

MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES



HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE

MANILA
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**A collection of stories
demonstrating the work and impact
of the United Nations in middle
income countries**



CHILE: UN PARTNERS FOR POLICY, RIGHTS AND CLIMATE ACTION

In Chile, a nation no longer receiving traditional development aid, the role of the United Nations has shifted to becoming a strategic partner focused on normative support, capacity development and policy coherence. This transformation exemplifies how the UN adds value in middle-income countries by shifting from financial transfers to technical expertise and convening power.

In 2024, approximately 42% of UN activities focused on capacity development for public institutions, civil society and marginalized communities, while 15% provided technical assistance for public policy formulation.

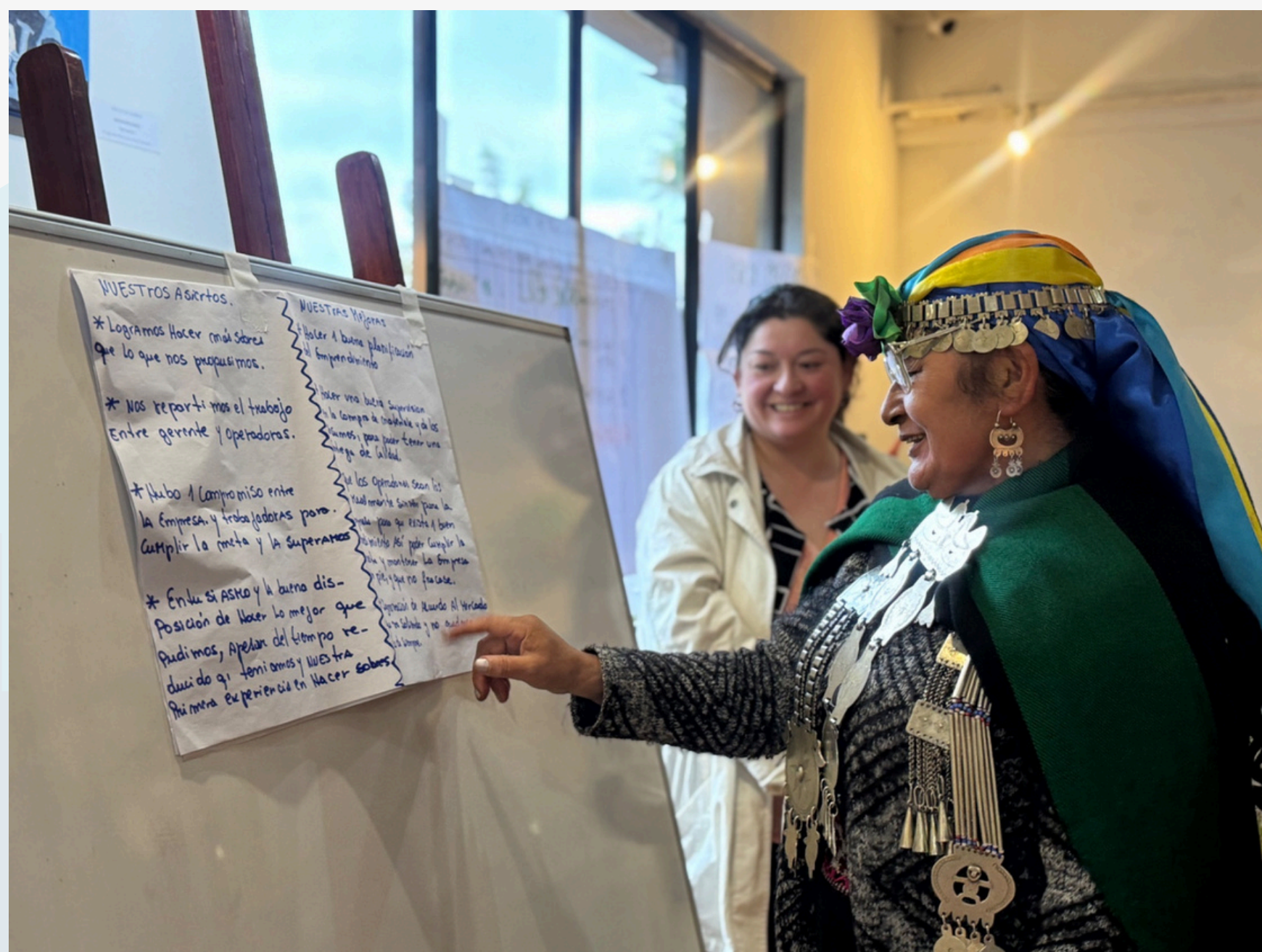
“In Chile, the UN is a strategic partner of the government on rights, climate, and inclusive development – moving from assistance to systems-level impact by aligning international norms with national priorities and offering expert advice, building capacity, and bringing people together” said María José Torres Macho, United Nations Resident Coordinator for Chile

The UN's shift from project-based interventions to systems-level impact is clearly visible in its climate work. With Chile simultaneously leading in energy transition while facing severe climate vulnerabilities, the UN directed over one-third of mobilized resources to climate and biodiversity goals. This support helped establish Chile's new Biodiversity and Protected Areas Service, strengthen climate adaptation planning, and enhance private sector engagement on climate risk management in the mining sector.

Rights-based policies forms another cornerstone of UN engagement: agencies provided critical technical assistance and facilitated multi-stakeholder dialogues that contributed to the passage of the landmark Integral Law to Prevent, Sanction, and Eradicate Gender-Based Violence after nearly a decade of deliberation. This work extended to strengthening Chile's National Care System and promoting the rights of women with disabilities and children through international normative frameworks.

Digital inclusion emerged as a third priority area. With support from the UN Joint SDG Fund, Chile launched Comunidades Conectadas, an initiative bridging the digital divide in remote rural and indigenous territories. The program's impact is evidenced by subnational governments providing complementary funding to expand its reach, contributing to the global "Forward Faster" strategy by advancing connectivity and inclusion of underserved populations.

The UN's approach in Chile showcases how international organizations can effectively support national development priorities through international standards, multistakeholder dialogue, data innovation, and policy advisory services - placing rights, sustainability, and equity at the center of national development efforts.



COSTA RICA: INTEGRATED BIOMETHANE TO POWER TRANSPORT REVOLUTION?

