

Development (D)

Advancing sustainable development through human rights



2030 AGENDA



Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

4 SDG indicators (for which UN Human Rights is responsible in terms of methodology, data compilation and dissemination)



High-level Political Forum

91 Voluntary National Review (VNR) processes supported (with guidance on integrating human rights data and analyses – 47 VNRs submitted in 2020 and 44 in 2021)



Right to development and SDGs

214 persons completed the UN Human Rights e-course (from 83 countries)

HUMAN RIGHTS INTEGRATION



UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks

1 UN system-wide guidance on Common Country Analysis (CCAs) and Cooperation Frameworks (that applies a human rights lens and integrates human rights content)

65 CCAs/Cooperation Frameworks processes supported (integration of human rights analysis and recommendations)



UN system at the global level

37 UN policies/programmes integrated a human rights approach



In the field, human rights mainstreaming support to

170 RCOs/UN Country Teams
400 other UN partners
1,100 government counterparts



Submissions for Universal Periodic Reviews (UPR) from

15 UN Country Teams (joint submissions)
53 UN entities

ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Climate change, environment, toxics and human rights

43 UPR recommendations issued (41 of which were supported by the State under review)

56 special procedures communications (sent and made publicly available)



Preventing business-related human rights abuses

Over **3,700** participants in the 9th Forum on Business and Human Rights (from 140 countries, including 200 speakers in 28 sessions)

A cornerstone in due diligence policies: The voice of human rights defenders

Just weeks after completing a two-week human rights training programme that was organized by UN Human Rights, in Bangkok, Panachai Chanta was employing the skills he had learned and making a concrete impact on the ground. Returning to the northern province of Mae Hong Son, where the local farming community was trying to halt a development project, Panachai led talks with local authorities to stop construction, which was allegedly planned without the consent of the community or any form of public hearing.

“The knowledge that I gained from the Human Rights Defenders School helped me to constructively negotiate with them,” he said. “I told local officials that indigenous peoples have the right to lands and territories that they have traditionally owned and occupied, according to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which was adopted by Thailand and 142 other Member States. I also cited the relevant Cabinet’s resolution on this issue.” Following these negotiations, all parties agreed to halt the project.

UN Human Rights first launched this training programme in 2014. Since then, the Office has equipped over 100 Thai human rights professionals and activists with skills and knowledge that can strengthen their work.

In order to pursue this objective across the region, UN Human Rights and the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises organized the first UN Pacific Forum on Business

and Human Rights. Held in a hybrid format in Suva, in December, the Forum featured sessions on various issues, including climate change and climate justice, the extractive industries, pollution, modern slavery, corruption, HRDs, entrepreneurship and the SDGs. Central to the discussion was a strong recommendation that companies consistently undertake human rights due diligence and consult with HRDs before initiating business activities.

“Human rights and human rights defenders need to be a priority for both States and businesses,” said Mary Lawlor, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders during the annual UN Forum on Business and Human Rights, held in November. To this end, she urged companies that are launching projects to engage with potentially affected communities and HRDs at the earliest possible stage and called on States to collaborate with HRDs during legislative processes.

“[Companies] have to keep the door open, even if objections of the defenders might render a project more costly, less profitable or even unviable. Free, prior and informed consent by the community is a must,” she emphasized.



Panachai Chanta, Coordinator of the Centre on Health Security and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, participating in an HRD training programme organized by UN Human Rights in Thailand. © OHCHR/Todd Pitman

Highlights of pillar results

Development (D)

UN Human Rights supports efforts to advance economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development. It helps to address human rights gaps in development and economic policies and

regulations. It takes steps to strengthen the accountability of duty-bearers in the public and private sectors and the participation of rights-holders, including those left furthest behind. The Office

promotes the achievement of rights-based Sustainable Development Goals and the overall integration of human rights into the work of the UN Development System.

PILLAR RESULTS / SHIFTS / SDGs

RESULTS / SPOTLIGHTS



D1 – BUSINESS and human rights

Judicial and non-judicial mechanisms hold business and other economic actors to account for rights abuses and provide remedies to victims.

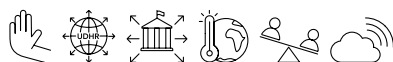


UN Human Rights provided mediation support to **indigenous communities and business actors in Cambodia**. In August, an agreement on communal land was reached between a rubber company and three Bunong indigenous communities in Mondulkiri Province and Socfin. Due to the Office’s intervention, over 500 hectares of land were returned to the indigenous communities, including sacred forests, spirit forests, cemeteries and reserve lands, which were located in the economic land concessions managed by the company. With the development of maps and the marking of the returned areas, the communities will be able to apply to have their land registered under the **communal land titling (CLT)** process, thus securing their land tenure.

