and middle-income countries are vulnerable. Since 2015, 135 journalists have been murdered in response to their reporting, while 248 journalists are currently imprisoned and a further 64 missing. Since measurements began in 1992, a total of 821 journalists have been murdered because of their reporting. During 2019, 304 human rights defenders were murdered in low- and middle-income countries due to their convictions. HRDs working on issues related to natural resources, especially those who are members of indigenous peoples (cf. section “Lack of human security deepens poverty”), and LGBTQ+ rights are often most at risk due to capitalist exploitation and growing religious and cultural conservatism. Female HRDs are especially vulnerable to sexual violence, slander and discrimination due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

**The effects of COVID-19**

The downward trend in freedom of speech has been further strengthened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments have imposed restrictions and constraints on freedom of movement that some have since used as an excuse to constrain democratic activities and silence critical voices. According to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), 99 countries have introduced measures that in various ways infringe on democracy and human rights. These measures, which are more common in nondemocratic countries, largely concern democratic freedoms and rights, privacy and security.

Governments in certain countries have also continued to shut down the Internet, despite the negative consequences this has for freedom of information, not least information about COVID-19. A survey by the organisation Freedom House confirmed that there has been a deterioration in democratic rights and freedoms in 80 countries during the pandemic and that many countries appear to be using COVID-19 as a pretext to impose permanent restrictions on the lives of citizens. Restrictions on the media and bans on protests (freedom of assembly) are among the most common impositions. The ability of parliaments to legislate and exercise oversight has also been limited through various restrictions on meeting, thus tipping the balance of power towards governments. Fewer demonstrations have been permitted during the pandemic and therefore violence associated with demonstrations has decreased over the period. That said, other forms of political violence have increased during the pandemic, especially mob violence and attacks on civilians by the police and other state actors.

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58 Advocacy bearers are individuals and groups who are engaged in advocacy for democracy and human rights, and who often represent groups of rights holders. These individuals can also often be considered change agents. One such group is Human rights defenders (HRD), another groups is journalists.
Lack of human security deepens poverty

A person who is poor in the dimension of human security finds their individual opportunities and those of their group to exercise their human rights and escape poverty constrained by violence and insecurity. This violence may be the result of armed conflict or criminality or be gender-based. Poverty in the human security dimension takes different forms for men and women, girls and boys. Men and boys are more likely to die in combat than women and girls and are overrepresented in murder statistics, both as victims and perpetrators. That said, millions of women and girls around the world are subjected to physical, psychological and sexual violence both in the home and outside – in school, for example. Boys also fall victim to domestic violence but the vast majority of those killed by domestic violence are women or girls. There are indications that increasing numbers of people are suffering from a lack of human security; for example, the world is less peaceful than it was a decade ago, the number of armed conflicts has increased, primarily in Africa, and in 2019 the number of refugees and internally displaced persons reached its highest level since UNHCR began keeping records.

Armed conflict has a direct impact through violence

As many as 79% of the people killed in armed conflicts during 2019 lived in one of the 57 countries and territories classed as fragile by the OECD. This means that the vast majority of those who die in armed conflicts live in the same areas of the world that are home to the majority of those living in extreme income poverty. In armed conflicts, physical, psychological and sexual violence affect different groups in different ways. Young men are more likely to be forcibly recruited and die in combat. The majority of those killed by landmines and other explosive ordinance left behind after a war are also boys or men.

A clear majority of victims of sexual violence during armed conflicts are girls or women.

Conflicts often lead to polarisation and stereotypical images of the enemy. In armed conflicts in which one or more of the parties claim to represent a particular group – ethnic or religious, for example – it is not unusual for people to be presumed to belong to one side or the other solely because of their ethnic or religious affiliation. Such generalisations then have direct implications for the security of those people. Aside from bombings and military engagements, armed conflict is often the harbinger of other forms of violence such as extrajudicial executions, abductions and other serious violations of human rights. These also affect dissidents, activists and journalists.

\[\text{\"{}After each bombardment I lost 2 or 3 kilos. I became very anxious and we all suffered from high blood pressure.\"} \text{[Voices of the Poor, Armenian Refugee, Armenia]}\]

Violence forces people to flee their homes. In 2019, UNHCR reported that globally 79.5 million were displaced, 45.7 million of whom were internally displaced, the vast majority having fled violence and conflict. UNHCR estimates that approximately 40% of refugees and internally displaced persons are

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66 UNODC. (2019). Global Study on Homicide: Understanding homicide. According to a global study by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 81% of murder victims in 2017 were men or boys. The study also estimates that the perpetrators were men in over 90% of murders.
68 UNODC. (2019). Global Study on Homicide: Understanding homicide. For example, according to statistics for 2017, 82% of victims of domestic violence with a fatal outcome were women or girls.
69 Global Peace Index. (2020).
70 Uppsala Conflict Data Program. (2019). Number of Conflicts, armed conflicts.
72 OECD. (2020). States of Fragility, 2020. If one only counts armed conflicts in which at least one of the parties is a state, this figure rises to 96%. States of Fragility, page 70.
children under the age of 18 years. 85% of refugees are in developing countries and the majority of internally displaced persons are in three countries: Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Syria. It is estimated that in 2019 there were 2.5 million refugees and internally displaced persons in the Middle East and North Africa and 4.6 million in sub-Saharan Africa. Factors such as the loss of assets and access to family networks make refugees more vulnerable to poverty. They are often traumatised and in need of protection. The fact that they are rarely granted work permits and thus access to the formal labour market can drive them into the informal sector and/or welfare dependency. Female refugees are especially vulnerable. Child refugees often have inferior access to education and learning. In 2018, only 63% of child refugees attended primary school and 24% secondary school. This compares to global figures of 91 and 84% respectively.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Number of people forcibly displaced (millions) 2019</th>
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<tr>
<td>The five countries with most refugees</td>
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<td>GLOBALLY:</td>
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Source: UNHCR and ourworldindata.org

Violence in armed conflicts also has serious indirect consequences

Aside from the death, maiming and injury caused by physical, psychological and sexual violence, and the forced displacement, armed conflict also increases poverty in ways linked to the other dimensions of poverty. Conflicts and violence have severe economic effects on the affected populations at both individual and societal level. As jobs and livelihoods disappear, families become poorer. Material damage to and loss of assets such as houses, land and other belongings are among the more obvious effects of armed conflict. For the poorest members of society, it can also reduce access to food. Conflicts may destroy crops and render fields uncultivatable due to landmines, cluster munitions and other unexploded munitions. The higher risks also make long-term investors, and companies in general, hesitant to invest in conflict areas. Instead, fragility, conflict, and violence tend to attract economic stakeholders with a greater propensity for risk, while the lack of rule of law allows the unsustainable use and exploitation of natural resources, often with little return for the local population. In such environments, corruption can easily take hold.

“The ongoing conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Yemen have caused hundreds of thousands of deaths and millions displaced. Millions need humanitarian assistance to survive in the conflict-affected countries. Million are refugees and internally displaces people, many of them children and women. A large part of the basic infrastructure and services are destroyed meaning that millions of children do not have access to adequate health and education” (Sida’s analysis of multidimensional poverty in the MENA region, 2019)

Armed conflict is largest single factor underlying hunger in the world today. Of those living with acute food insecurity in 2019, 57% (77 million people) lived in 22 countries and territories suffering from conflict and insecurity. As many as 80% of children stunted by malnutrition live in countries where there are active armed conflicts. Attacks on schools, as well as military use of schools, have consequences for physical and mental health and lost schooling, both because schools are forced to close and because parents keep their children at home during periods of insecurity, especially their daughters. A global study conducted in 2020 collected data on 11,000 attacks against educational institutions in 37 low- and middle-income countries between 2015 and 2019, including attacks against school buildings and against pupils or teachers, military use of schools and universities, the recruitment of children on their way to and from school and sexual violence on the way to and from school or university.

78 Cf. for example OECD. (2020). States of Fragility 2020. “Conflict economies can bring official state, non-state and criminal organisations together in relationships of convenience and often self-interest, undermining the integrity of economic systems in fragile contexts and eroding the basis for recovery.”
Almost one attack per day. In Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali, the UN reported a six-fold increase in school closures between April 2017 and December 2019, affecting 16,000 teachers and almost 650,000 children.

One worrying global trend is the increase in attacks against healthcare facilities and healthcare professionals. The World Health Organization documented over 1,000 security incidents in the healthcare sector during 2019 resulting in 825 deaths in 11 countries, including Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Syria, Yemen and Palestine. Attacks on the healthcare sector have both direct and indirect consequences for people’s lives and health, especially those who are already vulnerable and have limited resources and choices. In Afghanistan alone, attacks on the healthcare sector resulted in the loss of 48,000 hours of healthcare and 76,000 medical consultations.

Intrastate armed conflict undermines human security by eroding trust and social cohesion in a society, both between groups of citizens and between citizens and the authorities. There may be areas of a country in which the state has very little or no presence, preventing the provision of social services that would have been provided under normal circumstances. Where a non-state armed group more or less controls a given geographical area, parallel quasi-public authorities are built up that may provide certain services. In areas where it is unclear who is exercising public authority, or where the exercise of public authority overlaps, civilians often find themselves caught in the middle, especially the most vulnerable members of society.

People in conflict zones must adapt their way of life and learn to support themselves within the constraints of the destruction and insecurity brought about by the conflict. While they may identify positive survival strategies, when uncertainty is high there is also a risk that they will grasp at negative survival strategies such as child labour and child marriage. The sexual trafficking or forced marriage of girls is more common during armed conflicts.

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by gender-based and sexual violence in armed conflicts and post conflict situations. That said, there are also many examples of women being forced to take on the role of breadwinner and head of the household in the absence of men recruited to armed groups. In this way, conflicts may also advance gender equality, even though it might be more a matter of changed behaviour rather than changed norms and the old roles and behaviour often returns once the conflict is over.

Gender-based violence and violence against young people

Approximately 87,000 women and girls were the victim of intentional homicide in 2017, a decrease since 2012. Of these homicides, the percentage of women killed by an intimate partner or other family member increased from 47% of all victims in 2012 to 58% in 2017. It is estimated that globally 35% of women have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence at some time during their lives, either within an intimate relationship or at the hands of someone outside their immediate family. Women living in income poverty have limited opportunities to leave a violent relationship. Women with disabilities run a two to four times higher risk of being subjected to violence by a partner than women without disabilities. Harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, forced and child marriage and other forms of gender-based violence largely affect women and girls. Some 200 million girls and women in 31 countries have undergone genital mutilation. Men are far less likely to be subjected to sexual violence and exploitation than women; however, when this does occur, there are often no reporting or protection mechanisms in place, meaning that the scale of the problem is underestimated. The same applies to LGBTQ+ persons. Every year, almost 250 million children and young people are subjected to...
physical, sexual and psychological (emotional) violence in the home, community, workplace or online. Teenagers, especially boys, who somehow deviate from heteronormativity or are gender nonconforming are at risk from violence. M. Greene, O. Robles, K. Stout & T. Suvilaakso. (2013). A girl’s right to learn without fear: Working to end gender-based violence at school. Plan International. Share of women older than 15 years who experienced physical violence by an intimate partner the last year, 2017

Female genital mutilation prevalence: share of women aged 15–49 years, 2016

Violence associated with criminality

Globally, criminality is responsible for more deaths as a result of direct violence than armed conflict and terrorism combined. North and South America top the statistics for both murders per 1,000 of the population and the percentage of murders in which firearms are used. The use of firearms is also deemed to be the reason that robberies are more likely to result in murder in North and South America than in Europe. Studies of South American countries have demonstrated links between high murder rates and growing numbers of young men who neither study nor have gainful employment. Since 1990, the murder rate has decreased by 38% in Europe and 36% in Asia. One interesting fact is that in many cases statistics show that women and men are fairly equally likely to be the victim of murder in countries with relatively low murder rates. The higher the murder rate, the greater the percentage of men among victims of murder tends to be.

“Urban areas are more exposed to crimes than rural areas. Youth are at higher risk of insecurity.” UNESCO website: Homophobic and transphobic violence in education

It is worth considering why this might be: could high murder rates be associated with a male-dominated culture of weapons and violence? In South America, this is often characterised as machismo. We know that the vast majority of the perpetrators of violence are men and teenage boys. In 2014, 2015 and 2016, over 90% of murder suspects were male. Of those convicted of murder between 2010 and 2017 globally, 6% were women. A regional breakdown reveals that Europe was slightly above that average (9%), Asia was in line with the global average of 6%, while in Africa the percentage of convicted murderers who were women was below average (5%). Men and boys are also more likely to be the victim of deadly violence. In 2017, for example, 81% of murder victims globally were men and boys. As previously noted, the


92 UNESCO website: Homophobic and transphobic violence in education

93 UNODC. (2019). Global Study on Homicide: Understanding homicide. This heading relates to the standard language that distinguishes between economic violence, mostly aimed at financial gain, and violence committed within the scope of armed conflict. It should however be noted that this is a somewhat imprecise differentiation that in no way means that violence in armed conflict should be assumed, a priori, to be non-criminal, given that it may very well contravene international law (something that should be tried on a case-by-case basis).

94 This comparison is somewhat lagging in as much as war and armed conflict continue to claim victims after the initial casualties of direct violence.
percentage of men among murder victims tends to increase with the murder rate, meaning that, generally speaking, this is less prevalent in Europe than in low- and middle-income countries with higher murder rates.

Violence against those living in poverty in the dimension power and voice
Many of those who lack power and voice are at risk from violence. Violence may, for example, be the ultimate consequence of discrimination. In many cases, the advocates of civil and human rights are also at risk from violence, as described above (cf. section on power and voice).

