World Social Report Summary

The *World Social Report 2025: A New Policy Consensus to Accelerate Social Progress* outlines urgent global social challenges and proposes policy solutions centered on equity, economic security, and solidarity. Published jointly by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the UN University's World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER), the report serves as a strategic framework for the upcoming Second World Summit for Social Development (November 4–6, 2025)

Key Findings and Analysis

1. **Triple Crisis of Inequality, Insecurity, and Distrust**

• **Poverty dynamics:** Although extreme poverty has decreased, much of this progress remains "fragile," given the multitude of crises (including economic shocks, climate disasters, and ongoing conflicts). More than 25% of the global population lives close to the poverty level and thus at heightened risk of sliding back. Poverty rates across conflict-affected countries are 2-3 times higher than in other countries (e.g., poverty rates in conflict zones in Sub-Saharan Africa are 58%, while the rest of the region is 23%)[1].

• **Labor market instability:** Informality in work remains widespread (53% globally, as of 2023), and temporary contracts are increasingly concentrated in younger European workers (Figure 5)[1]. Widespread decent work deficits create economic insecurity and favorable conditions for social unrest.

• **Inequality:** The richest 1% captured 19% of the world's income in 2022 (up from 16% in 1990), while the poorest 50% of the population had only 2% of the wealth. Climate inequality makes this situation even worse: the poorest 50% generate 12% of emissions but suffer 75% of income losses.

2. **Erosion of Social Cohesion**

•**Declining institutional trust:** Institutional distrust was a global trend, with 40% of respondents in 45 countries having no trust in their institutions by the early 2020s (30% in the 1990s). Younger generations are even less trusting, suggesting a long-term crisis (Figure 10).

•**Digital divide:** Technology may provide a conduit for collective action. However, misinformation and unequal access exacerbate polarization. The report calls for policies to ensure that digital tools promote inclusion, not fragmentation.

Policy Recommendations

A. **Equity-Driven Investments**

- **Education and healthcare**: Prioritize universal access to quality services, addressing disparities by income, gender, and ethnicity (e.g., secondary school attendance gaps persist for rural and marginalized groups).

- **Housing and clean energy**: Expand affordable housing programs and accelerate clean energy transitions to reduce spatial and climate inequalities.

B. **Social Protection and Labor Reforms**

- Strengthen **life-course social protection systems**, including unemployment benefits, pensions, and disability support. For example, Germany's labor market reforms reduced informal employment through upskilling initiatives.

- Promote **progressive taxation** to fund social programs and reduce wealth concentration. Fiscal policies in middle-income countries could raise social spending by 2–4% of GDP without unsustainable debt (Figure 15).

C. **Rebuilding Trust through Inclusive Institutions**

- Enhance transparency in tax spending and policy design. Countries with higher perceived fairness in resource allocation report stronger public trust (Figure 12).

- Adopt participatory approaches like the **Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA)** method to build state capability and community buy-in.

Nepal's Social Status

Since the 1990s, Nepal has been steadily making strides socially inclusively, expanding education, health services and political engagement opportunities for previously

marginalized groups. Significant gaps still remain notably of caste groups and ethnic minorities.

Persistent Inequalities

Caste and Ethnic Disparities: Legal reforms and affirmative action have not provided the necessary impetus for Dalits and other excluded groups as they continue to be excluded in the economic, social and political spheres. While they are overrepresented in low-income, insecure work, excluded groups are underrepresented as decision-makers.

Time Poverty: The study identifies that excluded groups, especially women belonging to excluded castes and ethnic groups are spending substantially more time on unpaid care and domestic work. For example, during peak agricultural busy periods, excluded women are working up to 16–18-hour days juggling paid and unpaid work. This "double burden" keeps group members excluded from engaging in education, skills training and other opportunities to participate in public life.

Access to Infrastructure: Excluded households (especially in rural locations) spend more time collecting firewood and water as they have the basic inconvenience of not having an infrastructure in place. By contrast, groups in urban settings benefit from LPG stoves or piped water which save them time to do something productive or leisure.

Social and Cultural Constraints

Deeply Embedded Social Norms: Caste and gender biases continue to limit mobility and access to opportunities for excluded groups. For example, social interactions for Muslim women are often limited to communal work; even this reflects their limited agency and participation.

limited Economic Mobility: The majority of excluded individuals are largely restricted to informal occupations and other low-status positions. Only a small percentage can access formal employment or entrepreneurship opportunities.

Policy Implications

Interventions Needed: The findings suggest the need for policies that address both material deprivation and time poverty. Expanding physical access to infrastructure,

affordable labor-saving technologies, targeted social protection for marginalized groups, and other forms of service delivery are some possible areas for intervention.

Inclusive Policy Development: Initiatives aimed at improving social inclusion must include more than law reform or quotas. Efforts to improve inclusion need to include practical measures that ease the burden on excluded communities, labelled "everyday burdens," especially women.

Source: The State of Social Inclusion in Nepal: A Study of Time Allocation (SOSIN-SOTA), laserpulse.org, October 2023.