UN Human Rights collaborated with the World Economic Forum Partnership for Global LGBTI Equality (PGLE) to disseminate the Standards of Conduct for Business on Tackling Discrimination against LGBTI people and to build tools to advance their implementation. The Office finalized a **guide for LGBTI HRDs on engaging with the private sector** and supported the development of a gap analysis tool to help businesses measure their performance in implementing the Standards of Conduct.

D2 – GUIDING PRINCIPLES on Business and Human Rights

Business actors implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights effectively.



In **Colombia**, the Presidential Council on Human Rights (PCHR) approved the **second National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights** in December. UN Human Rights provided technical assistance during the formulation process, including for the organization of dialogue spaces with unions, business associations and academia. A baseline on business and human rights was successfully included in the Action Plan, which UN Human Rights had developed with two universities in Bogotá (Universidad Javeriana and Universidad del Rosario). The Office also provided technical assistance to the Mining and Energy Planning Unit to design a tool for mapping human rights risks in the mining and energy sectors.

In the **Russian Federation**, UN Human Rights raised awareness on the risks of **business-related human rights abuses in the context of COVID-19**, particularly with regard to decent work and social protection. The Office strengthened its partnership with two major representatives of the business sector, namely, the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (RUIE) and the UN Global Compact National Network. Together, they co-organized a videoconference to mark UN75 and Human Rights Day on the topic “Respect for human rights as a corporate responsibility indicator.” A total of 122 participants discussed challenges requiring better regulation and the effective enforcement of rules.

D3 – LAND and HOUSING laws/policies

State authorities adopt and implement laws, policies and strategies on land and housing that increasingly comply with human rights.



In **Kenya**, UN Human Rights assisted the **Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples** to prepare for her appearance as an expert witness in the **reparation proceedings in the Ogiek rights to land and housing case** that was before the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. The testimony of the Special Rapporteur focused on the issue of reparations for the Ogiek community, related international standards and good practices. The Government's Task Force that is mandated to implement the Court's judgment drafted its final report on the implementation of the decision.

UN Human Rights and the **Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia** undertook consistent advocacy with local authorities regarding the planned **evictions of ethnic Vietnamese communities** in Kampong Chhnang province. The Office successfully intervened to stop the demolition of homes belonging to families of ethnic Vietnamese, leading to a postponement of the relocation of almost 1,000 families. UN Human Rights called on the Government to complete the planned resettlement site before relocating the families and to ensure that the people were in agreement with the plan, as required by international human rights standards.

The UN Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for **South-West Asia and the Arab Region** reviewed the publications ***Land and human rights: Standards and application*** and ***Land and human rights: Annotated compilation of case law***. These publications provided the sector with short, user-friendly guides on applicable international human rights law, international humanitarian law and criminal law standards. Furthermore, in October, UN Human Rights and UN Women published the 2nd edition of ***Realizing women's rights to land and other productive resources***, which links the issue with the achievement of the SDGs and more systematically integrates the latest guidance from the international human rights mechanisms.

D4 – HEALTH POLICIES and human rights

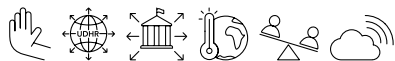
Public health approaches, including sexual and reproductive health policies, comply with international human rights standards and provide non-discriminatory access, especially to children, adolescents, women and migrants.



UN Human Rights expanded the global constituency for **sexual and reproductive health and rights** through awareness-raising on relevant international standards. For instance, the Office partnered with WHO and the Oxford University to launch the **Right to A Better World series** on 18 November, targeting practitioners and students. The series consists of four episodes, namely, comprehensive sexuality education, contraception, maternal mortality and morbidity and violence against women. In each episode, which is approximately 20 minutes long, human rights experts and advocates from around the world share stories on their professional struggles and successes. The Office also updated its **information series on sexual and reproductive health and rights** to reflect the latest standards.

D5 – ENVIRONMENT and CLIMATE policies

Environmental and climate policies and plans increasingly respect, protect and fulfil human rights, guaranteeing those affected with access to information, decision-making, public participation and remedies.



