

What does it mean to **leave no one behind**?

A framework for implementation



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*



When all 193 United Nations Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, they made a pledge to ensure ‘no one will be left behind’ and to ‘endeavour to reach the furthest behind first.’¹ In practice, this means taking explicit action to end extreme poverty, curb inequalities, confront discrimination and fast-track progress for the furthest behind.

The following² proposes a framework that governments and stakeholders can use in their countries to take action to leave no one behind in a way that enables, reinforces and accelerates national progress to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also aims to inform the manner in which the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) designs, implements, monitors and evaluates SDG strategies, policies, programmes and projects, set within the commitment of the United Nations Development System to put the pledge to leave no one behind at the heart of its support to countries.³

1. UN General Assembly, ‘Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, 21 October 2015, A/RES/70/1, available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

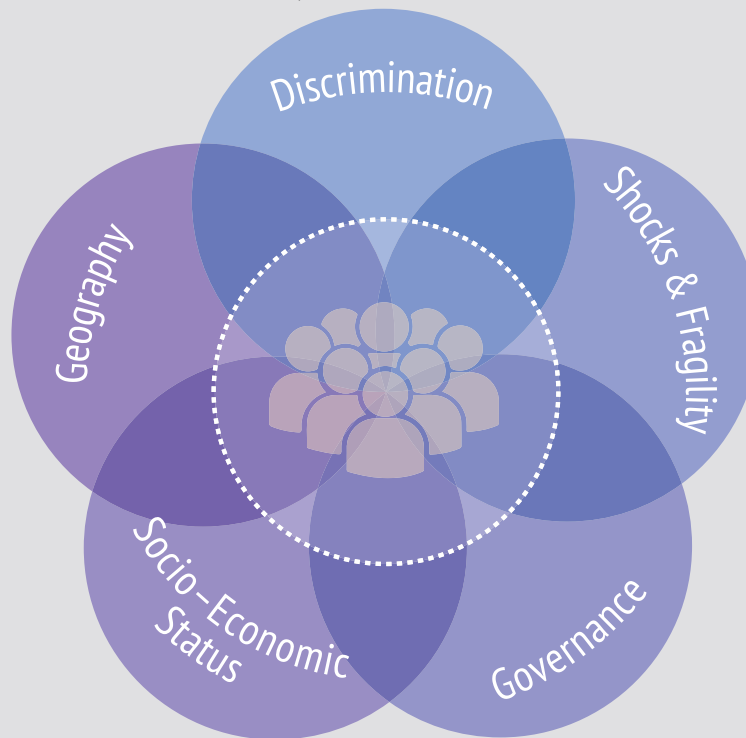
2. This brochure is adapted from the executive summary of the UNDP Discussion Paper ‘What Does it Mean to Leave No One Behind: A UNDP Discussion Paper and Framework for Implementation’, July 2018.

3. The framework aims to be fully consistent with the UN Sustainable Development Group’s SDG Operational Guide on ‘leaving no one behind’ for UN Country Teams, the Guidelines for UN Development Assistance Frameworks, the UN Chief Executive Board Framework for Action on Inequalities and Non-Discrimination and UNDP’s Social and Environmental Programming Standards.

Who is being left behind and why: five key factors

This framework proposes five intersecting factors as essential to understand who is being left behind and why.

People get left behind when they lack the choices and opportunities required to participate and benefit from development progress. All persons living in extreme poverty, in any form, are left behind, together with those enduring disadvantage(s) that deny or limit their choices and opportunities relative to others in society.



People at the intersection of these factors face reinforcing and compounding disadvantage and deprivation, making them likely among the furthest behind.

Discrimination

All disadvantages and deprivations that leave people behind should be considered across five factors:

Discrimination

Exclusion, bias or mistreatment based on some aspect of a person's identity (ascribed or assumed) including, but not limited to gender, ethnicity, age, class, disability, sexual orientation, religion, nationality and indigenous or migratory status;

Geography

Physical isolation, vulnerability, deprivation or inequity based on a person's area of residence;

Governance

Global, national and/or sub-national institutions that are ineffective, unjust, exclusive, corrupt, unaccountable and/or unresponsive; and/or laws, policies and budgets that are inequitable, discriminatory or regressive (including taxes and expenditures);

Socio-economic status

Disadvantages in terms of income, wealth, life expectancy, educational attainment or chances to stay healthy, be well-nourished, be educated; and access to energy, clean water and sanitation, social protection, financial services, vocational training etc.; and

Shocks and fragility

Vulnerability and exposure to the effects of climate change, natural hazards, violence, conflict, displacement, health emergencies, economic downturns and other types of shocks.



"I can't access public transportation. Even if someone offers to take me out, I can at most stay outside for two hours before returning home, because there aren't any bathrooms accessible. I'm an archery athlete, and often compete in other countries. When I go abroad, I have to suffer on planes for over ten hours. The bathrooms in the airplanes are too narrow." China.