The effects of COVID-19
The combined repercussions of the pandemic, armed conflict and climate change have caused the fight against poverty to lose ground for the first time in a generation. There are growing concerns about how the pandemic will affect armed conflicts as food insecurity increases, people are cut off from livelihoods and draconian restrictions fuel political unrest and exacerbate their underlying causes. Not only might peace processes stall as all attention is focused on the pandemic, but they may also suffer due to cuts in national budgets and limited scope for political reform in its aftermath. Calls from the UN Secretary-General and Security Council for a global ceasefire to allow room to tackle the pandemic have failed to have any decisive effect. At the same time, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of trust between local communities and public health authorities, something that is particularly difficult to broker in conflict zones where the state is one of the combatants. Among other things, a pandemic response that is sensitive to conflict may mean involving stakeholders that enjoy the trust of the community, as well as strengthening social cohesion through broad, inclusive and participatory processes. If already marginalised and discriminated groups are excluded or disadvantaged by the response to the pandemic, the underlying tensions and divisions of the conflict may be aggravated.

Global reports indicate that already vulnerable groups such as women and children are particularly exposed during the COVID-19 crises, not least in conflict contexts. Even before the outbreak of COVID-19, 35% of women worldwide had experienced physical or sexual violence. There are clear indications that the pandemic is reinforcing the problem by simultaneously increasing gender-based violence and weakening the safeguards for vulnerable women and girls. As COVID-19 dominates the attention of healthcare services, there is a risk that care and support for the victims of gender-based violence will fall by the wayside.

Fewer opportunities and choice for those who live in poverty
Someone who lives in poverty in the dimension of opportunities and choice has limited opportunities to develop or to use their resources to escape poverty. Access to resources such as social services, infrastructure, capital, land and natural resources affect the opportunities and choices available to women and men. While more children than ever now attend school and people living in poverty have greater access to good-quality healthcare and water and sanitation, limited opportunities and choice remain a fact of life for many people, adversely affecting their ability to escape other dimensions of poverty. The extent to which people experience these limitations is related

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to factors such as gender, ethnicity and place of residence. Generally speaking, girls lack access to education to a greater extent than boys\textsuperscript{99}, ethnic minorities experience more discrimination on the labour market\textsuperscript{100} and those living in rural areas generally have inferior access to sanitation, water and electricity than those in urban areas\textsuperscript{101}. Opportunities are further limited by living in an environment of conflict and violence. In such environments, girls’ access to education is further restricted.

\textit{“[In Cambodia,] Rural households rely on less productive agricultural activities and foraging, and live in areas with limited access to key basic services such as universal health and education, clean drinking water, sanitation, electricity, etc.”}\textsuperscript{[Sida’s analysis of multidimensional poverty in Cambodia, 2019]}

Who are the working poor (underemployed, unemployed or without job security)?\textsuperscript{102}

The global employment rate increased continuously between 2002 and 2018.\textsuperscript{103} In 2019, global unemployment was 5.4%, with 188 million people still without employment. Increased income from work has accounted for 40% of all reductions in global poverty over the past decade.\textsuperscript{104} Traditional metrics such as employment and unemployment rates are however less useful in developing countries where, despite the fact that almost everyone works, many still do not earn enough to escape poverty. The percentage of working people living in extreme poverty has decreased from 31.6% in 1994 to 7.1% in 2019.

Although the percentage of working people living in some form of income poverty (on less than USD 5.5 per day) has also declined, the global figure remains at around 20%, corresponding to approximately 630 million people. In Africa, of those working, 53.9% live in moderate income poverty (on less than USD 3.2 per day). The corresponding figure in Asia and the Pacific region is 18.8% – so, significantly lower. One major reason why people who are working are unable to support themselves is that jobs in the informal sector do not pay adequate wages. Informal employment also prevents people from benefitting from social safety nets linked to employment and places them outside the protection of labour market legislation and health and safety regulations.

Labour force participation rate % of population aged 15–64, 2019

Informal, insecure employment predominates in rural areas of low- and middle-income countries. People in rural areas are twice as likely to have insecure employment than those in urban areas; approximately 90% of jobs in the agricultural sector are informal. The informal sector employs 2 billion people, or 61.1% of the global workforce. At 85.8%, Africa has the highest percentage of informal jobs, followed by the Arab states with 68.6% and Asia and the Pacific region with 68.2%. The level of attained education is crucial to whether someone has informal or formal employment. People who have completed secondary education are less likely to be informally employed than those who received only a primary education or no formal education at all.\textsuperscript{105,\textsuperscript{106}}

Women are more likely to be unemployed or to work in the informal sector than men and to work part-time if they do have formal employment, and they also earn less than men for comparable work. Women spend more time (2.5 times more than men) on unpaid work in the home, thus limiting their opportunities to take paid work. When it comes to child labour, girls are more likely to perform unpaid household chores while boys have gainful employment outside the home.\textsuperscript{107}

Source: World Bank

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\textsuperscript{99} World Bank. World Development Indicators.
\textsuperscript{101} ILO. (2020). Transitioning to Formality in the Rural Informal Economy.
\textsuperscript{102} ILO. (2019). Understanding Poverty.
\textsuperscript{103} International Labour Organization.
\textsuperscript{105} ILO. (2018). Women and Men in the Informal Economy.
\textsuperscript{106} ILO. (2019). Transitioning to Formality in the Rural Informal Economy.
\textsuperscript{107} Sida. Gender Equality and Dimensions of Poverty.
dominates among young people; in Africa, 94.9% of youths work in the informal sector, a trend that is especially strong in West Africa. LGBTQ+ persons are also more likely to work in the informal sector.\textsuperscript{108}

Human trafficking affects the lives of millions of people, mostly women and children. It has been said that there has never been as much slavery as there is today; globally, it is estimated that as many as 40.3 million people are in some form of slavery.\textsuperscript{109} It is estimated that approximately 1.2 million children are victims of human trafficking,\textsuperscript{108} while as many as one in ten of children worldwide are thought to be subjected to child labour, with concomitant negative consequences for their learning, health and development.\textsuperscript{111}

![Share of the labour force in agriculture, 2017](source: ourworldindata.org)

Restricted access to ecosystem services and natural resources

The wellbeing of all humans depends on natural resources such as land, soil, forest, clean air, biodiversity, etc. A majority of the world’s poor still live in rural areas where they are very much dependent on local biodiversity and ecosystem services for their livelihoods, whether that be fishing, farming or forestry.\textsuperscript{112}

The livelihoods of a quarter of the world’s population depends on forest resources; 1.2 billion people practice agroforestry to feed themselves and earn an income. In many countries, firewood accounts for as much as 90% of energy consumption. Not only does the forest provide food, income, fuel, medicine and dwellings, but for millions of people living in poverty it is also a safety net in times of crises and disaster. Forest resources generate income both through employment and the sale of surplus goods. For poor households and women, the impact of deforestation is unambiguously negative. Deforestation reduces income from gathering wild forest products that, on average, account for 21% of household income in communities living in and adjacent to the forest, communities in which the poorest households are most dependent on the forest. Deforestation also contributes to the loss of the ecosystem services that are so important to health and wellbeing and that buffer poor households from the effects of natural disasters.\textsuperscript{113}

Fisheries and aquaculture (marine and inland) are an important source of income, nutrition and economic opportunity for people in low- and middle-income countries. Women play a significant but often under-appreciated role in small-scale fishing, both as fishers and in other ways.\textsuperscript{115} Overfishing, pollution and unsustainable coastal development do irreversible damage to habitats, ecological functions and biodiversity, adversely affecting people’s livelihoods.\textsuperscript{116}

Tenure insecurity drives poverty, affecting indigenous peoples and other local communities, not least the 1 to 2 billion people worldwide who farm common land to which they have no legal rights. In rural areas, those with little or no access to land are typically among the poorest. Indigenous peoples constitute approximately 3% of the world’s population but account for 15% of those living in extreme poverty. The territories that are home to indigenous peoples constitute up to 22% of the world’s land surface and contain around 80% of the planet’s biodiversity.\textsuperscript{117} The rights of indigenous peoples often conflict with the economic interests of companies in extractive industries and governments. While the lack of regulation around natural resources is not a problem

\textsuperscript{108} CGAP. (2020). Relief for Informal Workers: Falling through the cracks in COVID-19


\textsuperscript{110} UNICEF. (2020). Human trafficking is a form of slavery.

\textsuperscript{111} UNICEF. (2020). Child Labour.

\textsuperscript{112} Sida (2019). Report to the Swedish Government on biodiversity.1

\textsuperscript{113} FAO. (2015). Forests and poverty reduction.

\textsuperscript{114} CGD. (2017). Forests and Poverty: Barking Up the Wrong Tree?

\textsuperscript{115} SLU. (2020). David Lymer, Charlotte Berkström, Massimiliano Cardinale, Andreas Sundelöf, Andrea Belgrano and Michele Casini. Marine and coastal fisheries in a development context.

\textsuperscript{116} CBD. (2016). Sustainable Fisheries Press Brief.

\textsuperscript{117} IFAD. (2018). Indigenous peoples’ collective rights to lands, territories and natural resources.
unique to indigenous peoples, the remnants of colonisation and exploitation pose specific threats to indigenous communities.\textsuperscript{118}

**Access to financial services\textsuperscript{119}, electricity and ICT**

Between 2011 and 2017, 1.2 billion people gained access to financial services, largely due to the rapid development of mobile financial services, not least in developing countries. Despite this positive trend, approximately 1.7 billion adults do not have access to financial services (unbanked), of whom 67\% (1.15 billion) live in either Asia (808 million) or sub-Saharan Africa (339 million)\textsuperscript{120}. Globally, on average access for women is 9\% lower for women than men. Of those who remain unbanked, 56\% are women. People living in poverty are also overrepresented; half of those who remain unbanked belong to the poorest 40\%. Those who are unbanked are more likely to have low levels of education and stand outside the workforce. Lack of access to financial services is often identified as one of the most significant obstacles to the development of the private sector in developing countries.

![Access to electricity, % of population, 1994–2018](source: World Bank)

**Percentage of women without an account at a bank or with a mobile money service, 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MENA</th>
<th>Latin America and the Caribbean</th>
<th>Europe and Central Asia</th>
<th>South Asia</th>
<th>Sub-Saharan Africa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Development Indicators

Access to electricity is crucial to alleviating poverty, economic growth and improving living standards. Although the percentage of people with access to electricity has increased steadily, lack of access continues to present a challenge to economic development, the fight against poverty and increasing living standards in low-income countries. The use of firewood and charcoal as a primary fuel in rural households has a negative impact on health and is also a contributor to deforestation. As of 2018, only 42\% of the population in low-income countries had access to electricity, compared to 93\% in middle-income countries.\textsuperscript{121} Of those who lack access to electricity, 70\% live in sub-Saharan Africa (548 million people 2018). Although the percentage of people with access to electricity is rising in the region, the expansion is failing to keep pace with population growth, meaning that the number of people without electricity remained steady between 2016 and 2018.\textsuperscript{122}

Despite major progress in increasing access to information and communication technology (ICT) services globally over the past five years, with a significant increase in mobile internet access, over 40\% of people in low- and middle-income countries will still be offline in 2025.\textsuperscript{123} If the least developed countries also fail to develop in the digital sphere, there is a risk that inequities between and within nations will increase as rapid digitalisation changes the rules of international economic development and competition.\textsuperscript{124} The internet is still not open and secure for everyone. This presents particular challenges in countries with totalitarian tendencies, in which control is considered more important than unrestricted access. The most common point of access to the internet in low- and middle-income countries is the mobile phone. Literacy and digital competence are the two greatest barriers to mobile internet use.\textsuperscript{125} The gender gap in access to ICT varies between different parts of the world. Globally, 327 million fewer women than men have a mobile


\textsuperscript{119} World Bank (2017). The Global Findex Database.


\textsuperscript{121} World Bank. World Development Indicators.


\textsuperscript{123} GSMA. (2020). The State of Mobile Connectivity 2020.

\textsuperscript{124} Davide Strusani, Georges Houngbonon. (2019). The role of artificial intelligence in supporting development in emerging markets. IFC.