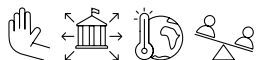
In **Mexico**, UN Human Rights promoted the establishment and functioning of a **Climate Justice Network** with more than 25 CSOs, which met regularly to share information on key issues like air quality, impact studies and the implementation of the **Escazú Agreement**. This work led to the submission of a joint proposal to the Ministry of Environment, with specific recommendations on the rights of indigenous peoples, rural people and people of African descent, the right to a healthy environment, due diligence and the integration of human rights and gender approaches into Mexico’s Nationally Determined Contribution, pursuant to the Paris Agreement.

In the **ASEAN region**, UN Human Rights, UNEP and UNICEF co-organized a virtual expert group meeting on **policy guidance** for promoting and protecting **children’s rights to a healthy environment**, with the participation of a CRC member and the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment. Moreover, the Office partnered with UNEP to produce a regional study on the impacts of COVID-19 on environmental rights.

With technical support from UN Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment issued 40 communications and 25 press releases concerning **environmental protection and human rights**. His report to the General Assembly focused on the need for urgent action to conserve, protect and restore the biosphere on which all species depend. It further illustrated the devastating impacts of COVID-19 and the crucial role of human rights in catalysing action to safeguard nature.

D6 – HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT assessment

Human rights assessments and impact analyses mitigate, prevent or redress the negative effects of economic, trade and development policies and projects.



UN Human Rights worked at the UN inter-agency level to **mainstream human rights into the new UN guidance on transformative economies**. This resulted in recommendations that the UN pay particular attention to the political economy and identify potential winners and losers in economic restructuring, with explicit references to the full respect for human rights, including ESCRs, and the duty to avoid retrogression in times of crisis.

The new safeguards of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and IDB Invest explicitly require human rights due diligence, and the IDB safeguards include a self-standing gender equality safeguard, the first of its kind for any **multilateral development bank (MDB)**. UN Human Rights continued to work in partnership with the MDBs and their Independent Accountability Mechanisms (IAMs) to strengthen banks’ operational **strategies and policies, reprisals and accountability procedures**. The Office’s submissions to the World Bank Group’s Strategy for Fragility, Conflict and Violence 2020-2021 led to the recognition that human rights abuses and violations are among the causes of conflict and opened entry points for operational engagement. UN Human Rights’ advocacy contributed to positive outcomes in operational and reprisals policies and procedures for the IDB, IDB Invest, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the European Investment Bank.

D7 – HUMAN RIGHTS INTEGRATION in implementing the SDGs

States integrate human rights, including the right to development and the outcomes of international human rights mechanisms, as they implement the Sustainable Development Goals and other development and poverty eradication efforts. The UN supports them in these activities and integrates human rights into its own development work.



Through its **Surge Initiative**, UN Human Rights operationalized the Secretary-General's Call for a New Social Contract, building an understanding of opportunities and entry points related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the reform of the UN Development System, including through rights-based and Leave No One Behind (LNOB) analyses, research and advice on how to implement the recommendations issued by the international human rights mechanisms. This work enabled UN Human Rights field presences to enhance their **local engagement related to ESCRs** and the implementation of the SDGs. The Office provided technical advice on addressing inequalities and discrimination and integrating human rights analyses into UN development processes, including in 65 CCAs and/or UNSDCFs. For example, in **Cambodia**, UN Human Rights contributed to prevention efforts through the creation of a UNCT early warning dashboard, featuring an indicators framework that encompasses all rights, SDG indicators and risk factors. In **Kenya**, UN Human Rights provided support to the Human Rights Adviser (HRA) and a network of 24 Social Justice Centres to undertake a human rights assessment of inequality in access to water in 24 informal settlements and communities in Nairobi, Kisumu and the coastal regions. The assessment provided evidence to support the advocacy efforts of CSOs as the COVID-19 crisis began and informed the Government's response regarding the suspension of utility bills, the provision of water to informal settlements and a moratorium on evictions during the pandemic.

In the context of COVID-19, UN Human Rights provided **extensive advice to UN partners** to ensure the **integration of human rights into response and contingency plans**. For instance, in Zimbabwe, the Office prepared a checklist of international human rights standards to inform UN activities, which is available in accessible formats for persons with disabilities. In the **Bahamas** and **Jamaica**, UN Human Rights supported the design of a matrix that links the recommendations issued by the international human rights mechanisms with the SDGs, facilitating their integration into the response plans of the UN and the respective governments.