In the bustling transport hub of San José, José Ángel Jiménez dreams of a future where his truck no longer depends on expensive, polluting diesel. Instead, he envisions a world where his vehicle runs on biomethane—a clean, locally produced alternative that could transform Costa Rica’s transport industry. He is not alone.

Costa Rica, a country already celebrated for its environmental leadership, is developing its National Biomethane Strategy – with UN support. UNDP and UNIDO with funding from the Joint SDG Fund, are developing this strategy, which, once implemented, would enable the country to replace diesel with biomethane in transport trucks.



“Costa Rica’s agricultural sector accounts for approximately 27% of greenhouse gas emissions, primarily from the waste of export products such as coffee, bananas, pineapples, and sugarcane. A key solution is to harness this waste to produce biogas and biomethane, which would not only reduce emissions but also help tackle the diesel dependency in our energy matrix. This is the beauty of this project: addressing two major challenges with a single solution,” said Costa Rica’s Vice President Stephan Brunner.

Truck drivers worry about rising diesel costs. If biomethane were widely available, their fuel expenses could drop, and their trucks would produce fewer emissions. “Filling up the tank is expensive right now. If biomethane saves money and pollutes less, then everyone wins,” truck driver Mr Jiménez said.

A shift to biomethane could also open doors for women in a traditionally male-dominated sector. With government-supported training programmes, more female mechanics and engineers could specialize in biomethane-powered trucks.

“By turning waste into fuel, empowering transport workers and prioritizing energy independence, Costa Rica has the potential to prove that sustainability is not just about the environment—it’s about people.

The biomethane revolution could be within reach, driving the country toward a cleaner, fairer, and more prosperous future for all.



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: INTEGRATED NATIONAL FINANCING FRAMEWORK HELPS UNLOCK FINANCING FOR SDGS

In the Dominican Republic, a nation with growing development demands but limited access to concessional financing, a revolution is quietly taking shape. The country has emerged as a regional leader in implementing an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) – a strategic approach that aligns all financial resources with national development goals and the SDGs. "Public money must be directed to where social needs and productive potentials are," said Minister Isa Contreras, who leads this initiative through the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development, with support from the United Nations System.

The results have been remarkable. In 2023, the Dominican Republic became one of the first countries in Latin America to fully tag its national budget with the SDGs, linking over 95% of public expenditure to specific development targets. This was made possible by creating a digital bridge between national planning and financial management systems – an innovation now being shared with other countries through South-South cooperation. Beyond budget tagging, the country has conducted comprehensive analysis of tax expenditures to strengthen domestic resource mobilization and identified 13 innovative financing instruments, including thematic bonds and public-private investment schemes, that could potentially unlock new resources for development.

Minister of Finance José Manuel Vicente has emphasized the government's commitment "to improve planning and budgeting processes, ensuring both dimensions of public policy are completely integrated, to guarantee coherence between defining goals - what we say we should do, and budget execution - what we actually do."

Looking ahead, the country is finalizing its first national Strategy for Sustainable Development Financing, which will institutionalize these approaches and guide resource mobilization beyond traditional aid. The government is also pioneering the use of artificial intelligence to automate budget tagging against the SDGs, including cross-cutting dimensions such as gender, children, and climate.

The initiative demonstrates how the UN's engagement with middle-income countries is evolving. Rather than implementing projects, the UN team provided upstream policy advice, technical expertise and convening power to enhance coherence across government ministries and development partners. The UN brought together diverse government counterparts and coordinated inputs from multiple UN agencies including UNDP, UNDESA, ECLAC and UNICEF. By steering negotiation processes and ensuring alignment with the country's National Development Strategy and the UN Cooperation Framework, it streamlined support into a cohesive, nationally owned process.



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR A NATIONAL CARE SYSTEM

In the Dominican Republic, caregiving has traditionally fallen on women's shoulders, with nearly 93% of the paid domestic and care workforce being female. This gender disparity is even more pronounced in the informal sector, where 94% of domestic workers lack social security. Recognizing this imbalance as a barrier to development, the country is pioneering an innovative approach to care that could transform lives across the region.

With support from the UN Joint SDG Fund, the "Communities of Care" initiative has evolved from a small pilot to a comprehensive national strategy. The programme brings together UN Women, ILO, UNFPA, UNDP and more than ten government institutions to build a care system that promotes gender equality while providing essential services. The UN agencies provided technical expertise to help establish institutional frameworks for care, facilitated multi-stakeholder dialogues that contributed to the draft care legislation, and supported the development of pioneering training programs.



"For the first time in the country, we are seeing this issue as a high priority for investment and for promoting the development of people who need care and those who dedicate themselves to caregiving," said Nisaly Brito, former Director of Comprehensive Women's Rights at the Ministry of Women.

The initiative has made remarkable progress through institutional strengthening, modernized training and enhanced information systems. Key achievements include establishing an Intersectoral Care Committee to coordinate across institutions, developing a Methodological Guide for Local Plans, and creating a draft bill to establish care as a right. A ground-breaking training programme called "Personal Assistance for People with Disabilities" has also been launched, professionalizing care work.

"Care policies are essential if we want more people to receive quality care, but above all, to create decent and quality jobs in the Dominican Republic. This is crucial for advancing toward much stronger, more ambitious and life-friendly welfare states," said Ángel Serafín, Sectoral Coordinator of the Ministry of Economy.

The programme's impact has gained international recognition, earning second place in the Social Category of the 2024 Small Island Developing States Partnerships Awards. The National Care Policy is projected to benefit approximately 850,000 people and has attracted attention from international donors including the European Union.

Rather than implementing standalone projects, the UN's approach exemplifies its evolving role in middle-income countries – providing technical expertise, facilitating policy development, and convening diverse stakeholders to address structural inequalities while creating sustainable national systems.

FIJI: PROMOTING THE BLUE ECONOMY THROUGH BLENDED FINANCING

Fiji has established itself as a global leader in sustainable development and ocean conservation through the Investing in Coral Reefs and the Blue Economy (ICRBE) Project. Launched in 2021 by UN agencies—including UNDP, UNCDF and UNEP—and supported by the Global Fund for Coral Reefs and the Joint UN SDG Fund, the initiative exemplifies how blended financing can unlock essential capital while promoting the blue economy and addressing environmental challenges. It also demonstrates the patient approach needed to develop high impact investment in small island developing economies.