\textsuperscript{125} GSMA. (2020). The Mobile Economy.
phone with an internet connection. In the least
developed countries, one in seven women use the
internet compared to one in five men. There are
many underlying causes of gender-based digital
exclusion, including cost, lack of education and
digital competence, as well as gender biases and
norms.\footnote{OECD. (2018). Bridging the Digital Gender Divide.}

Access to water and sanitation
Lack of access to water and sanitation traps millions
of people in poverty, stunts the growth of children
and causes diseases such as diarrhoea, the second
most common cause of death among children under
five. Children living in poverty also suffer from
intestinal parasites that, in combination with malnu-
trition and infections, stunt growth. This clearly has
an impact on the kind of life the child will be able to
live as an adult. In 2017, 90% of the world’s popula-
tion (6.8 billion) had access to basic drinking water
services, an increase from 82% (5 billion) in 2000. If
current trends continue, by 2030 approximately 96%
will have basic water access. Although there is still a
considerable gap between urban and rural areas,
this has decreased over the same period. Access in
low-income countries remains highly limited, with
only 56% of the population having access to basic
drinking water. Access remains lowest in sub-Saharan
Africa. In 2017, 74% of the world’s population (5.5
billion) used basic sanitation services, compared to
56% (3.4 billion) in 2000. In low-income countries,
however, only 30% of the population have access to
basic sanitation services, a figure that falls as low as
Realize Education’s Promise.} If we are to achieve universal
access by 2030, it will be necessary to double the
current annual increase.\footnote{UNESCO. (2020). Global Education Monitoring Report.} Access to improved water
services is dramatically higher in urban areas than
rural. Almost all urban households have access,
compared to only two thirds of rural households.
That said, even access in urban areas varies; in the
poorer neighbourhoods of some cities, access is lower
than in rural areas – with access in urban

slums presenting a particular challenge. The burden
of water-related tasks falls mainly on women and
girls. When water sources are a long distance from
home, there is a significant risk of sexual or other
physical violence, most commonly in fragile contexts.
In certain countries, a household’s access can be
explained, at least in part, by factors such as ethnici-
ty (e.g. Nigeria and Guatemala) or caste (India). A
child born into a lower caste is three times more
likely to live in a household that practices open
defecation. People with disabilities are less likely to
have access to improved water services.\footnote{UNESCO. (2019). Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene: 2000–2017.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internet users (% of population) 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-income countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Development Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Users of basic sanitation services (% of population) 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-income countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Development Indicators

Which children are not obtaining a good quality
Realize Education’s Promise.} Although school attendance has increased signifi-
cantly in low- and middle-income countries, children
are still out of school due to poverty, where they live,
their gender and/or ethnicity. Those who speak a
minority language, belong to a religious minority and
children with disabilities are to a higher degree
out of school, and those with intersecting sources of
discrimination and disadvantage are especially
vulnerable. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic
closed schools, 258 million children were out of
school, 38% of whom live in sub-Saharan Africa
where the percentage of out of school children even
is increasing\footnote{UNESCO. (2019). Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene: 2000–2017.}. More girls than boys are out of
school. Although access to primary and lower-
secondary education is essentially gender-balanced,
differences remain between girls’ and boys’ school
enrolment, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. From
upper-secondary level and upwards, girls are
severely underrepresented. There is also a signifi-
cant disparity between rich and poor households; in
all regions apart from Europe and North America,
the likelihood of completing lower-secondary school
is three times higher for a young person from a rich
household than from a poor household.\footnote{UNESCO. (2019). Global Education Monitoring Report.} Ethnicity
is an important variable in certain contexts; for
example, in Romania significantly fewer Roma children complete lower-secondary school, while in Latin America children from indigenous communities are twice as likely to go out to work than other children. Girls' schooling is affected by other factors, such as access to water and sanitation; in 2019, 15% of schools worldwide still lacked access to safe drinking water (over half of them in sub-Saharan Africa)\(^\text{134}\), while one in five schools worldwide still lacked any sanitation solutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of children who do not attend school, 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-income countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Development Indicators

As many as 75 million children and young people are out of school as a result of humanitarian crises and armed conflicts\(^\text{135}\). Children living in fragile and conflict-affected states constitute 20% of all children of school age but 50% of those who do not have access to education. Children in fragile states are up to three times less likely to attend school than children in general. They are also significantly more likely to drop out of school. Armed conflict can also have a negative impact in the form of teacher and material shortages as well as trauma. Conflicts also tend to increase exclusion based on ethnicity, religion or gender.\(^\text{136}\) While a safe and secure school environment is a prerequisite for the wellbeing and learning of children, presence in and travelling to and from school exposes many children to risks such as bullying and gender-based violence.

The positive news that more children now attend school hides the less palatable fact that, in many parts of the world, learning outcomes are alarmingly low. This is a global education crisis. After four years of primary school, approximately 125 million children still lack basic literacy and numeracy skills and the children of the poor are hardest hit. Gender differences in performance vary from subject to subject. Girls outperform boys in reading and writing in all countries, while boys are normally better at mathematics.

While lack of schooling will almost inevitably have a negative effect on a child’s opportunities to have a productive working life and earn a living, it also has a negative impact on their trust in society, as well as on their social capital. Each additional school year increases an individual's income by 8 to 10%, even more for women. Someone with an education has greater control over their life – they have greater agency – and there are also links between education and a longer, healthier life. Higher levels of education increases the likelihood that someone will be politically active.\(^\text{137}\)

**Who lacks access to good quality healthcare?**\(^\text{138}\) Although access to healthcare services has improved globally, and despite the fact that access to healthcare is a human right, almost half of the world’s population lacks access to basic health services\(^\text{139}\). The inhabitants of poor countries have inferior access to health services than those in rich countries and the poorer inhabitants within those countries have even less access. While a lack of financial resources or information may create obstacles to using health services, causality is moving in the other direction. When necessary healthcare is postponed or inaccessible, people's health deteriorates, leading to lost income and higher healthcare costs and contributing to poverty.

“We are all poor here, because we have no school and no health center. If a woman has a difficult delivery, a traditional cloth is tied between two sticks and we carry her for 7 km to the health center. You know how long it takes to walk like that? There is nobody who can help here, that’s why we are all poor here.”

[Voices of the Poor, Togo]

People who live in poverty have less access to information about health and health services, whether because of geographical distances, availability (opening hours, waiting times), costs, how well health services respond to their needs and the low quality of the services provided. Poverty may present obstacles to using health services: lack of money to pay medical bills, the cost of transport and lack of information about healthy lifestyle choices.

\(^\text{134}\) WHO, UNICEF. (2020). *Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene in Schools.*


Women, children, and young people, especially those in rural areas, lack access to preventive care and good quality healthcare. Over 800 women die every day from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. Although access to trained midwives has increased globally, 40% of births in sub-Saharan Africa still take place without trained staff, putting at risk the lives of both mother and child. Wide gaps in maternity care remain in low- and middle-income countries and the services are unevenly distributed among population groups. Based on available data from 23 low- and middle-income countries, it is apparent that there are significant differences in access between poorer and richer households: 17% of the poorest households had access to basic care, while the corresponding figure for the richest was 74%, with access lower in rural areas than in towns and cities. In India, people who live in households with low socioeconomic status in poor communities are less likely to consult knowledgeable healthcare providers. Many women and girls who live in poverty have little or no information about or access to services related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, whether due to discrimination, stigma, restrictive legislation and policies or deeply rooted traditions, a situation that has an adverse effect on their health. One example of this is high rates of teenage pregnancy; every year, approximately 12 million girls and young women between the ages of 15 and 19 give birth in low- and middle-income countries.

Despite evidence to support a range of cost-effective interventions to reduce mental illness, 75% of people in need of such services do not have access to care of any kind.

The effects of COVID-19
Not only does lack of access to the internet and other digital services restrict access to financial services, but also to gainful employment. This has been made readily apparent during the COVID-19 crisis, when those who are able to work from home or redirect their business online have the best chance of keeping their jobs. The pandemic has amplified the already identified need to increase access to digital services and new technologies. Aside from low-income countries in general, where internet connections may be haphazard, the ability to work from home is most limited for those in poorly paid occupations. In the shadow of the pandemic, lack of access to social security has been thrown into sharp relief. Lockdowns and lost income opportunities in combination with poor coverage of social security systems will contribute to increased poverty during 2020, not least among those working in the informal sector in urban areas, who are expected to be hardest hit. The COVID-19 pandemic has struck with particular ferocity against those living in urban slums and informal settlements where it is often impossible to implement recommendations such as hand sanitation, social distancing, isolation at home and lockdowns in order to prevent the spread of infection. The residents of these areas often live in the informal economy and have lost a large part of their income during the pandemic. According to the United Nations, women are overrepresented in the informal economy. The risk of evictions has also increased as lost incomes make it impossible to pay rents. Access to education decreased significantly during the pandemic, something that will have long-term implications for individuals, communities and countries. During spring 2020, to various extents 190 countries implemented school closures, leaving 1.65 billion children and young people without schooling. Although more and more countries have gradually reopened schools, in November 2020 over 230 million children and young people were still affected by school closures. While many countries have invested in various distance-learning solutions, it has proved extremely difficult to replace regular attendance at school. There is also a risk that progress made in education for girls will be lost; it is estimated that 11 million girls will not return to school. School closures have also had other negative effects, such as lost school meals, an increased risk for girls in particular of being subject to violence and abuse, and reduced access to

142 Defined as six out of seven basic health interventions in the field of child and maternal health.
149 UNESCO. [2021]. Education: From Disruption to Recovery.
education and learning for already marginalised groups, such as pupils with disabilities\textsuperscript{151}. The long-term impact of school closures can therefore be expected to be extensive, both for individuals and communities. The UN has warned that if schools do not reopen we risk “a lost generation”.

The pandemic has reduced access to healthcare worldwide. In many poor countries, for example, we are seeing a reduction in the number of women seeking maternity care, something that may have devastating consequences and cost years of progress in reducing maternal mortality. There are also reports that those living with HIV are finding it more difficult to access antiretroviral therapy. As is the case in most crises, it is the poor who bear the brunt. Analyses show that the response to COVID-19 is displacing basic healthcare interventions, undermining the progress made in the field of health over recent decades, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The indirect impact of the pandemic on public health may therefore be felt more keenly than the disease itself. Analyses performed by the WHO, UNAIDS, the Stop TB Partnership and others forecast that deaths from AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria will double as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the displacement of basic healthcare in many countries.\textsuperscript{152} Measures implemented to deal with COVID-19 have also displaced sexual health and reproductive services, such as maternity care, safe abortions and access to antiretroviral therapy for those with HIV. National vaccination programmes for children have been postponed in many countries, with 148 million children in 35 countries at risk of going unvaccinated. There have been reports of local outbreaks of diseases such as measles in 16 countries.\textsuperscript{153} UNFPA has estimated that global lockdowns could lead to access to contraception being denied to an additional 47 million women, 7 million unplanned pregnancies, 31 million cases of gender-based violence and an additional 13 million child marriages in low- and middle-income countries.\textsuperscript{154}

\textsuperscript{152} The Global Fund, Unite to Fight. (2020). Mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on countries affected by HIV, Tuberculosis, and Malaria.
\textsuperscript{153} UNICEF. (2020). Global response situation report.
\textsuperscript{154} UNFPA. (2020). Press release.
The previous section paints a picture of poverty in its various dimensions, with examples of those who suffer from deprivations in the different dimensions. It also demonstrates causal relationships between dimensions in terms of how poverty in one dimension may contribute to or deepen poverty in another. To understand the structural causes of poverty, the available opportunities to escape poverty and the risk of increased poverty, we also need to analyse the development context that shapes the living conditions of the women, men, girls and boys who live in poverty. Sida analyses the development context in four sub-contexts: political and institutional, environmental, conflict, and socioeconomic. These four sub-contexts are closely interconnected and may be mutually reinforcing. In this section, we present examples of significant facts and trends within the four sub-contexts as an explanation for the poverty described in Section 2.

The political and institutional context: Weak formal institutions and unrepresentative democracy

The political and institutional context encompasses formal and informal political institutions, norms, the rule of law and human rights. Despite the advances in democratic development globally over the past 50 years, it is within the political and institutional context that we find many of the explanations as to why certain groups live in poverty in its various dimensions. The fact that women’s power and voice is often restricted to the benefit of men can, for example, in part be explained in many countries by gender-discriminatory legislation and by patriarchal social norms that prevent women from shaping their own lives. There are strong links between effective governance and economic development and many examples of the importance of democracy to sustainable development. Free and fair elections contribute to improved health. The third wave of democratisation has slowed over recent years. Although many of the advances made around the world since the 1970s endure, it is also clear that many of the countries that introduced universal suffrage during this wave lack sections of the institutional framework that support democratic governance. This is probably a (partial) explanation for why, globally speaking, autocracy has become a more common path than democratisation over recent years. Even if the institutions exist on a formal level, they are described as weak in as much as they can easily be bypassed or corrupted.

“The state steals from us all the time so deceiving the state is not a sin.”

(Voices of the Poor, Ukraine)

Weak institutions

Weak institutions are characteristic of low- and middle-income countries – from democratic institutions and the judiciary to socioeconomic institutions. These formal but weak institutions and forms of governance have never truly been able to include the many citizens living in poverty nor to give them power and voice. A parallel culture of patronage is a much more immediate presence for many people than formal political and economic institutions. Those living in poverty find themselves primarily living in this parallel ‘informal’ reality, only making sporadic forays into the formal structure, such as voting in elections. Formal political and economic decisions are generally beyond the sphere of influence of poor people, helping to maintain the status quo. Elite capture, the redirection of public resources to benefit those in power, is also common, further depriving citizens of power and voice. Inequality presents a risk to democracy, social cohesion and a peaceful society.

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157 The frequency and effects of patronage are discussed in, inter alia, the World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law.

In many contexts, there is little or no expectation that elections will be a mechanism for change; rather, they are viewed as a potential trigger for conflict and unrest. We are seeing an ongoing dismantling of the components of democracy, as political and civil rights such as freedom of assembly, association, expression and information are gradually restricted, both online and physically. This retrogression is being achieved by the politicisation of the judiciary and through restrictive legislation and regulation introduced by governments and parliaments, all of which makes it more difficult to analyse and expose the gradual erosion of democratic space.\(^{159}\) Public awareness of this phenomenon may be one of the reasons why voter turnout is decreasing. In parallel with this autocratic development, democratic protests increased during 2019, demonstrating dissent against the erosion of democracy and criticism of authoritarian rule. Demonstrations have contributed to democratisation in 22 countries over the past decade, including Armenia, Tunisia and Sri Lanka.\(^{160}\)

Lack of transparency, insight and functioning supervisory bodies facilitates corruption. That said, corruption is a complex phenomenon that cannot be explained away as a function of this lack of capacity; in many societies, it is deeply rooted in social norms and political cultures and is strongly linked to power, politics and money. Lack of capacity, such as financial and human resources and infrastructure, and elite bargaining undermine the judiciary, especially in low-income countries. Corruption and legal impunity for those with resources makes equality before the law and legal certainty impossible.\(^{161}\)

### Table: Percentage of companies that have made informal payments to civil servants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Sub-Saharan Africa</th>
<th>East Asia and the Pacific</th>
<th>South Asia</th>
<th>MENA</th>
<th>Latin America and the Caribbean</th>
<th>Europe and Central Asia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019 Percentage</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Development Indicators

Flawed management and a failure to comply with legislation drive the degradation of natural resources, increasing the risk of tensions and conflicts over scarce resources within and between countries, transboundary water resources for example.