The High Commissioner sent letters to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the 51 countries that underwent a **Voluntary National Review** in 2020 and to the 44 countries that will undertake a VNR in 2021. The letters encouraged countries to **integrate human rights considerations** into their VNR reports and were accompanied by a country-specific document providing guidance and hyperlinks to tools such as the UHRI and the NRTD. The UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs made reference to these tools in its annual *Knowledge Exchange Booklet on Approaches and Tools for the 2021 VNRs*.

With a view to ensuring the mutual reinforcement of the SDGs and CRPD, UN Human Rights concluded a four-year project to develop an **SDG-CRPD resource package** to ensure that all actions undertaken to implement the SDGs are inclusive of persons with disabilities. The package, which was jointly developed with organizations of persons with disabilities, with funding from the European Union (EU), includes policy guidelines, human rights indicators related to the Convention, data source guidance, training materials and videos.

D8 – DISAGGREGATED human rights DATA


National institutions, assisted by communities, systematically collect, disaggregate and use data relevant for advancing human rights when they monitor and implement the SDGs.



UN Human Rights provided assistance in relation to the signature and implementation of Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) on a **Human Rights Approach to Data** in several countries. In **Uganda**, a MoU was signed, in 2019, to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by the Office of the Prime Minister, the Uganda Human Rights Commission, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics and the National Planning Authority. UN Human Rights provided technical support to develop a road map aimed at advancing the implementation of the MoU. The road map will serve as an important monitoring and accountability tool between the four institutions. In **Albania, Kosovo**⁵ and **Liberia**, new MoUs were signed in 2020. As a first step in Kosovo, the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo (OIK) incorporated the SDGs into its five-year strategy. In October, a joint working group, which included representatives of OIK and the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS), met for the first time to discuss the indicators and modalities of cooperation between the two entities, with a focus on the planned 2021 census (see feature story on p. 381 of the online report).

To support the **compilation of data for SDG Indicator 10.3.1/16.b.1 on discrimination**, UN Human Rights collaborated with approximately 200 national statistics offices and developed a pioneering compendium of survey questions to support disaggregation by multiple characteristics (such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender identity, socio-economic status, disabilities) in international and national censuses and surveys. This set of sample questions and technical guidance are being implemented in partnership with UNDP and UNODC under the SDG 16 Household Survey Initiative. For the first time, UN Human Rights reported data on **SDG Indicator 16.1.2 on civilian deaths in armed conflict**, which was disaggregated by sex, age and cause of death.

In **Mexico**, the National Council on Social Policy Evaluation (CONEVAL) increased the **integration of human rights** into its **evaluation models**, referencing human rights norms and exploring how to strengthen statistical data on vulnerable groups. UN Human Rights collaborated with the Human Rights Programme of the National Autonomous University of Mexico to support this process, including by delivering an in-depth training course on human rights indicators and SDG measurement frameworks for 35 staff members of CONEVAL.

 UN Human Rights collaborated with UN Women, UNICEF and national institutions to undertake a **COVID-19 rapid gender assessment in West Africa**, ensuring the integration of HRBA and LNOB analyses. The reports provide evidence regarding the impacts of the pandemic on women and men across the region and aim to inform decision-making. The evidence will also ensure a better understanding of the socio-economic effects of the crisis on societies, at the individual level (violence, discrimination, loss of income, psychological health, time spent on household chores) and at the household level (coping strategies, expenses for children). This reflected solid inter-agency collaboration and provided UN Human Rights with the opportunity to generate the raw data that are needed to undertake quantitative and qualitative human rights assessments. The reports and the related database are now available for [Côte d'Ivoire](#), [Mali](#) and [Senegal](#).

⁵ All references to Kosovo should be understood in full compliance with Security Council resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

Calling for people-centred policies in Serbia, with a focus on ESCRs

In 2020, UN Human Rights increased its advice on the application of an HRBA to economic policies and practices through its Surge Initiative. Emphasis was placed on building back better in the context of COVID-19 and leveraging the human rights obligations of States to reduce inequalities and ensure inclusive social and economic systems.

Serbia was one of the countries that received the support of the Surge Initiative, a field-driven initiative composed of human rights and development specialists. Within the framework of the 2030 Agenda, the objective was to increase the realization of ESCRs through tailored research and advice on development, economic and fiscal policy options at the country level.