The project was initiated as a direct response to the severe threats facing Fiji's coral reefs and marine ecosystems, which are vital for both local livelihoods and economic growth. It underscores Fiji's commitment to preserving its natural heritage while positioning the blue economy as a cornerstone of sustainable development.

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This transformative initiative focuses on two key outcomes: the establishment of a Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) Financing Facility and the creation of a landfill to enhance sustainable waste management and stopping waste from getting to the ocean. Collaborating with C3 International Limited and the Fiji Development Bank (FDB), the LMMA initiative focuses on developing investment plans for 30 LMMAs. By prioritizing 10 of these areas and utilizing FDB's Blue Lending Programme, with a US\$ 300,000 credit guarantee from the ICRBE Project, this effort illustrates how innovative financing fosters ecological and economic resilience.

"The facility is poised to rejuvenate marine biodiversity while empowering local communities economically," said Sivendra Micheal, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change.

Additionally, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the landfill project will transform Sigatoka's dumpsite into a modern recycling facility through a public-private partnership model, which can be replicated at three other dumpsites in western Fiji – expecting to handle the waste of 300,000 Fijians while protecting the Great Sea Reef.

"Through our partnership with the Asian Development Bank and by nurturing strong public-private collaborations, this initiative champions an inclusive, scalable and sustainable approach," said Mr Dirk Wagener, UN Resident Coordinator for Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Central to the ICRBE Project's success is its blended financing model, which combines public, private and international resources. This pioneering effort sets a new benchmark for financial strategies in the blue economy, proving that economic growth can harmoniously coexist with environmental conservation

More information



GUATEMALA: PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT MAPPING FOR SUSTIANABLE DEVELOPMENT

The private sector is crucial for stainable development: attitude, values, funding and technology are all key ingredients to meet Agenda 2030. In a middle income country such as Guatemala, with a strong and influential private sector, channeling some of those resources towards the SDGs is crucial to achieve the goal of leaving no one behind.



The UN in Guatemala and the government have co-led the first national mapping and systematization of private sector social programs to make visible the private sector's contributions to human capital development—particularly in areas such as education, health, nutrition and technical training.

This mapping exercise, launched in 2023 and continued into 2024, identified 110 social responsibility programmes at 50 private companies and foundations, representing an estimated annual investment of US\$ 35 million. “It serves as a foundation for building a more structured, evidence-based collaboration between the private sector and the UN system,” said Miguel Barreto, United Nations Resident Coordinator for Guatemala. “The exercise demonstrated how structured data collection and systematization can improve visibility and facilitate strategic planning and investment.”

The Government of Guatemala, through the Guatemalan Secretariat for Planning and Programming of the Presidency, is using the mapping results to identify strategic areas for collaboration, ensuring alignment with national development priorities. Additionally, 23 private sector entities reported contributing directly to disaster response and humanitarian efforts, reflecting their growing commitment to resilience-building.

To expand engagement, Phase II of the mapping was launched in 2025 with the goal of reaching 150 companies and foundations. This phase will also harness technological tools to strengthen impact measurement and identify opportunities for scaling successful initiatives. This initiative illustrates how the UN, by working hand-in-hand with national actors, can catalyze transformative partnerships. The Guatemala experience is a promising model that could be replicated in other countries looking to engage the private sector in a systematic and strategic way to accelerate SDG implementation.