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Undemocratic development
Threats, harassment, imprisonment, abduction and murder are employed to prevent human rights defenders and journalists from demanding rights and holding the state to account. The scope for rights advocates in civil society and the media to make themselves heard and to access information is limited by measures such as restrictive legislation governing NGOs, terrorism, states of emergency, etc. Human rights and freedoms are increasingly being restricted, primarily freedom of opinion, expression, assembly and organisation but even academic freedom. The freedom to associate and organise has decreased by 14% in countries classed as authoritarian. Polarisation and political violence are increasing in these countries, many of which are located in Central Asia and Eastern Europe.

Around 40% of the world’s population lives in countries where these rights are regularly infringed, and this figure is rising. The ITUC Global Rights Index documents violations of internationally recognised labour rights. Globally, 85% of countries violate the right to withdraw labour through criminalisation. This is an increase from 63% in 2014. The right to collective bargaining is limited in 80% of countries, an increase from 60% in 2014, underlining the negative development. According to International IDEA and the International Parliamentary Union (IPU), opposition politicians and party members are particularly liable to suffer rights violations, such as being suspended or dismissed from their posts, unfair trials, restrictions on their freedom of expression, torture and degrading treatment. In 2019, the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians noted the highest ever number of new cases.

"Whilst previously characterised by the strength of its democracy, the political climate has deteriorated since the 2016 election. Freedom of expression and assembly continue to visibly suffer through biased reporting by state media, intimidation and harassment reported by private media and CSOs, and crackdown on opposition politicians." (Sida’s analysis of multidimensional poverty in Zambia 2018)

The media is often governed by economic interests with close ties to the political elite. Freedom of expression and media integrity have decreased in a number of countries over the past decade. In some cases, this is due to a general decline in democracy as the scope for opposition is limited, critical voices silenced and electoral processes manipulated, while in others it is the upshot of the rise of nationalist political parties and justified by arguments for national sovereignty, law and order, national security and a firm response to terrorism.

While the Middle East and North Africa is the most dangerous region of the world for journalists, Eastern Europe and Central Asia are not far behind. China is ranked 177th out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index, just ahead of last-placed North Korea. Legislation to criminalise so-called “fake news” provides public authorities with an instrument to control the activities of reporters. Legislation to curb the dissemination of illegal content on social media often fails to meet international standards.

Media censorship is also on the rise, as is partisan news coverage favouring the government or some other elite and the dissemination of toxic hate speech, adding to its dissemination on social media.
media. National security has been invoked to weaken protection for journalists, increase surveillance and close newspapers and radio stations. In many countries, this has led to significant reduction in the freedoms afforded by new technologies. This is on top of existing legislation prohibiting blasphemy and the defamation of those in power.

**Discriminatory legislation**

Over 2.5 billion girls and women around the world are adversely affected by discriminatory legislation that denies them the same rights afforded to boys and men. Legislation that denies them equal rights within marriage and that fails to protect them from rape. Only six countries in the world provide women with equal rights in working life, while 93 countries permit girls to marry before the age of 18 with their parents’ consent. Structural barriers, such as discriminatory legislation and customs, restrict women’s opportunities to run for political office, as well as their access to education, contacts and resources, automatically leaving them in a worse position when it comes to competing with men for political and other leadership posts. Many countries have enacted legislation that restricts women’s access to the labour market and giving husbands the right to decide whether their wives are permitted to work, or lack legislation prohibiting sexual harassment. Power dynamics and social norms also restrict women’s economic empowerment.

Discriminatory legislation criminalising, for example, same-sex marriage is in place in Africa and the MENA region that in some countries can lead to life imprisonment or even the death penalty.

State repression also finds expression in the manipulation of legislation. Human rights defenders are increasingly highlighting the use of existing laws and states of emergency to hinder and delegitimise their work. Some states have exploited laws designed to prevent and prosecute terrorism and religious extremism to prevent human rights defenders from operating by freezing their assets and seizing documents. Laws regulating the financing of non-governmental organisations have also been deployed for this purpose. All in all, the erosion of democratic space and underfunding severely restrict the ability of civil society to act.

Over the past decade, legislation has also been deployed to restrict religious freedom; for example, several South Asian countries have legislated against conversion from the majority religion.

**Norms and values**

Patrician structures grant privileges to men and restrict women. Masculine norms also have an effect. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Gender and Social Norms Index 2020, which covers 75 countries, almost 90% of men and women espouse negative norms about women regarding politics, the economy, violence or reproductive rights. One crucial factor affecting the participation of women in the labour market in the Arab states is gender roles that assign women responsibility for unpaid household chores and men the role of breadwinner.

For girls and women, their opportunities and choice regarding health is adversely affected by discriminatory norms encompassing sexual coercion and violence, as well as traditions such as female genital mutilation and forced or child marriage. This in turn renders them more vulnerable and less able to protect themselves against unwanted pregnancies and the complications related to pregnancy and childbirth, or against HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases. Women, girls and transgender people who menstruate are also adversely affected by the widespread stigma and taboos associated with menstruation, which are deeply rooted in misogynic structures and discrimination of women and girls. If they are to navigate menstruation hygienically and with dignity, women and girls require access to clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene at home, in school and at work.

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172 Sida. (2020). Gender Equality and Dimensions of Poverty
173 UN Women. (2017). Women’s Leadership and Political Participation
174 DCEED. (2019). Women’s Economic Empowerment: What do we know?
175 Human Rights Watch. (2020). Outlawed. The love that dare not speak its name.
179 Sida. (2020). Gender Equality and Dimensions of Poverty
180 ILO. (2020). World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2020
181 Sida. (2020). Health and Dimensions of Poverty
183 UNICEF. (2020). Thousands of children die every day due to contaminated water.
Additional diagrams showing the political and institutional context

- **Societal fragility, 2019**
  
  Source: OECD, States of Fragility 2020

- **Property rights and rule-based governance, 2011–2019 [1=low to 6=high]**
  
  Source: World Bank

- **Women Business and the Law Index, 2019**
  *(The index measures how laws and regulations affect women’s economic opportunity)*
  
  Source: World Bank

- **Civil Liberties Index, 1980–2020**
  
  Source: V-dem
The environment context: Depletion of natural resources and the effects of climate change

The environmental context encompasses trends such as climate change and the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services, as well as the implications of these developments. Among other things, it captures the consequences of climate change. These strike hardest against the poorest individuals and communities, who are often dependent on farming or live in places that are especially exposed to climate change, such as urban slums at risk of being washed away by floods or in rural areas where droughts threaten the harvests.

The depletion of natural resources

In 2019, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) presented a global assessment of the state of biodiversity and ecosystem services. The results presented in the report are disheartening. Nature, its diversity, the functioning of its ecosystems and the ecosystem services it provides are deteriorating more rapidly than at any time in human history. A million species are at risk of extinction. This presents not only a threat to the animal and plant kingdoms, but also to the fight against global poverty. People living in poverty are especially dependent on biodiversity and natural resources, both for employment and livelihoods and access to food. The five most important direct underlying factors for the loss of biodiversity are: changes to the use of land and water, overfishing and overhunting, climate change, pollution, and the spread of invasive species. The most important indirect factors are: patterns of production and consumption, population dynamics, global trade, and technological development.

While the underlying causes of depleted natural resources and pollution are largely to be found in the wealthier parts of the world, this analysis focuses on understanding the causal relationships in low- and middle-income countries. As this is where development cooperation takes place. To a large extent, the overexploitation of ecosystems in low- and middle-income countries is driven by unsustainable patterns of consumption in wealthy nations; that said, unsustainable production methods/patterns in developing countries also have an impact. While the extraction and use of fossil resources has contributed to economic development, this has an obvious flipside in the form of climate change, environmental destruction and the impact of pollution on public health. The combination of rapid population growth and increasing levels of consumption places an increasing burden on terrestrial natural capital. This leads to increasing competition between land use and the provision of ecological goods and services, between human demands (for food, water and energy) and the pressing need to protect the other ecosystem services that regulate and support all life. The widespread use of hazardous chemicals in materials and production processes is a major problem exacerbated by the fact that a large proportion of global manufacturing takes place in China and Southeast Asia, where legislation is not as robust as it is in Europe.

“Little by little the environment is dying and people don’t understand that the problem comes from the fact that man is killing the environment.”

[Voices of the Poor, Guatemala]

The loss of biodiversity has increased over the past 50 years due to factors such as more intensive farming, the cultivation of grasslands, deforestation and other changes to land use. Increasingly intensive farming methods using more fertilisers and pesticides further reduce the space for biodiversity. Other factors that contribute to reduced biodiversity include direct exploitation in the form of hunting, fishing, deforestation and the drainage of wetlands, changes to freshwater areas, rivers and river basins and urbanisation and infrastructure construction. Climate change is now a direct cause of species loss, with an increasing negative impact on biodiversity.

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184 This section is largely based on IPBE. (2019). Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services. Additional sources are stated separately.

185 Ecosystem services are the direct and indirect provisions of nature to humans that are fundamental to our wellbeing, including social, cultural and spiritual wellbeing.


To this can be added the changing production and consumption patterns that are increasing pressure from emissions, waste, invasive species and chemical contamination of the soil, water and air. The loss of indigenous knowledge (and knowledge systems) of biodiversity has also been identified as at least as great a challenge as the loss of biodiversity in itself.  

Human impact on the marine environments is noticeable from coastal to deep sea areas. Freshwater ecosystems are declining at an alarming rate, as is the biodiversity on which their ecosystem services are based, services that are more important than terrestrial ecosystem services. Biodiversity is the basis for all fishing and aquaculture and the vast majority (90%) of fishers around the world fish on a small-scale in low- and middle-income countries. Of the world’s inland catch, a vital source of nutrition for people living in poverty, 95% comes from developing countries. According to one estimate in 2014, only 3% of the ocean is considered free from human impact. Half of the world’s living coral reefs have been lost since the 1870s and the loss has been accelerating over recent decades. Coastal ecosystems and coral reefs are among the world’s most productive ecosystems. Their loss reduces protection for populations from storms and hurricanes and opportunities to support oneself from fishing and aquaculture in the affected areas. Between 100 million and 300 million people currently live in coastal risk zones. Rising sea levels as a result of climate change also threaten to force nearly 40 million people from their homes.

Despite the invaluable importance of the world’s forests, deforestation continues at a rapid pace; over the past 50 years, the Amazon has lost 17% of its forests, deforestation continues at a rapid pace; over the past 50 years, the Amazon has lost 17% of its forests. Deforestation contributes to the depletion of biodiversity, desertification, flooding and greenhouse gas emissions. In addition to logging, both legal and illegal, deforestation is driven by factors such as agricultural encroachment, the expansion of infrastructure and mining. While this is a global phenomenon, the problem is especially pressing in tropical rainforests, as these provide habitats for a large percentage of the world’s unique biodiversity.

Soil degradation is a contributing factor to climate change and adversely affects the living conditions of millions of people, especially those living in poverty, not least women and children. The depletion of natural resources affects the ability of millions of people living in poverty to support themselves, see the section “Poverty is lack of opportunities and choice” for an analysis of who is affected. Scarcity is sometimes associated with livestock and overgrazing or soil depletion reducing the long-term ability to use ecosystem services.

Soil, air and water pollution
The overarching trend is that pollution and plastics in freshwater and marine environments continues to increase. Over 150 million tonnes of plastic is floating on the ocean, a figure that increases by between 5 million and 13 million tonnes every year. Since the 1990s, pollution has increased in almost every river in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Tens of millions of people on these continents live in risk zones for health problems related to contaminated surface water. A pronounced increase in untreated wastewater affects not only the quality of water supplies but also the amount of water available to meet human needs and maintain ecosystems.

The highest levels of urban air pollution are found in low- and middle-income countries in the eastern Mediterranean and Southeast Asia, followed by cities in the western Pacific region. Most fatalities related to air pollution occur in developing countries, where legislation is ineffectual or not applied, vehicle standards are lower and coal-fired power stations more common.

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192 D. Lymer. (2020). Inland capture fisheries in a development context - Policy brief. SLU.
196 WHO. (2016). Air pollution rises in many of the world’s poorest cities.
197 UNEP. (2019). Air pollution hurts the poorest most.
Climate change and its impact on people living in poverty

"Environmental issues are not prioritized and are largely neglected. Hence, coping capacity to deal with climate related risk is extremely weak." (Sida’s analysis of multidimensional poverty in Afghanistan, 2017)

Cross-border greenhouse gas emissions have increased by 1.5% over the past decade. Over recent decades, global warming has reduced snow and ice sheets, glaciers and the spread and thickness of Arctic sea ice, as well as increased the temperature of permafrost. This in turn has led to a rise in global mean sea level, increasing the risk of extreme weather, not least in combination with rising sea surface temperatures. Coastal ecosystems are vulnerable to ocean warming, including more intense marine heatwaves, as well as to ocean acidification and oxygen depletion, saltwater encroachment and rising sea levels.

