

Second World Summit on Social Development (WSSD)

4-6 November 2025 Doha, Qatar

Event Title: Basic Income: an emerging development instrument for social justice

Event Time: Wednesday 5 November 11:30 am - 12:45 pm Room 2

Introduction and Context:

Global inequalities, worsening climate impacts, persistent extreme poverty and large scale violence demand an urgent rethinking of how we address growing insecurities these challenges give rise to. Basic Income (BI) - a periodic, unconditional, individual cash payment - is emerging as a transformative solution to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) towards eradicating poverty, full and productive employment and decent work, and social inclusion. While a simple tool, BI's transformative potential rests in its non-targeted, individual and unconditional nature. As evidence from pilot studies from all over the world keeps pouring in, several political parties and governments are keenly studying the concept where some countries are considering local adaptations of the basic income model.

This side event is directly aligned with the aspirations of the Draft WSSD Outcome Document and its emphasis on promoting social development and social justice in response to pressing social challenges (paragraph 2): as a direct cash support, BI lifts people out of poverty; it boosts local economic production as individuals invest their modest BI into productive activities; and as it treats everyone equally by design, BI contributes to reducing social exclusion. Further, BI's efficiency and multiplier and feedback effects can prove essential for strengthening the effectiveness of the multilateral system (paragraph 5). Importantly, the Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace recommends BI as an emerging tool for breaking the cycle of violence towards maintaining peace and security (paragraph 4). Lastly, a more systemic consideration of BI can contribute to coalescing efforts across the UN system presenting an opportunity beyond business-as-usual (paragraph 12) at a critical time for the UN system. With the political will, adopting BI as a complement to traditional development efforts can make good on the promise for genuine solidarity, inclusive international cooperation, and shared responsibility (paragraph 12).

The session will showcase BI as an innovative solution against pressing social challenges that can integrate social justice within the development framework. Panelists will present how this tool is a practical, scalable and evidence-based social development initiative that can help us make leaps towards the SDGs.

Purpose/Objectives:

1. Highlight the transformative impact of Basic Income for eradicating poverty, advancing SDGs, including the potential accelerator role of UN entities
2. Consider practical applications of Basic Income in diverse contexts and what a pilot could look like
3. Foster knowledge exchange among government, policymakers, civil society, the private sector and development actors on integrating Basic Income into multilateral and national strategies
4. Explore future partnerships and strategies among these development stakeholders for implementing Basic Income pilots with the support of leading experts among the event panelists
5. Build momentum for the inclusion of Basic Income as an innovative and complementary development tool for the WSSD outcomes and future development paradigms.

Structure and Agenda:

11:30 - 11:40 | Welcome and Opening Remarks | Moderator - UNDP

- Framing the need for an innovative and transformative development instrument. Introduction of speakers and structure of event.

11:40 - 11:50 | Eradicating Poverty Beyond Growth: The role of Basic Income | Olivier de Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights

- Specific advantages of Basic Income in the fight for eradicating poverty beyond growth.

11:50 - 12:00 | Basic Income as a complementary development tool | Sarath Davala; Diana Bashur

- Key evidence from BI pilots: BI's transformative effects
- Basic Income at the UN: status across IOs and links to major UN paradigms.

12:00- 12:20 | Emergency Basic Income for Palestine | Prof. Guy Standing, SOAS;; Raja Khalidi, Director of the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (Tbc)

- Presentation of a recovery BI scheme, including beneficial effects and feasibility considerations drawing on pilots and experimental evidence
- Outline of a localised pilot implemented at an earlier phase with modest funds as well as the affordability of a full scheme.

12:20 - 12:45 | Closing Reflections - Q&A with Audience | Moderator - UNDP

- Summary of contributions
- Brief reflections on recommendations of the WSSD outcome document
- Moderated Q&A with the audience.

Background Resources:

- UN Special Rapporteur's latest [report](#): Eradicating poverty beyond growth
- UNDP [Report](#): Temporary Basic Income - Protecting the poor and vulnerable people in developing countries
- BIEN [Submission](#) to the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights
- Basic income as an innovative social protection tool - Blog [Post](#)
- 'Recovery Dividend': An Emergency Basic Income for Palestine - [Policy proposal](#)
- BIEN documentary on basic income, 30 minutes, ['Unconditional'](#)

Format:

- 90-minute in-person session, open to all WSSD participants.
- Blend of presentations, panel discussion, and interactive Q&A.

Target Audience:

- Member State representatives, civil society, international organisations, technical experts, private sector actors, academia.