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More information

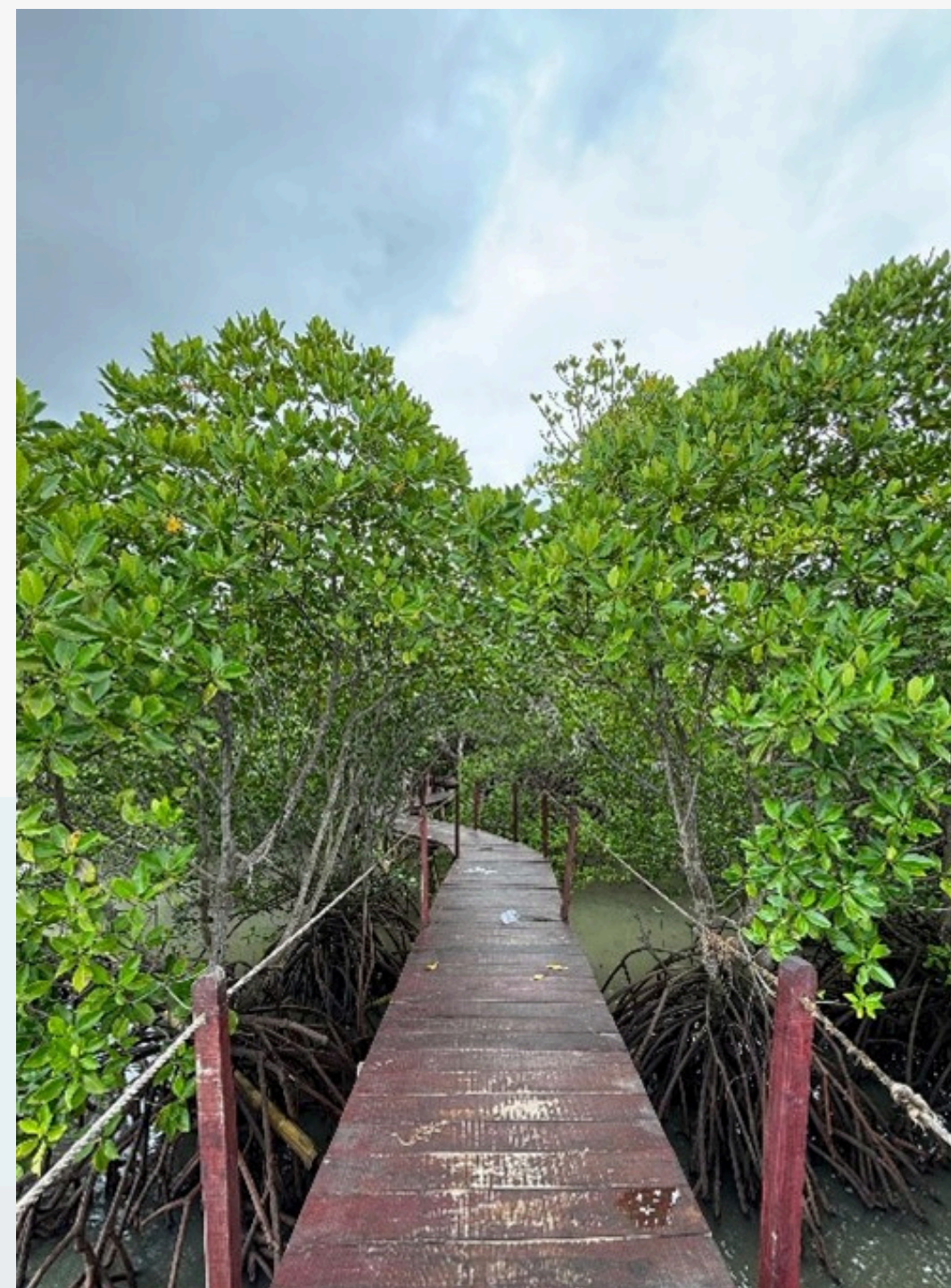


INDONESIA: THE UN'S INTEGRATED APPROACH TO FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT

Indonesia re-entered upper middle income country status in 2023; this means it is no longer eligible for certain types of development financing mechanisms reserved for lower income countries, but at the same time it opens new doors for innovative approaches to financing. To accelerate the SDGs and its own development priorities, the government – with the support of the UN – has mobilized over US\$ 11 billion in innovative financing.

Unlocking Islamic Finance for Green Investments:

Indonesia has successfully mobilized US\$ 9 billion through green sukuk – Sharia-compliant investments – over the past six years. These funds support climate-friendly urban infrastructure and other sustainable projects. Facilitating this, the UN has supported both the pre- and post-issuance phases of green sukuk to enhance impact reporting and boost investor confidence. The UN is now working with the government to scale up Islamic social finance for the SDGs, positioning Indonesia as a leader in faith-based finance for sustainable development and climate action.



Expanding Sovereign and Municipal Bonds: Indonesia has demonstrated leadership in issuing SDG bonds, raising US\$ 2 billion for critical sectors such as education, nutrition and food security. At the same time, blue bonds have raised US\$ 309 million for sustainable fisheries, aquaculture and mangrove rehabilitation. To facilitate this, UNDP has supported the Ministry of Finance while UNICEF has provided technical assistance and capacity building to provincial governments, empowering them to issue municipal bonds. These have the potential to unlock an additional US\$ 2 billion for climate and social investments.

Bridging the \$1.7 trillion funding gap: As Indonesia prepares for the Financing for Development Forum in Spain in July, UN in Indonesia is playing a key role in leveraging innovative financial solutions and partnerships for climate action and sustainable development, addressing a financing gap of \$1.7 trillion to meet the SDGs.

The UN collaborates with five national banks to advance sustainable financing frameworks. UNEP has played a key role in advocating for sustainable finance adoption by convening financial sector stakeholders and fostering knowledge exchange on best practices.

To achieve Indonesia's net-zero target by 2050, substantial investments in renewable energy are crucial. In partnership with government and SEforAll, the UN is in dialogue with the private sector on bankable projects to unlock additional investments necessary for the acceleration of sustainable energy nationwide.

KAZAKHSTAN: USING DIGITAL INNOVATION TO EXPAND SOCIAL PROTECTION AND LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Kazakhstan's ambition to create a more inclusive and resilient society is taking a transformative step forward through the Digital Family Card—a pioneering initiative that leverages digital innovation to extend socioeconomic support to the most vulnerable. Despite ranking 28th in the UN's Global E-Government Development Index, challenges such as fragmented data systems, paper-based administration, and gaps in identifying those in need have historically hindered the provision of timely assistance.

The Government, with technical support from UNDP, launched the Digital Family Card (DFC) in 2022. Funded through the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund, the initiative is a model of digital social innovation that aligns with Kazakhstan's long-term development vision and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In Kazakhstan, over 980,000 families—almost one in six—lack official income or access to pensions and targeted social assistance. With more than 3 million people classified as vulnerable, the challenge has been not only identifying these households, but also ensuring they receive the support they are entitled to. The new programme addresses these issues head-on by digitising and analysing data from all 5.9 million families across the country.

The system then automatically initiates targeted support through Kazakhstan's e-government platform, removing the burden from citizens to navigate complex application processes. Families receive support through simple SMS confirmation, after which benefits are transferred directly to their bank accounts.



Additionally, the initiative piloted a mobile app for social workers to access the digitalised information, which reduces the time needed to organise cases and process information and allows for greater efficiency and transparency when carrying out daily monitoring, reporting and assignment of services.

"The Digital Family Card exemplifies Kazakhstan's commitment to technologically empowered governance," said Katarzyna Wawiernia, UNDP Resident Representative in Kazakhstan. "The initiative not only strengthens institutional capacity, but serves as a replicable model for smart, inclusive social protection systems in other developing countries."

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MEXICO: IMPROVING THE ALLOCATION OF RISKS AND RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

For middle-income countries such as Mexico, sustainable development financing and climate risk management are foundational elements for long-term resilience and equitable growth. With high levels of inequality, significant exposure to climate impacts, and a complex public financial system, Mexico faces urgent challenges in aligning financial flows with its development and environmental goals. Strengthening institutional capacities to plan, finance, and monitor sustainable development policies is essential to meet the targets of the 2030 Agenda and to create a more inclusive, climate-resilient future.

In response to a government request, the UN in Mexico launched a major initiative to enhance national and subnational capacities for financing sustainable development and managing climate-related risks. The programme generated tools, knowledge products, and partnerships aimed at contributing to the broader transformation toward sustainable development in Mexico

UNDP spearheaded efforts to identify financing gaps and opportunities for aligning public and private financial flows with the SDGs.

The Development Finance Assessment (DFA) provided an evidence-based diagnostic of Mexico's current financing landscape and proposed recommendations to close SDG-related funding gaps.



UNEP, meanwhile, focused on strengthening the capacity of Mexico's financial sector to integrate climate risk into investment policy and practice. The programme developed tools and delivered training to assess climate scenarios and improve stress testing practices, in collaboration with the central bank, the Ministry of Finance and major financial sector associations. Particular emphasis was placed on gender equity within financial institutions, with a dedicated workshop and guidance documents supporting the inclusion of women in decision-making roles.

A major outcome was the collaborative design and socialization of Mexico's Sustainable Taxonomy—an innovative classification system for identifying investments aligned with environmental and social sustainability objectives. This taxonomy, now officially adopted and running at a **Pilot Test Program** stage, positions Mexico among the few countries with such a framework and creates the foundation for a green investment ecosystem that mobilizes private capital for sustainable outcomes.