Low-income countries suffer more from the effects of climate change and people living in poverty most of all. Climate change is a double blow to people living in poverty: because they are more dependent on natural resources for survival; and because the degradation of ecosystems due to overexploitation, land use and climate change undermines sustainable and equitable development. While it is difficult to estimate exactly how many people will be displaced by climate change, it is clear that it will lead to significant population movements as certain areas of the world become less sustainable places to live. The terms climate refugee or environmental refugee are already well established.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of people in millions displaced by natural disasters in 2017</th>
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Source: UNHCR and ourworldindata.org

Coastal communities, including many Small Island Developing States (SIDS), polar regions and high mountain regions are especially vulnerable to the consequences of climate change. Some 670 million people live in high mountain regions, a figure expected to rise to between 740 and 840 million by 2050. Around 680 million people live in coastal zones, a figure estimated to rise to over 1 billion by 2050, and 65 million in SIDS. This means that approximately 1.5 billion people currently live in regions that are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change. Communities in high mountain regions are mainly threatened by changes to the state of glaciers, snow and permafrost, while coastal and polar communities are badly affected by rising sea levels and changing ocean and water conditions.

The impact of climate change on ecosystems and ecosystem services will not be evenly distributed around the world. It is anticipated that the effects of climate change will increase existing inequities as they will have a greater impact on those living in poverty. This especially applies to indigenous peoples.

203 The terms climate refugee or environmental refugee are however problematic, given that definitions under international law render this type of “refugee” largely invisible in the statistics, as no institution is responsible for collecting data on the numbers of people displaced by climate and/or environmental changes.

Source: World Bank
Climate change affects both the societal and environmental causes of ill health. It is forecast that climate change will cause 250,000 additional fatalities each year between 2030 and 2050 from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress. Regions with inadequate infrastructure, mostly in developing countries, are least equipped to deal with this situation. Children living in developing countries are among the most vulnerable to heat-related risks and are exposed to health risks for a longer period of time. The elderly and those with existing conditions will also be disproportionally affected.\textsuperscript{206}

Internally displaced persons from natural disasters, 2017

Source: ourworldindata.org

Hunger and malnutrition will continue to increase due to extreme weather conditions, changing environmental conditions and the subsequent increased spread of pests and diseases, not least when combined with weak institutions, armed conflicts, violence and refugee crises. Smallholders and local communities that rely on subsistence farming will be more severely affected by this. Hunger is more widespread in countries with high population growth and low enrolment in education and health services and has a negative impact on economic development.\textsuperscript{207}

Nature reserves (% of total land area) 2018

\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & Sub-Saharan Africa & East Asia and the Pacific & South Asia & MENA & Europe and Central Asia & Latin America and the Caribbean \\
\hline
Sub-Saharan Africa & 17.7 & 16.5 & 7.3 & 6.7 & 11.7 & 23.5 \\
\hline
Source: World Development Indicators

\end{tabular}

Melting glaciers will increase the risk of flooding during wet seasons and reduce water supply in dry seasons for one sixth of the world’s population, mainly on the Indian subcontinent, parts of China and the Andes.\textsuperscript{208} Melting glaciers will increase the risk of flooding from glacial lakes and of landslides, especially in mountainous regions of Nepal, Peru and Bolivia.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{nature_reserves.png}
\caption{Nature reserves (% of total land area) 2018}
\end{figure}

Source: World Bank

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{displaced_persons.png}
\caption{Internally displaced persons from natural disasters, 2017}
\end{figure}

Source: ourworldindata.org

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{gain_index.png}
\caption{Notre Dame Gain Index, 2017 (vulnerability to climate change in combination with readiness to improve resilience)}
\end{figure}

Source: Notre Dame Global Adaption Initiative

\textsuperscript{206} WHO. (2018). Fact Sheet on Climate Change and Health.
The conflict and peaceful context: Armed conflict undermines development and poverty reduction

The conflict/peace context encompasses: on the one hand, factors such as social cohesion, trust, conflict resolution, the legal sector and arms control; and on the other, violence, international and intranational tensions, disputes and conflicts of interest. In the section on the human security dimension of poverty, it was stated that globally more people die of crime-related violence than directly in combat in armed conflicts. This comparison is somewhat lagging in as much as war and armed conflict continue to claim victims after the initial casualties of direct violence. This section summarises the long-term effects of war and armed conflict in the form of multidimensional poverty. Armed conflict creates a kind of poverty trap that is difficult to escape. One cause for concern is that the number of armed conflicts has increased over recent years. This section provides a brief overview of a few overarching trends related to armed conflict, as well as peace treaties, legal recourse to curb crimes of aggression and crimes against humanity, and trends related to the supply and control of arms.

Armed conflict as a poverty trap

A cursory examination reveals that the world has become less peaceful. In the section on the human security dimension of poverty, we confirmed that the vast majority of people who die in armed conflict live in the regions of the world in which the majority of those living in extreme poverty live. Armed conflict kills, wounds and causes material damage, making it easy to see that its immediate effects come at a high humanitarian and economic price. It is estimated that between 2011 and 2016, Syria lost USD 226 billion, or four times the country’s 2010 GDP.\(^{209}\)

According to the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee’s multidimensional analysis framework, which lists 57 fragile contexts, 76% of those living in extreme poverty globally live in fragile and conflict-affected states. As poverty has decreased in states not classified as fragile and conflict-affected, so global poverty has been concentrated in these contexts, a trend that can be expected to increase going forward. Although globally resource poverty declined steadily between 2000 and 2019, there were only marginal improvements or even backsliding in fragile and conflict-affected states.\(^{210}\) Recent explanations for the increase in and concentration of poverty to fragile and conflict-affected states have focused attention not only on the immediate destruction and costs of armed conflict, but also increasingly on the more long-term effects of poverty. In the section on the human security dimension of poverty, examples were provided of the impact of armed conflict on education and health and it was demonstrated that armed conflict is the single largest factor underlying hunger in the world today. The World Bank has reported that the impact of armed conflicts in terms of lower levels of education and deteriorating physical and mental health, including the effects of childhood malnutrition, results in a long-term decrease in productivity once the conflict ends. Fears of a return to armed conflict may also deter investment long after the armed conflict has ended. Through such adverse effects on human capital and productivity, armed conflict can contribute to more and deeper poverty for decades and generations to come.\(^{211}\) When a region or country repeatedly relapses into armed conflict, a poverty trap may be created. Examples of this include the 40% decline in Somalia’s GDP since the 1970s and the failure to increase GDP in Afghanistan over the same period due to recurrent and protracted armed conflicts.\(^{212}\)


Armed conflicts are increasing in number

Globally, the number of armed conflicts has increased over recent years until, in 2019, conflicts registered by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) reached the highest level over the period covered by the database, i.e. since 1946.\(^{213}\) This applies to armed conflicts in which at least one of the parties is a state. The increase has been sharpest in Africa, the location for just under half of armed conflicts, no less than eight of which broke out or reignited during 2019.\(^{214}\)

The next highest figure per region was found in Asia and the third in the Middle East. According to the Global Peace Index – which not only looks at the number of armed conflicts but also counts fatalities, other types of violence, armaments, etc. – the least peaceful region of the world is MENA.\(^{215}\)

While armed conflicts between states remain relatively rare, the number of intrastate armed conflicts internationalised through troop involvement by external states has increased dramatically over recent years.\(^{216}\) As many as 40% of intrastate armed conflicts involve external troop involvement, either from neighbouring countries or regional and global superpowers.\(^{217}\) This is a worrying trend, given that research has demonstrated that internationalised intrastate conflicts tend to last longer and claim more casualties than those without the direct involvement of other countries.\(^{218}\)

Conflicts between non-state armed groups (in which none of the primary parties are states) have also increased. Between 2012 and 2019, the annual average number of this type of conflict was 70 compared to an annual average of 31 between 1989 and 2011. At the peak of the civil war in 2014, in Syria

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\(^{213}\) In 2019, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program registered 54 state-based conflicts, the high number since 1946. At the time of writing, data for 2020 has not yet been compiled, however, a rough estimate suggests that the figure will be about the same.

\(^{214}\) According to the Uppsala Conflict Data, in 2019 25 of a total of 54 armed conflicts took place in Africa. The number of African countries experiencing armed conflicts that same year and according to the same source was 18 (some countries had more than one conflict). Two of the conflicts were in Libya, MENA. T. Pettersson & M. Öberg. (2020). Organized Violence 1989–2019. Journal of Peace Research.


alone there were 32 separate registered non-state armed conflicts.\(^{219}\)

One downward trend is in the number of terrorism-related fatalities. The term terrorism is politically sensitive and without any generally accepted definition, according to the University of Maryland’s Global Terrorism Database, 236,422 people died in terrorist attacks between 2002 and 2019, most of them in low- and middle-income countries. All of the 10 countries hardest hit by terrorism during this period were involved in armed conflict, with 95% of deaths occurring in conflict-affected countries, the vast majority (93%) in MENA, sub-Saharan Africa or South Asia. Since 2017, however, the number of terrorist attacks and deaths has decreased. Despite the increase in the number of conflicts, the number of people killed in conflict has declined slightly, largely due to a de-escalation of the armed conflicts in Syria and Iraq.\(^{220}\)

Ethnopolitical tensions and disputes, even when latent or low-key, are equally relevant to development cooperation in fragile contexts. Such disputes represent a significant threat to human security in many contexts and there could be a risk that they will escalate into more conventional armed conflict.\(^{221}\) In West Africa and Sahel, violent confrontations between herders and settled farmers have escalated over recent years, claiming thousands of lives.\(^{222}\) Although these conflicts may fall short of inclusion in databases of violent conflicts due to criteria such as a certain level of organisation and a certain number of fatalities, they should not be neglected in so far as they are characteristic of some of the contexts in which development cooperation takes place and have significant local impact on opportunities to combat poverty.

**Less mediation**

Unlike during the immediate post-Cold War period of the early 1990s, when the number of armed conflicts was almost as high as it is today, there is not a corresponding increase in the number of peace treaties.\(^{223}\) Despite the fact that mediation capacity in itself has increased since the end of the Cold War, the number of conflicts mediated by international mediators has decreased. One scientific article published in 2020 describes this decline in international mediation as “puzzling”, although it does posit the explanation that the rise in the number of conflicts involving Islamist armed actors, coupled with increased reliance on terrorist-listing, has placed a significant number of conflicts outside the reach of international mediation.\(^{224}\) As the international community has undergone a normative shift towards counterterrorism at the expense of conflict resolution, so the number of armed conflicts subject to international mediation has decreased.\(^{225}\)

The percentage of peace treaties that explicitly include gender equality provisions increased from under 10% in the 1990s to 45% in 2013, since when the figure has begun to decline again.\(^{226}\) Despite relatively strong ownership on the part of the UN Secretary-General and many UN Member States, as well as strong support from an active civil society, the women, peace and security agenda has met considerable resistance.\(^{227}\) Studies have shown that women’s participation in and influence over peace negotiations improves the content and implementation of peace treaties and the prospects for a sustainable peace.\(^{228}\)

The participation of civil society is also important in order to increase the legitimacy of peace processes and increase the chances of them leading to a sustainable peace. The inclusion of civil society in peace processes is of particular importance in non-democratic countries.\(^{229}\)

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The ongoing struggle to reduce impunity for international crimes, increased military expenditure and more nonviolent struggles

Aside from the path of negotiation, there is also the legal route of peaceful solutions to international disputes through judicial review. Reducing impunity for those who commit war crimes and other serious breaches of international law may furthermore act as a deterrent to future crimes. Much of the violence committed in armed conflicts could be curbed by improved compliance with international humanitarian law and respect for human rights. One of the reasons that it is so difficult to bring suspects to justice is deadlock on the Security Council. Other avenues are being explored in the aftermath of the mass exodus of some 700,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar to Bangladesh in 2017 that might prove applicable to similar cases. Judges at the International Criminal Court (ICC) have authorised an investigation into alleged cross-border crimes committed against the Rohingya based on the fact that Bangladesh is a signatory to the Rome Statute, even if Myanmar is not. A case against Myanmar has also been brought before the International Court of Justice in the Hague by Gambia alleging breaches of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The latter case is first in which a state with no direct connection to the alleged crimes has used its membership in the Genocide Convention to bring a case before the ICJ based on the obligation of all signatories to prevent genocide anywhere in the world. The United Nations Human Rights Council has also appointed the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIIMM).

One measure of world insecurity is the resources countries invest in military armament. Total global military expenditure increased for the fifth consecutive year in 2019 and now corresponds to 2.2% of global GDP, or USD 249 per person. The 2019 increase was largely due to spending patterns in the United States and China, which between them account for over half of global military expenditure.\(^\text{230}\)

### Military expenditure (% of total state expenditure) 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>East Asia and the Pacific</th>
<th>South Asia</th>
<th>MENA</th>
<th>Latin America and the Caribbean</th>
<th>Europe and Central Asia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia and the Pacific</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Europe and Central Asia</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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### Personnel in the armed forces (% of total workforce) 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>East Asia and the Pacific</th>
<th>South Asia</th>
<th>MENA</th>
<th>Latin America and the Caribbean</th>
<th>Europe and Central Asia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia and the Pacific</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Europe and Central Asia</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
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Source: World Development Indicators

Armed conflicts are usually divided into two categories: those about control over territory; and those about how, or by whom, the state should be governed. Contrary to popular belief, those who challenge the status quo are more likely to rely on nonviolent methods rather than organising for armed struggle, even when the matter at hand is the governance and territorial boundaries of the state. And according to researchers, if anything this is increasingly common.\(^\text{231}\) It is no easy matter to overthrow a government, change the way a country is governed or alter its territorial borders. Should one attempt to do so, however, the chances of success are twice as high when employing nonviolence rather than armed struggle.\(^\text{232}\)

The causes of violence and armed conflict in other areas of the context

So, while armed conflicts are generally divided into those fought over territory and those that are about a change or reform of government, the stated goal (the

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\(^\text{230}\) SIPRI. (2020). *SIPRI Yearbook 2020*. Swedish summary. According to this source, global military expenditure in 2019 was an estimated USD 1,917 billion.

