

Concept Note

High-Level Political Forum 2025

NGO Committee for Social Development Side Event

The theme of the 2025 HLPF: “*Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind*”.

The theme of the side event: *Decent work and economic empowerment: grassroots perspectives on barriers and opportunities in achieving productive livelihood and socio-economic well-being.*

Background

The Grassroots Subcommittee of the NGO Committee for Social Development, in January 2025 survey, received information on the social and economic realities confronting people on the ground across the world. The survey's findings underscore a range of issues including, but not limited to, poverty, food insecurity, and inadequate access to health care, clean water, and education. Furthermore, respondents articulated concerns regarding gender inequality, employment, discrimination, and corruption. They called on leaders to foster social policies that “prioritize access to health care, job creation, education and closing the gender pay gap” and “economic policies that support small business.”

Echoing the reality and concerns of people from grassroots communities, this side event underscores the interconnectedness of decent work and economic empowerment, along with the barriers and opportunities to achieve a prosperous livelihood and socio-economic well-being for all individuals, particularly those in most need.

As articulated in the context of UN Sustainable Development Goal 8, decent work and empowerment aim to establish a work environment characterized by fair and secure employment, social protection, and opportunities for growth. The implementation of SDG 8 will foster economic empowerment in the affected communities and promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

Economic empowerment can be defined as the process of increasing the ability of individuals or communities to make economic decisions and access resources that improve their livelihoods. The objective of this initiative is to empower individuals by equipping them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and opportunities to engage meaningfully in the economic landscape and attain financial autonomy. Economic empowerment is critical importance for marginalized groups, including women, youth, and people with disabilities. These groups often encounter systemic barriers that impede their economic participation.

The following factors have been identified as key elements that promote economic empowerment: *Access to education*, which equips individuals with the knowledge and skills

necessary for employment, entrepreneurship, and informed decision-making; ***Financial services***, which include access to banking, credit, and financial education; ***Entrepreneurial opportunities***, which enable individuals to generate income, create jobs, and contribute to economic growth.

The concepts of decent work and economic empowerment are inextricably linked, and their pursuit is mutually reinforcing. Decent work provides the income and security necessary for economic empowerment, while economic empowerment enables individuals to access and maintain decent work opportunities. For instance, access to education and financial services have been demonstrated to facilitate the acquisition of suitable employment for individuals. Conversely, decent work provides the financial stability and social protection necessary for individuals to invest in their education, start businesses, and improve their livelihoods.

Objectives:

- Bring the voices of people on the ground to be heard at the United Nations through the High-Level Political Forum and looking forward to the second World Summit for Social Development 2025.
- Share challenges and best practices from countries and grassroots communities, in promoting decent work and economic empowerment.
- Inform sound national social policies and practices that support decent work and economic empowerment for marginalized groups

The date and time: Wednesday, 16 July from 11.00 A.M. – 12.30 P.M. (EDT)

Format: Off-site

The Venue: Bahá'í International Community UN Office 866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 120 New York, NY 10017

Moderator: Barbara Bozak

The Speakers

- **H.E. Dionísio da Costa Babo Soares, PhD**, Ambassador, representative of the Permanent Representative of Timor-Leste to the United Nations,
- **Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon**, the ILO Director for the United Nations in New York.
- **Anita Thomas**, Chair, NGO Committee on Financing for Development.
- **Marie Cari**, Software Engineer at Bank of America, the board for Year Up, the International Association of Women, and Women in Computer Science at Hunter College.
- **Julia Lievre-Cormier**, Senior Manager - Global Client Corporate Responsibility Lead at Capgemini, a multinational tech company.
- A compiled video featuring the voices of people from the grassroots

The organizer: The NGO Committee for Social Development (NGO CSocD)

Co-sponsors organizations:

- VIVAT International, Congregations of St. Joseph, International association of Schools of social work, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Life Project 4 Youth, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Congregation of the Mission, International Presentation Association, Association Dalit Women's Advancement in Nepal (ADWAN).

The Link to register: <https://forms.gle/xN7LTPkcx6tDYMgK7>