In the context of middle-income countries, the programme demonstrated the critical role the United Nations can play in building institutional capacity, bridging policy and financing gaps, and supporting systemic change through non-financial contributions. By aligning global frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda with national and local priorities, and by equipping public and private actors with tools to manage climate and development risks, it contributes to the sustainability transition.



MONGOLIA: SUPPORTING MONGOLIA'S JOURNEY TOWARDS A DIGITAL NATION

Mongolia is a land-locked country, but not mind-locked,” said Ts. Baatarkhuu, Minister for Digital Development, Innovation and Communications, underscoring Mongolia’s rapid digital transformation. Mongolia, with a population of under 3.5 million spread across over 1.5 million square kilometers, has long faced challenges in bringing public services to the population. This is why digitalization is more than technology: it is an essential prerequisite for achieving the SDGs; the United Nations supports the government to bridge the digital divide..

In 2024, Mongolia ranked 46th in the UN e-Government Index, up from 92nd in 2020. Today, 99% of the population has access to 4G/LTE coverage. At the heart of the digital transformation is the e-Mongolia platform, a comprehensive online portal that provides more than 1,170 government services to over 1.7 million citizens. This approach has helped Mongolia to overcome geographical barriers of remoteness as well as administrative and logistical challenges, making government services more accessible, time-efficient, and cost-effective.

However, challenges remain, especially in reaching rural and nomadic communities where digital infrastructure is costly and connectivity remains limited.

The UN in Mongolia is working with the government to bridge this remaining digital divide. With support from the UN Joint SDG Fund, the programme focuses on enhancing access to services and building digital skills, particularly among the elderly, youth, and marginalized groups.

In Darkhan-Uul province, for instance UNDP and the ministry help 3,000 citizens, half of them women, to learn essential digital skills. A new Digital Training Facility will offer basic digital literacy to underserved communities to access the Government’s e-Mongolia platform and other digital public services.

To improve early education, UNICEF trains 3,000 teachers and reaches over 11,000 children and families across 13 provinces, while improving school connectivity and digital learning. ICT teachers are being trained to troubleshoot networks and act as digital leaders, supporting students, parents, and even the elderly in the digital world



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PANAMA: INSTITUTIONAL REFORM FOR A STRENGTHENED SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM

As a high-income country with persistent inequality, Panama exemplifies the development paradox faced by many nations in Latin America. Despite robust economic growth and upper-income status, the country continues to struggle with significant disparities in income distribution, access to public services, and social protection coverage. The United Nations system has responded by evolving its role toward strategic partnerships that leverage technical expertise, international best practices, and convening power to support Panama's national priorities, particularly in critical areas like social security reform.



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One of the critical priorities identified in 2025 is the reform of the Caja de Seguro Social (CSS), Panama's social security institution. Its reform is essential to maintain the financial stability of the system while ensuring access to quality healthcare and pension benefits for all Panamanians.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has developed a comprehensive actuarial study on the current state of the CSS, providing critical data and analysis to inform the national dialogue on reform. The ILO's involvement, coordinated through Panama's Ministry of Labor, extends to developing various scenarios and reform options that will help stakeholders make well-informed decisions about the future of the system. Three additional United Nations agencies are providing strategic support to Panama's social security reform through complementary approaches. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is focusing on strengthening governance and transparency within the CSS through the implementation of a Corruption Risk Management process. This systematic approach helps identify vulnerabilities in the institution's operations and develops targeted mitigation strategies to prevent corruption risks from materializing.

The Pan American Health Organization, Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization, PAHO/WHO has been working over the past 3 years with the CSS to strengthen its health information systems to achieve more equitable and efficient health financing. This initiative has improved managerial decision-making and optimized the use of resources, leading to significant savings. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is addressing operational efficiency through the implementation of a Logistics Management Information System (SALMI). This innovative tool is transforming how the CSS manages its supply chain for essential medicines and medical supplies. SALMI provides real-time inventory tracking and needs forecasting, enabling healthcare facilities at all levels to maintain optimal stock levels and prevent both shortages and waste. Since the implementation of SALMI, the Panamanian Ministry of Health has saved 51 million dollars in software coverage costs thanks to UNFPA support.

Through these targeted interventions, the United Nations is supporting Panama in building a more equitable, transparent, and efficient social security system that can effectively serve all segments of the population, particularly the most vulnerable who depend most heavily on these essential services.

PANAMA: INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS INITIATIVES TRANSFORM EDUCATION

Panama presents a unique case as a high-income country with significant development paradoxes. While it is among the fastest growing economies in Latin America, it remains one of the most unequal countries in the region. This duality creates challenges for development cooperation, as traditional ODA is practically nonexistent despite persistent inequalities.



The United Nations in Panama has adopted an innovative approach focused on strategic partnerships with government entities and national institutions, private sector, civil society and academia to address structural development gaps. The UN leverages its technical expertise and convening power while mobilizing diverse financing and stakeholders to tackle specific development challenges related to education and employability as well as employment generation for youth.

UN agencies have developed strategic initiatives that target systemic educational improvement. The Think Tank for Education, supported by UNICEF and UNESCO, brings together student and parent organizations, teachers' unions, educational

experts, business sector representatives, and international cooperation organizations. It operates as a policy and advocacy tool to promote change in public policy for education.

At the same time, UNDP and UNFPA are implementing a portfolio of more than US \$80 million in development financing to advance the quality of education. This is done through an innovative partnership model triangulating technical assistance, transfer of technology and financing between public sector, IFIs and the UN.

"This significant investment showcases how the UN can serve as a trusted policy advisor and implementing partner for large-scale projects in high-income contexts, providing technical expertise and international best practices while ensuring transparent resource management," said Ana Patricia Graca, United Nations Resident Coordinator for Panama. "The initiative focuses on short-cycle technical education that directly connects to labor market needs in strategic sectors such as aeronautics, logistics, and tourism." The results have been impressive: an 80% employment rate among graduates and 97% classroom occupancy, demonstrating the effectiveness of targeted educational interventions that respond to Panama's economic demands.