\(^\text{231}\) E. Chenoweth. (2020). The Future of Nonviolent Resistance. *Journal of Democracy*. P. 74: “Among the 565 campaigns that have both begun and ended over the past 120 years, about 51 percent of the nonviolent campaigns have succeeded outright, while only about 26 percent of the violent ones have.”

\(^\text{232}\) E. Chenoweth. (2020). The Future of Nonviolent Resistance. *Journal of Democracy*. P. 74: “Among the 565 campaigns that have both begun and ended over the past 120 years, about 51 percent of the nonviolent campaigns have succeeded outright, while only about 26 percent of the violent ones have.”
incompatibility is not the same thing as the cause of armed conflict. What the parties say they fight over is not the same thing as why they fight or why they use violent means rather than nonviolent means. Conflicting interests and disputes can be peacefully resolved. "The two civil conflicts between 1989–2003 have had large impact on the Liberian society. Although a reconstruction process has succeeded to some extent, for instance with no violence during the latest president election in 2018, the root causes of the conflict remain unaddressed. Inequality, centralised power, corruption and land disputes are still large concerns in Liberia and drivers of conflict." (Sida’s analysis of multidimensional poverty in Liberia, 2019)

Security fragility, 2019

Source: OECD, States of Fragility 2020

Building a peaceful, inclusive society is a matter of building a society with the capacity to deal with conflicts – because conflicts will inevitably arise – without recourse to violence. From a conflict perspective, democracy is a system for peaceful conflict resolution in that it encompasses institutions, processes and norms designed to identify and resolve disputes by peaceful means. Although there are strong links between democracy and peace, this presupposes that democratic institutions, processes and norms are robust and fit for purpose. Unfortunately, democratisation – the road to democracy – is fraught with risks of violence and armed conflict, see the section on the political and institutional context.

Horizontal inequality between social groups increases the risk of violence, especially when inequities coincide with markers of identity such as ethnicity, religion, clan, etc. The risk rises once again if the state systematically favours or is viewed as biased towards one side or another. These types of conflict tend to revolve around tensions between the state and those on the geographical or political periphery, who reject the national project or respond to exclusion from the political and/or economic system. One factor that motivates people to join armed groups is corruption, or at least the perception that the state or an elite is corrupt.233

"Cohesion can only exist when a sense of identity prevails." (Panama, Voices of the Poor)

A number of factors can exacerbate or increase the risk of violence without being a direct cause. Environmental and climate threats are threat multipliers that increase the risk of violence and armed conflict.234 Ethnopolitical tensions and conflicts between herders and settled farmers are often linked to conflicting interests and disputes over scarce resources. That said, scarcity of resources alone, or indeed other issues related to climate change and environmental destruction, do not in themselves necessarily lead to violence and armed conflict. It is the combination of increased competition for scarce resources and the actions of political elites, stoking inequalities and exploiting tensions for their own ends, that makes peaceful resolution more difficult and violence more likely.235

Finally in this brief and by no means comprehensive overview, it should be noted that studies have shown that societies with a high level of gender equality tend to be more peaceful.236

The economic and social context: Inadequate economic development keeps people in poverty

The socioeconomic context encompasses the size and growth of the economy, key macroeconomic variables, fiscal policy, the components of the economy, the labour market and employment, trade, the utilisation of and dependence on natural resources, the provision of basic social services and demographic development. The economic context can both explain the causes of poverty and highlight the possibilities for escaping it. The fact that a large proportion of the population of sub-Saharan Africa still works in low-productivity agriculture offers a partial explanation as to why income poverty is so widespread in the region. At the same time, examples in certain parts of Asia demonstrate that inclusive economic development has the capacity to move people out of poverty.

Demographic trends

The global population is currently 7.7 billion, an increase from 5.3 billion in 1990. It is growing slower and aging more rapidly than ever before. The majority of the global population, 5.8 billion, live in middle-income countries, while 668 million live in low-income countries. Over the same period, the number of countries classified as low-income has decreased from 50 to 31. An increasing number of countries have undergone the demographic transition in which increasing prosperity has contributed to extended life expectancy, a gradually declining birth rate and smaller families. When a country’s share of working age population becomes larger than its non-working population, it may reap the so-called demographic dividend. If a large number of jobs are created across the economy during this period public finances are improved and investments are made in human capital, infrastructure and institutions, the country’s economic prosperity can increase rapidly and be maintained for the period of a gradually aging population. Countries that have not yet started or are in the early stages of demographic transition are home to 90% of those who still live in extreme poverty. In these countries, the population will continue to rise until the demographic transition is initiated. This is the case in 24 of Sida’s 32 partner countries, 15 of which are in sub-Saharan Africa.

There are large regional differences in population growth. The population of sub-Saharan Africa is just over 1 billion, twice as many as in 1990. The region also has the largest percentage under the age of 15 (40%), a level that has remained constant since the 1950s while it has been declining in all other regions. It is expected that by 2100, 80% of the global population will live in the two continents of Africa and Asia (40%), compared to the current figures of 17% in Africa and 60% in Asia. This implies that extreme income poverty – already most widespread in sub-Saharan Africa, which includes 27 of the world’s 28 poorest countries – will become even more concentrated there over the coming decades. The more inclusive socioeconomic development becomes in Africa and Asia, the faster global income poverty will decline. Otherwise, it seems likely that large young populations could become a driving force for instability which in turn could delay development further.

Urbanisation is one of the strongest global trends and it is growing fastest in Africa and Asia. A paradigm shift occurred in 2014, when for the first time a larger percentage of the global population lived in urban areas than in rural. This shift is irreversible: the global rural population has now stabilised at approximately 3 billion and is not expected to increase. Today, 85% of people living in multidimensional poverty live in rural areas, but a shift can be anticipated as the pace of urbanisation increases. It is expected that in 30 years from now two thirds of the global population will live in urban areas, an increase from today’s 50%, making urbanisation one of the most pervasive demographic trends. Less developed regions such as East Asia, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa will account for

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237 World Bank. World Development Indicators.
239 Our World in Data.
240 At just over 1%, annual global population growth is currently at its lowest recorded level in modern times and steadily declining. It is estimated that the global population will continue to grow before stabilising at around 11 billion by the year 2100. Meanwhile, the number of people under 15 years of age has already stabilised at around 2 billion.
241 WDI, country classification.
243 Sabina Alkire, et al. (2014). Poverty in rural areas. OPHI.
90% of urban growth. In these regions of the world, urbanisation is largely unplanned, thus driving the ongoing growth of informal settlements and slums. Slums generally have major shortcomings in access to healthy dwellings, clean water, adequate sanitation, reliable energy supply and waste management, not to mention the safety and security of the people who live in them. Women and girls are particularly hard hit by deficient water and sanitation.

**Financial flows**
Developing countries are dependent on various types of financial flows to fund their development, primarily their own tax revenues but also remittances, foreign investment, private capital and aid. The significance of these flows varies between low-income and middle-income countries, with low-income countries being more reliant on aid and middle-income countries on private capital, remittances and tax revenues. Social sectors are more likely to be funded with aid than productive sectors and infrastructure. Official development assistance (ODA) also becomes less significant vis-à-vis the growing South-South Cooperation, in which aid is more closely linked to bilateral trade agreements and investments. All in all, this decreases the importance of aid to the financing of developing countries.

In terms of sustainable financing for development, developing countries will increasingly need to finance their own development. It is estimated that developing countries will need a tax-to-GDP ratio of at least 15% in order to achieve the global sustainable development goals. Only 30 of the world’s 75 poorest countries currently achieve this. The average tax-to-GDP ratio in low- and middle-income countries is 12%. At the same time, there is a growing concern of rapidly increasing debt levels in several developing countries that places even higher demands on efficient management of public finances. Debt is also increasingly owed on commercial terms to countries and international capital markets, rather than linked to the multilateral debt system (e.g. the Paris Club). This means that developing countries must accelerate reforms to generate tax revenues and make more efficient use of scarce public resources, including responsible debt management.

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244 Itzá Castañeda Camey, et al. (2020). Gender-based violence and environment linkages. IUCN.
245 Itzá Castañeda Camey, et al. (2020). Gender-based violence and environment linkages. IUCN.
248 OECD. (2018). Countries must strengthen tax systems to meet sustainable development goals.
249 World Bank. Tax revenue data.
250 CET brief debts.
The need for public funds to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic including stimulus packages will put further pressures on public finances. The negative impact on public finances is likely to be felt for some time to come; to put things in perspective, it took eight years for the global economy to recover from the 2008 financial crisis. Countries with limited room to manoeuvre in terms of financial and monetary policy will be hit harder. Many developing countries have already requested support packages and debt cancellations.

### Systems providing basic social services

“We keep hearing about monies that the government allocates for projects, and nothing happens on the ground.” (Voices of the Poor, South Africa)

Public funding for education is distributed unevenly in low- and middle-income countries. A study conducted by UNICEF in 2015 showed that, in many countries, most funding primarily benefited the most affluent students. On average, 46% of funding in low-income countries went to the richest 10% of students with the highest levels of educational attainment. In lower-middle-income countries, this figure was 26%. According to UNESCO and the World Bank, given the deteriorating state of public finances, the prospects for mobilising and prioritising necessary education resources are poor. Education systems are often poorly adapted to achieving learning objectives, partly because there are often multiple competing goals and many different stakeholders interacting in a complex manner. These weaknesses are magnified by the fact that many central government agencies lack the capacity to implement their own policies. Given that the pandemic is likely to exacerbate already ineffective resource management in the education sector, there is a risk that these gaps will widen.

A quarter of all countries have legislation that requires children with disabilities to be taught separately, a figure that rises to 40% in Latin America and Asia. Several African countries have legislation excluding pregnant girls and adolescent mothers from school. While certain countries, most recently Sierra Leone, have relaxed this legislation, tens of thousands of pregnant girls and adolescent mothers each year are still denied their right to education. In many Central and Eastern European countries, Roma children are segregated when attending public schools. Teaching staff are unevenly distributed, leading to high teacher density in a limited number of schools and widely ranging class sizes. There are also significant differences between student cohorts within the same school, as class size generally declines with age. This contributes to a situation in which children who fall behind in the early years of schooling are left behind throughout their education, the gap widening with each passing year. A large proportion of teachers lack the necessary skills and have not mastered the subjects they are expected to teach.

Public funding for health services is often directed towards areas of the system that do not meet the needs of people living in poverty, who are often referred to more widely available, often more expensive and lower quality, private services. Figures show that, as a percentage of income, those living in poverty spend more on healthcare than the middle or upper classes (cf. section on opportunities and choice). A lack of basic, affordable, good quality healthcare poses risks to the long-term development of countries. Low- and middle-income countries bear 90% of the global burden of disease but account for

### Table: Percentage of GDP, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sub-Saharan Africa</th>
<th>East Asia and the Pacific</th>
<th>South Asia</th>
<th>MENA</th>
<th>Latin America and the Caribbean</th>
<th>Europe and Central Asia</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development assistance, received</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct foreign investment, inflow</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remittances, received</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Development Indicators

251 Navid Hanif, Ceyla Pazarbasioglu, Pascal Sant-Armans. (2020). Facing the crisis. IMF.
only 12% of global health spending. Corruption in forms such as bribery, theft and the unethical marketing of pharmaceuticals presents a major problem for the functionality of healthcare system, which encompasses both the provision of good quality care and medical products. Healthcare systems in low- and middle-income countries also suffer from inadequate human resources and limited institutional capacity and infrastructure. There is a severe shortage of trained staff. Over 70% of the workforce in the health sector is made up of women who are poorly paid with few benefits and poor working conditions. It is estimated that during 2018, 2.5 million new-born and 5.3 million children under the age of five died mainly as a result of the limited range for effective interventions within existing healthcare systems. The poor quality of the care provided accounts for a greater percentage of excess mortality than having no access to healthcare. Based on data from 54 low- and middle-income countries, 38% of healthcare facilities lack access to the most basic level of water, 19% lack sanitation and 35% do not have soap and water to wash hands.

To a large extent, developing countries still lack access to basic wastewater treatment systems. Access to water and sanitation is critical if children are to attend school. Half of schools in sub-Saharan Africa lack access to water and a third of schools in sub-Saharan Africa, East and Southeast Asia have no toilets or handwashing facilities.

**Employment**

Some 600 million new productive jobs will be required by 2030 simply to absorb the young people entering the labour market, while productivity and incomes from existing jobs will need to increase at the same time. Current growth and employment forecasts and socioeconomic development in low-income countries suggest that this will not be achieved. Improved agricultural productivity and increased opportunities for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) will therefore be vital in the short term for increasing incomes at scale. In the long term, and in countries that have initiated their structural transformation, productive jobs must be created at scale in the service and manufacturing sectors, to which end job-creating trade and investment have an important role to play.

