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# INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY

**Single Mothers (Mothers Solo): From Structural Exclusion to Shared Responsibility**  
**Workshop Statement - International Day for the Eradication of Poverty**  
**17 October 2025**

## Executive Summary

Single mothers—often referred to as mothers solo—are among the groups most exposed to poverty and social exclusion across all regions. Their vulnerability does not stem from family status itself, but from systems that fail to recognize and support caregiving as essential work. When social protection, labor markets, and childcare systems are designed around two-parent households, single mothers are left to absorb economic risk, unpaid labor, and emotional pressure alone.

## The Reality of Single Motherhood

Single mothers must meet their children's physical, emotional, and educational needs while relying on a single income—often unstable, part-time, or informal. Rising living costs, insufficient child support, and limited access to affordable childcare severely restrict their ability to secure decent work. For many, daily survival takes priority over long-term security, professional development, or personal well-being.

Poverty is not experienced only as a lack of income. Single mothers frequently face social and institutional stigma—being judged, blamed, or treated with suspicion by welfare offices, schools, employers, and financial institutions. Administrative systems are often complex and punitive, requiring repeated proof of “deservingness” rather than providing timely and respectful support. This erosion of dignity deepens exclusion and undermines trust in public institutions.

## Country Experiences Highlight Shared Patterns

Across France, Thailand, Switzerland, The Philippines and Ethiopia, workshop participants described different legal and economic contexts but strikingly similar outcomes

Economic insecurity driven by single-income households, inadequate benefits, and weak links between training and decent employment  
Childcare gaps that make stable work impossible or force mothers into low-paid, insecure jobs  
Mental health strain, including chronic stress, anxiety, depression, and social isolation  
Unpaid care work that remains invisible and unrecognized in social protection and labor systems

These challenges demonstrate that poverty among single mothers is structural, not individual.

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# What Works: Community and Local Solutions

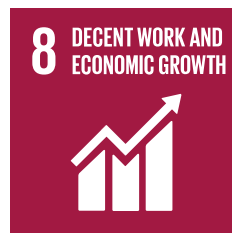
Despite systemic gaps, effective responses already exist at local and community levels. Single-mother and family service centers, peer-support networks, and low-threshold digital services show strong results when support is integrated rather than fragmented. Initiatives that combine childcare, psychosocial support, skills training, job placement, and emergency assistance help stabilize families and restore confidence.

Community-based peer networks reduce isolation, strengthen resilience, and create practical solutions such as shared childcare and mutual support. Digital tools expand access to counseling and information, particularly for women balancing care responsibilities with limited mobility or time.

## From Emergency Support to Structural Change

WHILE LOCAL INITIATIVES ARE ESSENTIAL, THEY CANNOT REPLACE SYSTEMIC REFORM. WORKSHOP DISCUSSIONS IDENTIFIED CLEAR PRIORITIES FOR ACTION:

1. Recognize unpaid care work as essential social and economic labor and integrate it into social protection and labor policies
2. Ensure income security and decent work, with benefits reflecting real living costs and training linked to stable employment.
3. Expand affordable and flexible childcare aligned with real working conditions.
4. Simplify and humanize welfare systems so that support is accessible, respectful, and non-punitive.
5. Address mental health and violence risks through accessible, specialized services.
6. Reduce stigma and change narratives, recognizing single mothers as resilient contributors to society.



The workshop was further strengthened by dedicated video presentations from experienced practitioners and advocates working directly with women and families affected by poverty and exclusion.

#### Speaker Video Presentations

- Hadia Gondji (BPW International, Ethiopia)

Video presentation: Challenges and pathways for single mothers in Ethiopia

▶ Watch video: <https://youtu.be/Q1-eWBU41Sc?si=ckXvqBc8p9ObrvZG>

- Dr. Jenny Elmaco (BPW International, UN Vienna)

Video presentation: Care, mental health, and policy responses for single mothers

▶ Watch video: <https://youtu.be/EwucQCFAwnE?si=ct1aymheeXOr6FLQ>

## Conclusion

Eradicating poverty among single mothers requires a shift from crisis management to shared responsibility. Supporting mothers solo is not charity—it is an investment in children, social cohesion, and sustainable development. Policies that value care, dignity, and equality enable single mothers not only to survive, but to participate fully in economic and social life.

Ensuring respect, security, and opportunity for single mothers is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and to building societies that leave no one behind.

## Single Mothers Working Group

- Brigitte Polonovski – ICW
- Chularat Israngkool Na Ayutthaya – BPW International
- Doris Gerber – BPW International
- Gina Vezzini – Young BPW International