Another alliance between private sector, the UN and the government is transforming teacher education in Panama and is leading to the democratization of the access to quality digital literacy to all students. Through a partnership with Huawei, UNESCO is supporting the Ministry of Education in the implementation of the "Among Peers" Programme (Programa Entre Pares). This programme provides – for the first time in the country's history – all of Panama's more than 52,000 working teachers online and in-person education opportunities and free educational resources to improve and innovate in the integration of digital technologies in classrooms, leadership and management. In 2025, more than 20 training events will be held with international and national experts, including also spaces for sharing practices developed by teachers across the country.

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PAKISTAN: POWERING CHANGE - A BOLD STEP TOWARD A CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE

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On 13 March 2025, on the sunny shores of Barbados, Pakistan's Advisor to the Prime Minister stood before global leaders and made a bold announcement: Pakistan would develop its first-ever **Energy Transition and Investment Plan (ETIP)**. The aim? To reshape how the country powers its homes, businesses, and industries — cutting down dependence on imported fossil fuels and building a future powered by clean, sustainable energy.

For a country that generates nearly 60% of its electricity from fossil fuels and struggles with a US\$ 8.3 billion energy debt crisis, this is no small feat. But Pakistan is betting on transformation. With support from the **UN Resident Coordinator's Office, Sustainable Energy for ALL (SEforAll), UNESCAP**, and other UN agencies, the government will be working across ministries — from energy and finance to climate and industry — to align economic growth with climate resilience and financial stability.

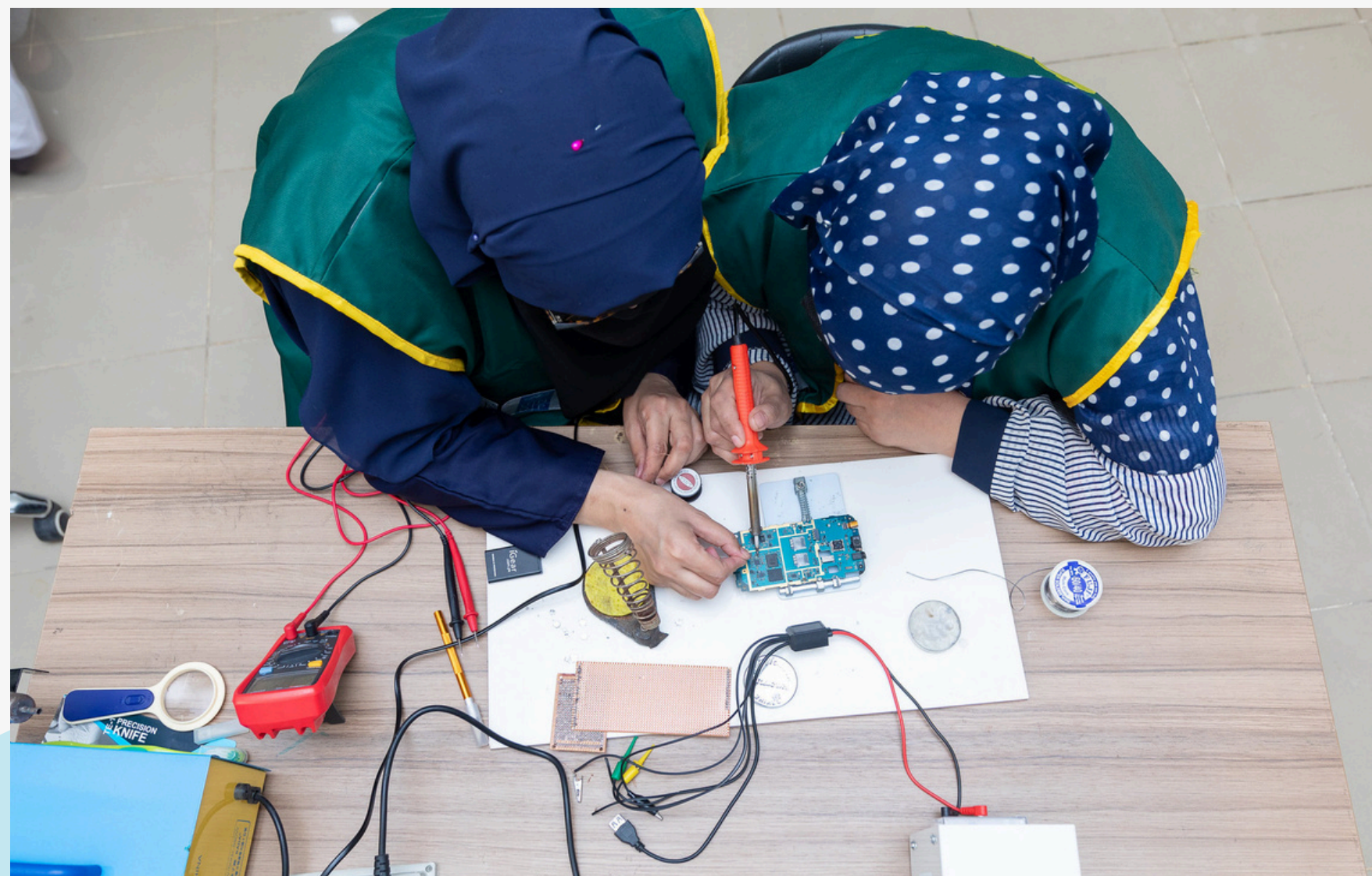
The plan is not just about technology or finance. It's about people. Pakistan is committed to making the energy transition just and inclusive, ensuring no one is left behind — especially vulnerable workers and regions that depend on fossil fuel industries. As a next step, Pakistan is exploring the launch of a national Energy Compact, potentially to be announced during the UN General Assembly. This would signal concrete, early action and attract global support and investment.

Pakistan is treating energy reform not as a crisis to manage, but as an opportunity to lead, innovate, and grow sustainably. With the right partnerships and continued UN support, this could mark the beginning of a new energy era for the country — one that powers prosperity without polluting the planet.

More information



PAKISTAN: BUILDING A DIGITAL FUTURE ONE CONNECTION AT A TIME



In a fast-moving digital world, Pakistan is laying the foundation for a connected future that includes everyone – and the UN is helping to make it happen. Working closely with the Ministry of IT and Telecom, UNDP, UNESCAP, UNESCO and the ITU are supporting a national push to bring Pakistan's digital infrastructure into the 21st century. From tiny villages to bustling cities, the goal is to build inclusive, future-ready digital systems that support everything from education and healthcare to job creation and smart governance.