The negative health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the negative economic impact of the Great Lockdown have affected supply and demand for goods and services, as well as people’s mobility. The subsequent unprecedented impact on global employment led to the loss of 495 million full-time jobs in the first half of 2020 alone, 240 million of them in low- and middle-income countries. The disruption of global and local value chains also contributed to reduced investments.

While the agricultural sector remains the largest employer in many developing countries, at around 65% of the workforce, the importance of other sectors such as the service sector is increasing as a percentage of GDP. MSMEs play a crucial role in job creation in all economies, including in developing countries, where the formal and mainly informal private sector is the engine of job creation, while larger companies and the public sector create fewer but most of the scarce formal jobs.

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“The economy has failed to achieve structural transformation. Agriculture sector is still the major contributor of GDP. The agriculture is dominantly smallholding peasant farming. Over 70 percent of Ethiopia’s exports are primary agricultural products such as coffee, oil seeds, chat, cut flower, pulses and others which fetch low prices. Export performance has been sluggish in the past few years.”
(Sida’s analysis of multidimensional poverty in Ethiopia, 2019)

Agriculture plays a crucial role directly linked to employment, poverty reduction, food security and nutrition. It is also particularly exposed to the risks of extreme weather conditions brought about by climate change. Global agriculture is facing the challenge of feeding growing populations, increasingly living in urban areas, at the same time as growing conditions are deteriorating, not least due to climate change, pest infestation and depleted ecosystems. Productivity is low in many low-income countries that rely heavily on the agricultural sector. Most of the over 570 million farms worldwide are family-owned (operating 75% of the world’s agricultural land) and small scale (less than 2 hectares, operating 12% of agricultural land). The average size of farms in most low- and lower-middle-income countries decreased between 1960 and 2000. Small-scale farming continues to dominate in Africa, where, on average for 14 African countries, 80% of holdings are smaller than 2 hectares in size, covering about 25% of the agricultural land. In a number of African, Latin American and Asian countries, men and women alike who are involved in agriculture do not own the land they farm. In addition to agriculture, hundreds of millions of people depend on fishing and other marine resources for their livelihoods. Over 38 million people are directly employed in the fishing industry.

Globally, small and medium-sized enterprises account for 90% of all companies, over 50% of all jobs and 40% of GDP, figures that rise when micro-enterprises and the informal sector are added and one looks solely at developing countries. As the level of informality is high, it is difficult to make any more than a rough estimate of the number of MSMEs. According to the International Finance Corporation (IFC), in 2014 there were approximately 163 million MSMEs operating in the formal sector employing in the region of 508 million people. Of these, 96 million companies employing 231 million people operate in growth markets. Were one to add the informal sector, these numbers would be significantly higher. Globally, approximately 2 billion people work in the informal sector and in Africa 9 out of every 10 workers are informally employed. It is therefore important to address barriers to employment in both the formal and informal private sectors. Of the approximately 163 million formal MSMEs in developing countries, 40% (65 million) have a combined annually finance gap of USD 5.2 billion, a figure that rises significantly when one factors in informal micro-enterprises.

A complex and unpredictable business climate presents further obstacles to private-sector development. According to the Doing Business rankings, 13 of the 20 worst countries in which to do business are in sub-Saharan Africa.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farming, forestry and fishing (% of GDP) 2018</th>
<th>Sub-Saharan Africa</th>
<th>East Asia and the Pacific</th>
<th>South Asia</th>
<th>MENA</th>
<th>Latin America and the Caribbean</th>
<th>Europe and Central Asia</th>
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<tr>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Other jobs within agriculture (% of workers) 2018</th>
<th>Sub-Saharan Africa</th>
<th>East Asia and the Pacific</th>
<th>South Asia</th>
<th>MENA</th>
<th>Latin America and the Caribbean</th>
<th>Europe and Central Asia</th>
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<tr>
<td>53%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Development Indicators

267 FAO. (2020). Gender equality.
268 WWF. (N/A). Mitt hav.
Trade has and will continue to play a crucial role in global job creation, especially of formal, productive and decent employment; however, barely 1% of international trade involves the least developed countries (LDCs), a figure that has remained steady over recent years. During the period 2000–2015, when developing countries increased their share of international trade from 33 to 48%, poverty decreased dramatically in these countries and thus globally. Millions of jobs were created, not least in exporting manufacturing industries in countries such as China, Vietnam and the Asian Tiger economies of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan. It is estimated that a full implementation of the WTO’s Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) may reduce the cost of trade by an average of 14%, creating 20 million new jobs, mainly in developing countries. The full implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) can be expected to increase the continent’s income by USD 450 billion, helping to lift 30 million people out of extreme poverty.

The greater technical capacity and scalability of larger energy systems such as national or local electricity grids offer the added benefit of being able to supply households as well as schools, hospitals and businesses. Despite the positive trend towards sustainable energy since 2010, 65% of global electricity generation comes from unsustainable solutions in the form of oil, coal and gas, meaning that a large part of the transition remains to be achieved.

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274 [https://www.tradefacilitation.org/tfa-hub/](https://www.tradefacilitation.org/tfa-hub/)
SECTION 4. WHO LIVES IN MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY?

This section provides a few examples of who is living in multidimensional poverty and what form their poverty takes. While the analysis does not conclude that these groups are the poorest, the literature on which the analysis is based provides a similar picture of who is living in poverty in low- and middle-income countries.

The section begins by presenting five personas to clarify the multidimensional and intersectional nature of poverty. This is followed by a compilation of expressions of poverty among various groups based on the different dimension of poverty discussed in Section 2 and supplemented by further information. The groups are presented as examples that, by dint of their characteristics (age, ethnicity, sex, etc.) or life context, experience similar multidimensional poverty. The descriptions of both personas and groups are incomplete, and rather presented as visualisations of persons living in poverty and their situations.

Five personas reveal the multidimensionality of poverty

Kamala is 35 years old and lives in a rural area of Mozambique. She was married at the age of 15 to a considerably older man who has now left her alone with their five children, the last of whom died shortly after birth. Kamala is concerned that her children are undernourished. The cassava on which their diet is based does not go far. Her husband was prone to violence – directed against both Kamala and the children.

Kamala grows corn and cassava which she sells at the local market. Good harvests have become increasingly difficult to come by as the rainy season arrives later than it once did and the area is experiencing longer and longer dry periods. She wishes she could start a small business, perhaps sewing and selling clothes, but she has no education and no idea how to go about it. Her brothers were permitted to attend school and are literate and numerate, while she herself cannot even read, making many situations difficult for her. For example, she has heard that state benefits are available to those without sufficient incomes, but how can she apply if she is unable to read the application form?

Kamala has a guilty consciousness about doing the same as her own parents; her sons are allowed to attend school while her two daughters must stay at home. She would love to send the girls as well, so that they do not end up in the same situation she finds herself in, but she is afraid that something will befall them on the way to and from school, or while they are at school. They would also have to remain home when they have their periods, as there are no toilets or clean water at the school. The best course of action therefore seems to keep them at home so they can help in the fields.

A political conflict is ongoing in her region. Although Kamala knows nothing about politics, she is worried that the conflict will affect her children. She finds it strange, and unfair that she should suffer, given that she has never been permitted to speak at village meetings, where only men are allowed to speak. A neighbour visited her a few weeks ago and asked about her eldest daughter, who is 16 years old. He wanted to take her as his wife. Kamala is unsure about what she should do, or whether she even has any choice in the matter. When the men set their minds on something, they usually get it. That’s just the way it is in her village.

While life sometimes seems hard to Kamala, she still loves to sit and watch the boys play football or to gather the family in the evening and listen to the children talk about how their days have been, about what they have learned and what they dream of doing. She is proud of them and, even if conditions could have been better, she feels that they have a greater chance of success than she had at their age. This makes life seem brighter.

Sava is 18 years of age and lives in Moldova. Sava grew up in the countryside, his everyday life and those of his siblings and mother marked by the father’s violence. At home, the violence escalated when his father found out that Sava is homosexual. Sava moved to Chisinau in the hope of finding a job but as he has no training and therefore lacks the necessary
skills, he is finding it difficult. Although discrimination on the labour market based on an applicant’s sexual orientation is illegal, he has the impression that this is placing an additional obstacle in his path. Sava survives on the money his elder brother sends home from Russia.

The labour market is not the only place where Sava faces harassment due to his sexual orientation. He has been assaulted and sexually abused on a number of occasions. There is no redress available to Sava; Moldova has no general legislation prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and Sava does not know of anywhere that he can turn to for help and support. He wonders if God is punishing him.

Sava is considering whether he too should leave Moldova for Russia. He has heard that work is available in the building industry and has been put in touch with a man who has offered him a job. Although Sava knows very little about the man, he is beginning to feel desperate and, after all, the man has promised him a job. On arriving in Russia, Sava is met by the man he previously had contact with. The man takes Sava’s mobile phone and passport and says he will hold them in safekeeping for him, as Sava no longer needs them.

**Sharmin is 11 years of age. She has grown up in the belief that her disability is a curse placed upon her to punish her for past sins.** The slum in which Sharmin lives with her mother, father, two brothers and two sisters has no running water, electricity, sewerage or waste management. Sharmin’s mother and sisters spend a great deal of their time fetching water from inadequate sources, as well as undertaking other unpaid work. The hazardous particles they inhale as the cook over an open fire have an adverse effect on their health.

Sharmin’s opportunities and choice are limited by the stigma surrounding people with disabilities that exists in the area where she has grown up. At home, Sharmin’s opinions are often disregarded and, even if she does not agree with her family’s decisions, she does not speak up as she is entirely dependent on them. Social discrimination against people with disabilities excludes her from the community and keeps her isolated. While growing up, as a girl and as a girl with disabilities living in the slum, Sharmin has been the victim of various forms of violence, both physical and psychological.

Another vulnerability that Sharmin faces is lack of physical access to health services. Compared to her siblings – especially her brothers, who attend school – Sharmin’s opportunities to escape poverty are limited. As a person with disabilities, Sharmin faces many obstacles as she lacks access to school and is unable to secure her livelihood or participate fully in the community. Sharmin is malnourished, perhaps more so than other children because she is a girl, and a girl with disabilities.

**Dilma is 45 years old and lives in Arariboia in the north-eastern Amazon.** Dilma belongs to one of Brazil’s indigenous peoples, who have lived in the area for generations. Dilma and her family depend on the forest and river for their livelihoods. The river provides clean water and the forest both food and raw materials for housing.

Large logging companies have been causing problems in the area for several years. Logging has also polluted the river, which is now in danger from siltation. This threatens Dilma’s livelihood. Dilma, her husband and other residents of the area began to protest against the logging. Believing that illegal logging was going on inside the reserve, Dilma’s husband sought legal advice. Shortly thereafter, he disappeared. His body was found in the river several days later, with traces of torture. Although no one has been convicted of the murder, Dilma knows that those responsible for the deforestation murdered her husband to silence him.

Concerned for the safety of her family, Dilma has sent her 20-year-old son to look for work in the nearby state capital, Fortaleza. The last Dilma heard from him, he had not found a job and she is worried that he, like many other young men who neither study nor work, will fall in with criminal elements.

Despite the murder of her husband, Dilma continues to protest against deforestation. Although she is afraid, she feels that she has no choice – her life and that of her people revolves around the forest and the river. Lacking other means, Dilma campaigns against the illegal exploitation of the reserve on the internet. At first, Dilma felt safer as she was not confronting the loggers directly, but her online campaign attracts
daily threats of violence and violent sexual harassment. Several other murders have been committed in the reserve since her husband’s death. Dilma fears for her life every day.

Zalmay, 43 years old, lives outside Kabul with his wife and four children. The couple originally had six children but the two oldest sons were recruited into the Afghan army and died in combat. As a day labourer without land, Zalmay must grasp every opportunity to work and is by no means certain that he will be able to earn money every day. Without any formal network or extended family, he is very vulnerable to the day-to-day corruption involved in obtaining the most basic social services for himself and his family. Zalmay has considered moving into the city for work but has learned from other villagers that jobs are few and far between for those without skills or training. He attended school for six years but can barely read or write.

He is also a member of the Hazara minority, which may also decrease his chances of finding work in the city. Hazaras have a low status in society, limiting his ability to make his voice heard on behalf of himself and his family. In school, his children are sometimes teased for their ethnicity. Although the family lives in a ‘safe’ province that is not currently controlled or claimed by insurgent groups, this may change at any time. Should the security situation deteriorate, it may become even more difficult for Zalmay to find work.

For Zalmay, it goes without saying that the man of the house should be the breadwinner and he is ashamed of his inability to fulfil this role. He sometimes takes his sense of shame and frustration out on his wife and children. He has been known to strike them, although he has always regretted doing so afterwards. Zalmay worries that he or a family member will fall ill. Should they do so, they will have to meet the medical expenses themselves, which would be extremely difficult given the family’s already stretched finances.
Different groups living in multidimensional poverty

Poverty affects women and men differently

Globally, women are overrepresented among those living in poverty. Because women as a group consistently suffer greater deprivations in the various dimensions of poverty, their multidimensional poverty is often deeper. Patriarchal norms – in some countries, reinforced by discriminatory legislation – both cause and reinforce women’s poverty in all dimensions; for example, many countries have laws that limit women’s access to the labour market and give men the right to decide over their wives’ opportunities to work. Structures of power, social norms and legislation therefore restrict women’s economic empowerment.\(^277\) Women are also at greater risk of being subjected to physical or sexual violence and suffer from a severe lack of human security. It is estimated that globally 35% of women have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence at some time during their lives, either within an intimate relationship or at the hands of someone outside their immediate family. Women living in sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and the Middle East are most at risk, as this is where violence against women is most widespread.\(^278\) Globally, one in five girls will be forced into marriage before the age of 18, while 200 million girls and women, mainly in Africa, have undergone female genital mutilation. Child marriages are most common in sub-Saharan Africa, where 37% of girls marry before reaching 18 years of age. Women are underrepresented globally in policy and decision-making positions in both the public and private sectors, as well as in academia.\(^279\) Although the percentage of female parliamentarians has slowly increased over the past decade, at the current rate, it will take another 46 years before they reach parity.\(^280\)

Women’s poverty may also differ within the group; for example, women in rural areas are more likely to be subjected to violence than those in urban areas. Women who belong to an ethnic minority or whose sexual orientation is deemed deviant are at risk from multiple forms of discrimination.\(^281\) In other words, intersectionality plays a major role and should always be borne in mind when discussing women’s and men’s poverty.

