



## NO ONE WILL BE LEFT BEHIND

Megatrend: Demographic Changes

Sustainability Challenge(s): No Poverty (SDG 1), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8) & Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10)

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In recent decades, the issue of growing inequality has become a prominent concern in many countries. When measured in relative terms, global inequality has been decreasing. However, in absolute terms it has been increasing<sup>1</sup>. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this issue and highlighted the urgent need for action. Prior to the pandemic, various forms of inequality, such as vertical inequalities between the rich and poor and horizontal inequalities between and within different societal groups, including gender-based inequalities, were on the rise or remained stubbornly high in many countries.

High levels of inequality have adverse social, economic, and political consequences. In practice, high inequality means that millions of people are unable to meet their needs or those of their families, save for retirement or enjoy protection when they fall sick. It means that access to labor market opportunities is unfairly divided among men and women, the old and the young, indigenous peoples, migrants, people with disabilities and other groups. It means that jobs around the world are segmented by level of reward and by level of social and employment protection. Recent literature has demonstrated how these and other inequalities can have harmful effects on the pace and sustainability of economic growth and may result in environmental degradation, slow down efforts to reduce poverty, erode social cohesion and increase the risk of social unrest or political instability<sup>2</sup>.

To combat inequality and promote inclusive growth, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is central to international efforts. The agenda pledges to leave no one behind and calls for sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all<sup>3</sup>. The business community can play an important role in achieving this ambition. While there are many initiatives already in place, there is a lot of work to be done still – and robust action is needed to reverse trends of increasing inequalities.

**What can your company do** (alone or in collaboration with other companies or organizations) to contribute to sustainable employment and the reduction of inequalities? Define an area (geographically or other) where your company can contribute to the goal of sustainable employment, make sure you analyze what are the biggest obstacles and opportunities, develop a robust solution that has potential to scale, build the business case and prove that it will work!

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wider.unu.edu/publication/global-inequality-rising-or-falling>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/I09/reports/reports-to-the-conference/WCMS\\_792123/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/I09/reports/reports-to-the-conference/WCMS_792123/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>3</sup> The United Nations System Shared Framework for Action, United Nations, New York, 2017 - <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/I628748>