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At the heart of this effort is a national 5G rollout strategy, a key step toward faster internet and more connected services. But it's about more than just speed – Pakistan is also investing in Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) to ensure secure, inclusive access to services for all citizens. A major milestone is the Digital Economy Enhancement Project (DEEP), which is already shaping how the country plans, builds, and governs its digital ecosystem. Meanwhile, Pakistan's AI strategy has been reviewed by UNESCO and UNESCAP, contributing to discussions on how to ensure the policy reflects international best practices and ethical considerations.

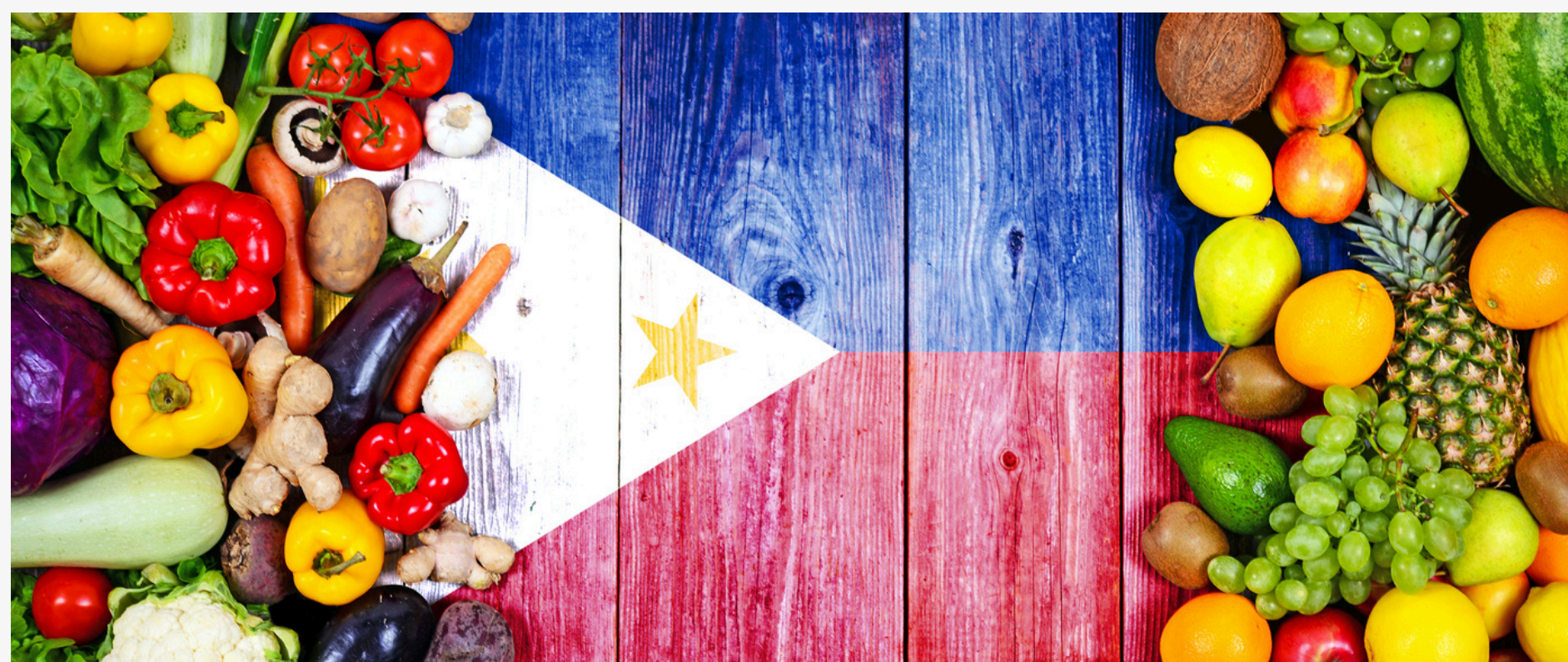
This transformation is guided by Pakistan's broader "5Es Agenda" for economic reform, which sees digital technology as key to unlocking the country's development potential. The UN's role has been crucial – not just in providing technical expertise, but in helping bring global standards and best practices into local policy.

For millions of Pakistanis, especially young people and women, this digital push could open new doors: to education, to jobs, and to a more connected, empowered life. In a country where access can still depend on where you live or who you are, this is about creating a more equal playing field. Pakistan's digital journey is just beginning – but already, the direction is clear: forward, fast, and for everyone

More information



PHILIPPINES: FORGING PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPROVED NUTRITION



The Philippines' ambition to become an upper middle-income country is within sight, but sustainability of economic growth requires simultaneous concentrated efforts to address long-standing development issues and ensure that no one is left behind. One key development challenge the government has identified is combating child stunting. The government estimates that 1 in every 4 children under five years old is stunted or short for their age, a strong indicator of malnutrition.

The Philippine Multisectoral Nutrition Project (PMNP), spearheaded by the government and supported by the UN and the World Bank, is a four-year programme dedicated to enhancing essential nutrition and health services in 235 municipalities. Through a US\$178 million loan from the World Bank and with technical support from UNICEF and UNOPS, the PMNP is creating systemic change to reduce child stunting across the country through capacity building initiatives for health care workers, promotion of improved nutrition behaviour at the household and community levels, and performance-based grants to incentivize local government units to deliver nutrition-specific interventions.

This modality of cooperation highlights complementarity, partnership and comparative advantages, building on the unique expertise of each player to achieve the common goal of a sharp reduction in stunting. Since the launch of the programme three years ago, there has been a 31% increase in the percentage of pregnant women in project areas who receive prescribed antenatal care, and a 59% increase in the percentage of infants younger than 6 months who are exclusively breastfed—their age-appropriate diet. More Regional Health Units—an increase of almost 30%—now have the standard equipment and supplies for the key first 1,000 days of primary health care services. All 235 municipalities engaged by the project have been able to develop and fund their Municipal Nutrition Action Plans.

UNICEF led the development of evidence-based social and behaviour change prototype interventions, focusing on critical areas such as antenatal care, breastfeeding, complementary feeding, food production, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Capacity building efforts also reached 1,782 health providers, while UNICEF also supported the timely government disbursement of performance-based financing by facilitating external verification of performance-based grants for 123 target municipalities. UNOPS is procuring over 100,000 units of primary health care supplies, more than 12 million units of nutritional commodities, over 24,000 units of start-up goods and about 1,000 units of information and communications technology equipment for regional project operations.