UN Human Rights and its national partners, including representatives of Roma communities, CSOs and government stakeholders, led a real-time mapping exercise of needs and risks in substandard Roma settlements. This provided the first compilation of cross-checked information on over 700 settlements with approximately 170,000 inhabitants, which identified health risks and assessed access to electricity, clean water and sewage infrastructure and gathered data on sustainable sources of income.

These activities offered detailed information on the human rights impacts of COVID-19 on select Roma communities and directly informed the UNCT's analysis of vulnerable groups, enabling their inclusion in the UN SERP. It also contributed to the enhanced delivery of



A Roma settlement near the industrial zone in the city of Novi Sad, Serbia. © Vojin Ivkov

support to Roma and other inhabitants, including through the timely allocation of government resources and emergency aid.

ESCRs can determine whether people will live or die or if societies will become more resilient or fall apart. Consequently, all human rights need to be integrated into all policies, programmes and processes. “It is important that we see ESCRs as essential rather than luxuries,” said Todd Howland, Chief of the Development and Economic and Social Issues Branch at UN Human Rights.

As noted by Françoise Jacobs, Resident Coordinator in Serbia, “The rippling effects of the pandemic” prevented many people from enjoying their essential rights, such as access to work, education, safe water and electricity, thereby threatening their “health, well-being and prosperity.”

By gaining a deeper understanding of the situation of vulnerable Roma persons, the Government, the UN and other partners are better able to provide assistance.

While this work is still in its early days, there are promising signs that the approach is working. In addition to the pandemic, the world is facing a panoply of risks, including economic upheaval, potential human rights violations, the dismantling of health care systems and the long-term disenfranchisement of groups that are being left behind. The Office's expertise in ensuring that ESCRs are central to development and humanitarian efforts can help pave the way for respecting, protecting and fulfilling key human rights, reducing inequalities and preserving the dignity of people left behind when a crisis hits.

We are all in the same storm: Making COVID-19 vaccines available to all

On 17 September, during the HRC’s biennial panel on the right to development, Dr. Maria Mercedes Rossi reminded participants, “We are all in the same storm, but travelling on different boats.” The discussion was focused on strengthening international cooperation in the fight against COVID-19.

As a representative of the CSO Association Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII, Dr. Rossi noted that our capacity to face and overcome emergencies is linked to factors beyond our control and choice, such as our birthplace, our family income, our access to safe dwellings and caring neighbourhoods, the level of pollution around us, the preparedness of public health systems and our access to them and the integrity of our leaders and their interest in common goods.

In December, in the [Guidance Note on human rights and access to COVID-19 vaccines](#), UN Human Rights asserted that COVID-19 vaccines must be treated as global public goods, not as marketplace commodities that are only available to countries and individuals who can afford them. In its General Comment No. 25, CESCR argues that access to vaccines, medicines and health technologies is an essential dimension of the rights to health and development and that everyone is entitled to scientific progress to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health.

Dr. Rossi remembers a time when she worked as a doctor in Zambia and antiretroviral treatment was not yet available. “I had an eight-year-old patient, Martin, in the last stage of HIV infection. I [asked him at the hospital]

“What should I bring when I come back tomorrow? Some fruit? A drink?” He replied: “Dr. Maria, bring me the medicine!” Linking Martin’s story to the COVID-19 crisis, she urged countries to unlock international solidarity and the right to development for the benefit of all humanity, underlining that Martin’s story mirrors the situation for millions of people around the world, highlighting the urgent need for universal, just and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines.

In November, a group of special procedures mandate holders issued a [joint statement](#) to emphasize that COVID-19 requires a concerted and principled response based on the fundamental human rights-based principles of international solidarity, cooperation and assistance. “There is no room for nationalism or profitability in decision-making about access to vaccines,” they said.

Dr. Rossi has been collaborating with UN Human Rights for more than 10 years, contributing to activities related to the right to development, including the UN Human Rights capacity-building module on the right to development and SDGs. She urges the international community to commit to making the vaccine widely available to prevent global threats and address inequalities, noting that the right to development should be legally binding and that international solidarity should be recognized as a right.



Maria Mercedes Rossi has championed the struggle to advance the right to development at the UN and reinforce international solidarity. © Photo courtesy of Maria Mercedes Rossi



In February, UN Human Rights staff conducted a mission to Lomas del Diamante, an irregular human settlement in the outskirts of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, in order to monitor and document the living conditions of residents and their access to economic, social and cultural rights. The 400 families living in the community face uncertainty about land tenure and fear mass evictions that would enable the State to construct a proposed large-scale housing project.
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