Geography



Photo: UNDP Rio+20

"Once I saw in the newspaper a story that said that the dirtiest community of Rio de Janeiro was mine. It was when I dropped everything and went to work with recycling. I faced all kinds of difficulties, people criticized me and drug dealers wanted my land. I still continued and gather all cans, PET bottles, plastic bags and cooking oil. History is made by those who move on. If I can change a person, I can also change the world." Brazil.

Governance



"With a growing family, I need the government now. The government is going to help me get most of the things that I need. Like medicine today. But that only happens when the authorities are really listening to the people, and being responsive.

I would like to see better job opportunities. My wife is working, and my job is only part time. Before I found it, just thinking about the future made me really angry. Now I'm hopeful, but more work would make me happier." Rwanda.

Socio-economic status



"I am Taqaih and I am 75 years old. I have three sons, they are all married and have children, but they forgot about me. I was hoping they would remember their mother when they had children of their own, but they left me at an age when I cannot take care of myself anymore.

I pray that God will guide their children to obey their parents, and I hope my sons will not come to live the deprived life I am living now." Yemen.

Shocks and fragility



"I lost everything in the tsunami, and still years later we don't own another home. I started working in a factory as a stitcher at the age of 15. Now I have 6 employees. I have to pay my stitchers more and more, just so these ladies can eat. If food cost less, everything would be easier." Sri Lanka.

Realizing the opportunity to leave no one behind

To implement the pledge to leave no one behind, countries should consider an integrated framework consisting of three mutually reinforcing 'levers': examine, empower and enact.

Examine: Monitoring SDG progress of all relevant groups and people by collecting, analyzing and making available disaggregated and people-driven data and information on who is left behind and why. Track the progress of those furthest left behind relative to everyone else.

UNDP can support countries to **examine** by:

- Undertaking integrated 'leave no one behind assessments' using the framework offered here as a starting point for thinking, analysis and action;
- Strengthening national capacities to gather, analyse and use disaggregated data and evidence, including to understand the range of disadvantages and deprivations that leave people behind;
- Working with governments, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and civil society to institutionalize community feedback mechanisms and advance participatory and people-centred SDG monitoring that includes the voices and perspectives of those left behind;
- Enabling the use of existing quantitative and qualitative data sources to identify and track the progress of the people that are left behind, the furthest behind and those most at risk of falling behind; and
- Mobilizing different levels of government, partners and stakeholders, including marginalized groups and communities, to fill gaps in disaggregated data with improved surveys and registries, complementary new techniques, perception surveys, practitioner know-how, community-based and participatory monitoring and feedback mechanisms, etc.

Empower: Enable people that are being left behind to be equal agents in sustainable development, ensuring their full and meaningful participation in decision-making by providing safe and inclusive mechanisms for civic engagement.

UNDP can support countries to empower people by:

- Facilitating a rights-based approach to programming that is conducive to meaningful participation, civic engagement and supporting the role of people, communities and civil society organizations (including informal networks) to shape public decisions and hold governments to account to realize their rights;
- Supporting governments to ensure SDG national reporting, follow-up and review are all people-centred, gender-sensitive, respect human rights and focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and furthest behind;
- Expanding opportunities for local civil society, NHRIs and community networks to engage in dialogue with decision makers, including to build consensus on SDG strategies and policies required to close gaps in opportunities and outcomes that leave people behind, taking into account state obligations and recommendations from human rights treaty bodies and the Universal Periodic Review;
- Strengthening the capacities of civil society actors, and expanding and protecting spaces for people's participation in political and public life;
- Building capacities of national and local authorities and processes to be inclusive, responsive and accountable to their populations, with an emphasis on the people and places left furthest behind; and
- Promoting and supporting women and young people's political participation in parliamentary and electoral processes as candidates and voters.

Enact: Develop integrated equity-focused SDG policies, interventions and budgets to support rights-holders and duty-bearers to address the intersecting disadvantages and deprivations that leave people behind.

UNDP can support countries to enact by:

- Integrating the pledge to leave no one behind in their SDG strategies, plans and budgets through equity-focused and rights-based approaches;
- Promoting equity-focused and rights-based laws, policies, public information campaigns and frameworks to address stigma and discrimination;
- Encouraging SDG localization to understand and address divergent rates of progress, establish SDG support mechanisms and build capacities at central, regional and local levels;
- Strengthening the capacities to build accountable, responsive and inclusive local governance systems to reduce inequalities and exclusion;
- Supporting governments and other stakeholders to identify, embed and report effectively on locally achievable and ambitious SDG targets essential to leave no one behind;
- Promoting, supporting and learning from policies and interventions to improve the opportunities and capabilities of the people, groups and communities left furthest behind.
- Identifying and assessing options to finance leave no one behind policies and interventions.



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