In many cases, men’s poverty differs from women’s. While men also experience a lack of human security, in their case it is more likely to involve dying in combat or falling victim to homicide. It is estimated that in 2017, 81% of murder victims worldwide were men and boys,\(^282\) as are the majority of those killed by landmines and other unexploded ordinance left behind after wars.\(^283\) At the same time, the vast majority of the perpetrators of violence are men and teenage boys.\(^284\)

Poverty among boys and girls

Poverty is especially widespread among children. Over 20% of children under 10 in low- and middle-income countries live in extreme poverty (less than USD 1.9 per day). Among adults, this figure is much lower: less than 10% of adults in low- and middle-income countries live on less than USD 1.9 per day. Children under 18 years of age account for half of all those living in extreme poverty in low- and middle-income countries. Although these figures are from 2013, they provide a fairly clear picture of just how vulnerable children are to poverty.\(^285\) Figures from the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) reinforce this picture. Globally, 665 million children live in multidimensional poverty. Two thirds of children in sub-Saharan Africa live in multidimensional poverty, while the corresponding figure in South Asia is 39%. Over half of the children living in multidimensional poverty worldwide live in fragile states, demonstrating the consequences of armed conflict and unstable environments.\(^286\)

Girls are especially vulnerable in terms of access to education, particularly in the weak and fragile contexts. In fragile and conflict-affected regions\(^287\), 28% of girls are out of school, compared to 20% of boys. A similar pattern is seen in low- and lower-middle-income countries, even if the disparity is less pronounced: in low-income countries, 22% of girls and 17% of boys are out of school; while in lower-middle-income countries, 10% of girls and 8% of boys are not in school.\(^288\) At the same time, the vast majority of those killed by landmines and other unexploded ordinance left behind after wars.\(^283\) At the same time, the vast majority of the perpetrators of violence are men and teenage boys.\(^284\)

281 UN-NAI. *Combating discrimination against women.*
287 According to the World Bank’s definition of fragile and conflict-affected regions.
of boys are out of school. Worldwide, every year approximately 246 million children experience violence at school or on the way to or from school. Almost 60 million girls experience sexual violence in school settings every year. This means that, for millions of children around the world, the risk of being subjected to school-related violence must be weighed against the benefits of receiving education.

The elderly
Growing old involves a significant risk of falling into or remaining in poverty. In the latter stages of life, the opportunity and/or ability to work decreases, often for health reasons. If people can continue to work into old age, incomes tend to be lower than for younger people. Many countries lack social security for the elderly and any savings that might have been accrued during working life are often insufficient. This leaves the elderly particularly vulnerable to income poverty, something reflected in figures from developing countries, where the number of elderly people living in poverty is increasing. They are also overrepresented among those living in chronic poverty. As a consequence of reduced or non-existent incomes and the lack of social security, the elderly are often left to rely on the younger generation. In large parts of the world, this means sharing multigenerational homes with younger family members on whose resources they are largely dependent. In all likelihood, such dependency affects the elderly individual’s situation in all dimensions of poverty, diminishing their independence and opportunity for self-determination. In many low-income African countries, the burden on the elderly has increased enormously due to increased adult mortality as a result of HIV/AIDS and regional conflicts, meaning they can no longer rely to the same extent on the traditional safety net of the extended family and are required to take greater responsibility for children in the household.

Migrants and refugees
In 2019, the global international migrant stock was 272 million. The majority of these migrants have moved for reasons related to work, education or family. Half of the international migrant stock lives in low or middle-income countries, with 40% in developing countries. Many countries exclude migrants from the social system and they therefore lack access to basic social services such as schools and healthcare. Migrants tend to gravitate towards the informal employment sector where social security is non-existent.
Not all migrants leave their homelands to work, study or join family members. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 79.9 million people were forced to flee persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations during 2019. Of these, 26 million were international refugees and 45.7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), 85% of whom are found in developing countries. UNHCR estimates that approximately 60% of all refugees and 80% of all internally displaced persons live in urban areas rather than refugee camps. Child refugees are less likely than other children to have access to education. In 2018, the primary school enrolment was only 63% for child refugees and only 24% for secondary school, compared to global figures of 91% and 84% respectively. With less access to education, child refugees are likely to have fewer opportunities to obtain productive employment in future and thus to escape poverty.

Groups regarded as interlopers by the majority communities in which they live are at greater risk of being subjected to violence of some kind. They include migrant workers, stateless individuals and refugees but also internally displaced persons or others who have moved from one region to another within a country. Women refugees and internally displace persons are especially vulnerable to sexual and physical violence and live with a great lack of human security. They also tend to have less access to schools, health services and employment.

People with disabilities
The World Bank and WHO estimate that approximately 15% of the world’s population (1 billion people) live with some form of disability. It is unclear how many of these live in low-income countries, as lack of recognition of disability in many cultures renders them invisible in both official statistics and at societal and household level. Children with disabilities are less likely to attend school, with a concomitant negative impact later in life. People with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed and, if they do work, to have a lower income, they are more likely to face discrimination on the labour market and to lack the resources to support themselves through entrepreneurship. People with disabilities are therefore less equipped to benefit from economic development and to escape from poverty. Not only do people with disabilities suffer from a lack of opportunities to work...

294 Hans Park. (2016). The power of cities. UNHCR.
Indigenous peoples

There are approximately 476 million Indigenous Peoples in the world. They are disproportionately poor: despite only making up 6% of the global population, they account for 15% of those living in extreme poverty. Indigenous peoples experience poverty in all its dimensions. They lack power and voice as their territories and land assets are seldom formally recognised. They are also often excluded from political and decision-making processes. They also face major obstacles to participation in the formal economy, adversely affecting their opportunities for economic development. Their access to health services, water and sanitation are often limited, which may in part explain why the life expectancy of indigenous peoples is as much as 20 years lower than that of nonindigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples are greatly reliant on natural resources for their survival. Combined with lack of recognition for their assets, this contributes to increasing their vulnerability to climate change. Global deforestation often violates the rights and interests of indigenous peoples as forestry and plantation companies appropriate their land, more or less forcing them to move, often under the threat of violence. Indigenous women are particularly vulnerable, including to sexual violence.

Minorities

Discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities is a global phenomenon. In Latin America, 25% of the population identifies as Afro-Latin America. As a group, they often lack access to basic social services such as education and employment. Afro-Latin Americans are two and a half times more likely to live in chronic poverty than the majority population. They also run a greater risk of being subjected to violence. In Europe, the Roma minority experiences systematic racism and social exclusion. This adversely affects their opportunities to earn a living and thus their living conditions; in Eastern Europe, 70% of Roma households live in poverty. A study of 33 low- and lower-middle-income countries demonstrates that over two thirds of poverty in the dimensions health and education is found in households the head of which belongs to an ethnic minority. It also showed that in 16 countries, the poorest women from marginalised ethnic groups were the ones left behind by developments in education and health.

That said, it is not only ethnic minorities that face discrimination. LGBTQ+ persons also comprise a vulnerable group. Discrimination can take many forms: outright harassment, threats, violence or denial of access to social services and work. Discrimination may also occur at a higher level: homosexuality is illegal in 70 countries and carries the death penalty in 9, including Sudan and Yemen. A hostile environment forces LGBTQ+ people to choose between persecution and disguising their sexual identity, thus limiting their power, voice and opportunities for self-realization.

Multidimensional poverty in various contexts

Poverty in fragile contexts

In 2017, over 800 million people were living in fragile, often conflict-affected contexts. Life in a fragile and unstable environment often results in poverty in one or more dimensions. Conflict and fragility leads to poverty in all its dimensions. For example, 96% of those killed in armed conflicts during 2019 lived in one of the 57 countries and territories classified as fragile according to the OECD Development Assistance Committee’s multidimensional fragility analysis. Living in a fragile context also affects people’s access to resources: 37% of people living in fragile and conflict-affected regions live in extreme poverty on less than USD 1.9 per day, while 82% live on less than USD 5.5 per day. At 61, life expectancy...
in these regions is lower than the average of 63 for low-income countries and 68 for lower-middle-income countries. Growing up in a fragile environment has a highly negative impact on children’s ability to escape from poverty; aside from living in a household in which resources are likely to be scarce and human security low, their opportunities to attend school are also often restricted. Globally, 75 million children, the majority girls, do not attend school due to conflicts and humanitarian crises.

Rural poverty
Globally, a clear majority of those living in poverty live in rural areas. According to the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), 85% (1.1 billion) of the 1.3 billion people living in multidimensional poverty live in rural areas. The highest proportion of rural poor can be found in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia: 85% of those living in multidimensional poverty in sub-Saharan Africa live in rural areas, while the corresponding figure in South Asia is 88%. Those living in rural areas are often deprived in resources and opportunities and choice. Despite improved access to information and communication services, a large percentage of people living in rural areas still have no internet or electricity supply. In lower middle-income countries, those living in rural areas are 37% less likely to use mobile internet than the residents of urban areas. There is a similar lack of access to water and healthcare. People living in rural areas are more likely to have low levels of education than those in urban areas. The inhabitants of rural areas, especially the indigenous and local population, often live in poverty in the dimension of power and voice, their rights violated as forestry and plantation companies appropriate their land and to all intents and purposes force them to leave. The economy of rural regions is generally characterised by low-productivity agriculture lacking infrastructure and access to formal markets, thus limiting opportunities to benefit from economic growth and development. The ability of women to support themselves is limited by discriminatory gender norms; for example, they rarely own land to the same extent as men. The fact that most house-holds rely on farming for their income and survival leaves people extremely vulnerable to the impact of climate change.

Urban poverty
Half of all people in low- and middle-income countries live in urban areas, over 30% of them in slums. In low-income countries, two-thirds of urbanites live in slum areas, often lacking access to basic services such as clean water, sanitation, waste collection, electricity supply, sewerage and clean air. While access to such resources and services may be severely limited in urban slums, they are generally significantly more accessible than in rural areas. Lack of water and sanitation in urban slums is especially detrimental to the safety of women and girls. In communities and residential areas without latrines, women and girls are often restricted to defecating after dark or out of sight, presenting a risk to both health and security as girls are forced to walk alone at night in hidden places. Slums and informal settlements are often located in high-risk areas for natural disasters of various kinds, such as flooding and landslides. The dwellings in slums and informal settlements are also likely to be built from substandard materials, exacerbating the risk that they will be destroyed in such events. The risk of disaster striking such areas is increased by climate change, making the people who live in slums especially vulnerable to the impact of climate change.

Africa
Income poverty is widespread in Africa, especially south of the Sahara. Over 40% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa lives in extreme poverty on less than USD 1.9 per day, while 86% live on less than USD 5.5 per day. While the majority (52.3%) of the population works in agriculture, few own the land they farm and incomes are generally so low that there is little opportunity to escape poverty. As most people work in the informal sector, few are

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covered by any form of social security. Access to electricity is limited, especially in rural areas in sub-Saharan Africa, where only 32% of the population has access to electricity. In the absence of electricity, food is often cooked over an open fire, creating a health hazard as small soot particles penetrate deep into the lungs. Exposure is particularly high for women and small children, who spend most time in and around the home.

The lack of schooling and poor education is a major problem and the situation is very different for boys and girls. In sub-Saharan Africa, 56% of primary and secondary schools lack running water, preventing girls in particular from attending. For those who do have the opportunity to attend school, the quality of education is often low. The percentage of trained teachers in sub-Saharan African schools has declined from 84% in 2000 to 61% in 2016. The negative consequences of deficiencies in the education systems are readily apparent, including in the level of literacy among those over 15 years of age; as of 2019, 65.5% of men and 58.9% of women in sub-Saharan Africa are literate.

Female genital mutilation and child marriage are both commonplace in sub-Saharan Africa, with 37% of girls marrying before the age of 18. The general lack of human security is a growing problem in Africa. Of 54 state-based armed conflicts registered in 2019, 25 took place in Africa, 8 of them new or reignited conflicts. Unilateral violence against the civilian population has also increased by 37% in Africa since 2018. Discriminatory legislation, including the criminalisation of same-sex marriage, is found in Africa that in some countries can lead to life imprisonment or even the death penalty, presenting another threat to the LGBTQ+ community’s power, voice and human security.

In many respects, the longer-term trend is positive. Between 2001 and 2018, the percentage of children not attending school declined from 37 to 19%. The percentage of the population of sub-Saharan Africa living in extreme poverty (less than USD 1.9 per day), decreased from 58% in 2001 to 40% in 2018. The percentage of people living below the USD 5.5 poverty line has also decreased, if less dramatically, from 91% in 2001 to 86% in 2019. Access to electricity has also increased, especially in rural areas of sub-Saharan Africa, where 32% of the population had access in 2018 compared to only 14% in 2001.

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