The PMNP has laid a strong foundation for sustainable nutrition and health improvements. By fostering collaboration between national agencies, local governments, and development partners, PMNP has created a replicable model for combating malnutrition and ensuring that every Filipino child has a healthier, brighter future, in line with national priorities for sustainable and inclusive growth.

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PHILIPPINES: REDUCING CO2 EMISSIONS WHILE CREATING ECONOMIC GROWTH

In 2021, the Philippines pledged to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 75 percent by 2030 as part of the country's commitments under the Paris Agreement on climate change. How to reconcile this goal with the need for strong economic growth, so that the country can achieve Upper Middle Income Country status by 2027?

To help decouple climate change from economic development, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) supported the Philippine Government through the establishment of the Cold Chain Innovation Hub to introduce and promote low-carbon, energy-efficient refrigeration technologies in the country. The project involved a policy and regulatory assessment resulting in policies to support natural refrigerant technologies. The minimum energy performance standards for the cold chain industry proposed under the initiative are expected to generate approximately 110,000 MWh in energy savings, potentially avoiding over 500 million metric tons of CO2 emissions by 2040. The project is funded by US\$ 2 million from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), with US\$ 25 million in co-financing (in-kind, grants and loans) from other partners.

Cold storage plants are essential for ensuring food security by reducing post-harvest losses, which can be as high as 50% for perishable goods due to inadequate cold chain infrastructure. Refrigerated transport is crucial for preserving perishable goods, yet it is heavily reliant on fossil fuels, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions and making logistics costs volatile. Solar-powered refrigeration technology, demonstrated through the project, has reduced operational costs, increased energy stability and created new business opportunities.

Ten demonstration projects across the industrial, commercial, agriculture and transport refrigeration sectors have showcased the innovative technologies. Capacity building activities were conducted to equip local engineers, system suppliers, and end-users with skills and knowledge to support the cold chain industry's transition to greener practices. "The project's success in transforming the Philippine food cold chain industry into a more sustainable and energy-efficient sector is setting a benchmark for future environmental initiatives," said Teddy Monroy, Representative of UNIDO in the Philippines. Through comprehensive policy updates, capacity building, innovative technology transfer and rigorous monitoring and evaluation, projects like this make a significant contribution to the Philippines' environmental goals, he added.

UNIDO is currently preparing a follow-up initiative to scale-up investments in innovative, low-carbon and energy-efficient cold chain technologies. This will focus on assisting SMEs and local fishing communities to access green financing to support the adoption of tailored applications, based on UNIDO's global expertise and experience. Meanwhile, further technical support is planned for the Cold chain Innovation Hub to help the government encourage innovation in the large industries that are looking for climate solutions and qualified human resources.



THAILAND: UN SUPPORT HELPS ADVANCE LGBTIQ+ RIGHTS



Thailand made history earlier this year as the first country in Southeast Asia to recognize marriage equality, ensuring that no one is left behind in love. The United Nations' commitment to support Thailand in promoting equality, inclusivity, and the empowerment of marginalized groups, in close collaboration with the government, civil society, the private sector, and academia, played a major role in the achievement of this milestone result.

Close partnership between the UN in Thailand and the Ministry of Interior, involving all 77 provincial governors, has significantly contributed to advancing the nation's sustainable development and human rights efforts. This collaboration

has expanded from advancing environmental protection into fostering dialogue and training programs on critical human rights issues to ensure access to services and inclusion in decision-making processes nationwide.

Thailand's pioneering move to recognise same-sex marriage marks a significant milestone in the region. The Marriage Equality Act signifies a major stride in upholding human rights and fostering inclusivity across the nation. In a joint event on 13 January 2025, the UN Country Team gathered to witness all 77 governors pledge to advance marriage equality and gender diversity in their Provinces, recognising that all love is equal. The leadership of the provincial governors is recognised not only to facilitate the registration of marriages but to shape a society that values diversity, promotes inclusivity and recognises the rights of all.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Anutin Charnvirakul reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment to ensuring seamless and lawful marriage registration for all couples, fostering public confidence in a system that valued diversity and honored every individual's dignity. He also highlighted the Ministry's robust collaboration with the UN in Thailand. "Your partnership not only enhances the significance of today's gathering but also exemplifies the robust collaboration between the UN Country Team in Thailand and the Government of Thailand in advancing human rights and gender equality," he said. The UN further leverages this partnership to promote the SDG agenda at local levels, reinforcing its commitment to sustainable development, human rights and equality across Thailand.



VIET NAM: MACROECONOMIC MODELLING – EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING AND INVESTMENT FOR SDG ACCELERATION

Viet Nam has set ambitious goals: to achieve high-income country status by 2045 and reach net-zero emissions by 2050. But how can a nation balance rapid economic growth with social development and climate commitments? The United Nations is helping answer this question through an innovative partnership that puts advanced economic modeling at the service of Viet Nam's future.

Working closely with Viet Nam's Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the UN in Viet Nam have developed a sophisticated macroeconomic model examining how investments in energy transition, social protection, poverty eradication, education and digital transformation would affect the country's development trajectory. The analysis provides policymakers with evidence-based pathways to optimize policies and achieve their development vision.



The model shows how inclusive fiscal policies can accelerate progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals, while highlighting how investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency can simultaneously deliver environmental benefits *and* economic growth through improved health and increased productivity. The MPI's Director General noted that "the modelling provided tremendous amount of knowledge required to explore further financing options for those investment choices."

The findings have gained significant traction at the highest levels of government. Key recommendations from the analysis have been accepted as inputs to the 2026 Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam – the forum that sets the nation's medium-term socioeconomic development plans. The insights will also inform Viet Nam's participation in the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development in 2025 and shape the Viet Nam 2045 Report, the government's long-term national vision document.

This collaboration builds on previous UN support for Viet Nam's second Voluntary National Review and National Commitment to SDG Transformation presented at the 2023 SDG Summit. By providing technical expertise and global perspective while respecting national ownership, the partnership highlights how international organizations can add value to countries transitioning beyond traditional development assistance. National policymakers now have robust data and evidence to navigate complex trade-offs between different investment choices, fiscal policies, and debt management strategies. As Viet Nam advances on its development journey, this data-driven approach ensures that economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability move forward together – creating a model that other nations can learn from.





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