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**Programme questions and other matters: United Nations  
Research Institute for Social Development**

## Report of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

### Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Commission for Social Development at its sixty-first session the report of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development on the work of the Institute during 2021 and 2022.

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\* [E/CN.5/2023/1](#).



## Report of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development on the work of the Institute during 2021 and 2022

### *Summary*

The present report covers the activities of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) during the biennium 2021–2022. It highlights the programmatic achievements of the Institute during that period and presents its institutional and financial situation.

UNRISD is the only United Nations institution devoted exclusively to progressive, evidence-based and sustainable approaches to social development. In 2023, the Institute will commemorate 60 years of fulfilling this unique role. Amid a challenging global development context characterized by structural and systemic inequalities, interlinked crises and forms of injustice, the biennium marked the start of a period of building forward from prior knowledge, as the Institute's new institutional strategy 2021–2025, entitled "Overcoming inequalities: towards a new eco-social contract", came into effect. The strategy served to deepen the Institute's focus on inequality and related forms of injustice as central impediments to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In an effort to expanding lines of inquiry from the previous strategy, UNRISD research programmes under the new institutional framework are aimed at prioritizing inclusion, institutions, intersections and innovations as pillars for sustainable and transformative social development. Grounded in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Our Common Agenda" and the 2030 Agenda, the shared cross-cutting goal of the programmes is to tackle the root causes of inequality. The aim is to build a new eco-social contract, represented in implicit or explicit agreements between citizens and States that are inclusive of all people, guarantee their participation and advance social development within the resource boundaries of the planet and its ecosystems.

Through these programmes, the Institute's work addressed system-wide development priorities, captured by the central promise of the 2030 Agenda of "leaving no one behind". The Institute's research directly supported the work of the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council on the theme "Inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being and dignity for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda". The Institute's research findings were also used by United Nations organizations, Member States (including during the high-level political forum on sustainable development), civil society and academia. The Institute's researchers regularly advised or provided briefings to those stakeholders, sharing knowledge on development issues, informing debates and framing policy alternatives.

The Institute is funded entirely through voluntary contributions and depends on the support of Member States to ensure the fulfilment of its core mandate and functions to provide support to the United Nations system and to Member States. The Institute is grateful to its funding partners during the biennium, particularly those providing unearmarked institutional funding – Finland, Sweden and Switzerland – without which none of the Institute's activities could take place.

Institutional funding agreements signed with Sweden and Switzerland covering the period 2020–2022 have ended. While careful stewardship and greater cost recovery have allowed the Institute to build up reserves, the need for new sources of institutional funding from 2023 onwards is growing urgently. The Institute is exploring all avenues for sustainability, including ways to reduce the cost base without adversely affecting delivery on the core mandate.

## I. Introduction

1. The present report covers the activities of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) during the biennium 2021–2022. It is submitted to the Commission for Social Development in accordance with the terms set out in Secretary-General’s bulletin [ST/SGB/126](#) of 1 August 1963, in which it was stipulated that the Board of the Institute should, *inter alia*, submit regularly to the Commission a progress report on the work of the Institute.

2. The Institute was established in 1963 as an autonomous space within the United Nations system with the mandate to undertake policy-relevant research on the social dimensions of development. For six decades, the Institute has been at the forefront of efforts to ensure that social issues remain prominent within the development activities of the United Nations. UNRISD is the only institution in the United Nations system that is dedicated to research on social issues that are often neglected in development policy and practice.

3. The Institute uses its global convening power as a United Nations organization with a reputation for research excellence to leverage an international network of academics, policymakers and practitioners, thus bringing both a diverse knowledge base and a plurality of ideas to inform the work of the United Nations system on social issues.

4. The biennium marked the inception of the Institute’s new institutional strategy 2021–2025, entitled “Overcoming inequalities: towards a new eco-social contract”. The strategy served to deepen the Institute’s central focus on understanding and overcoming inequalities and related injustice as preconditions for realizing the transformative vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is aligned with the priority concerns and themes of the United Nations system – captured in the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Our Common Agenda” – and the 2030 Agenda. Annual workplans were also aligned with priority concerns and themes of the Economic and Social Council and the Commission for Social Development.

5. UNRISD continued to position itself as a key player in the United Nations system and the global development community in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and as a knowledge hub and convening platform for critical, multi-stakeholder debates on social development and international governance.

6. The funding agreements signed with Sweden and Switzerland covering the period 2020–2022 provided the Institute with the stability needed to begin implementing the new institutional strategy. Furthermore, the strategy has provided clarity of focus on inequalities, and in that regard has served as a beacon for additional institutional, programme and project funders. However, with both countries indicating that the provision of support would not be renewed beyond the end of 2022, the need for other sources of institutional funding is growing urgently. UNRISD is also exploring ways to reduce the cost base without diminishing capacities to deliver on the institutional strategy. Full and successful implementation of the strategy is vital to provide continuing evidence of the Institute’s unique contributions to the United Nations system and global development.

7. The Institute is funded entirely through voluntary contributions and its work is governed by an independent Board. This arrangement provides the Institute with the autonomy needed to produce high-quality independent research and engage multi-stakeholder communities. The Institute depends on the financial support of Member States to ensure delivery on its core mandate and functions to provide support to the United Nations system and Member States.

## II. Strategic framework

8. The present report covers the first two years of the Institute's new institutional strategy 2021–2025, entitled "Overcoming inequalities: towards a new eco-social contract", which is available in the six official languages of the United Nations. The work programme for implementing the strategy is aimed at bringing clarity of focus to the overarching theme of understanding and reducing inequalities and dismantling related forms of injustice.

9. Furthermore, the strategy calls for renewed social contracts that are more inclusive and ecologically sensitive. It was developed through consultations with stakeholders of the Institute in the United Nations system, Member States, civil society and academia. It emerged within a difficult global development context, in which societies across the world are beset with cascading, interlinked challenges that threaten the well-being of people and the planet.

10. Under the strategy, the Institute is undertaking research that addresses topics relevant to the most disadvantaged people and countries, recognizing that sustainable development at a global scale is intimately linked with greater equity and sustainability in and between countries and across all income levels. An overarching goal of the Institute is to share and disseminate evidence, analysis, ideas and strategies – co-produced with its research networks and stakeholders – that can influence debates, policy formulation and practices to reduce inequalities in its various dimensions. In that regard, UNRISD aims to foster more equitable, inclusive and sustainable development outcomes through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with an emphasis on low- and middle-income countries.

11. The specific objectives under the new institutional strategy, which are monitored and reported on annually in a results-based management logframe, are:

(a) To produce evidence, analysis, knowledge and ideas that put social dimensions at the centre of sustainable development;

(b) To contribute to the capacity development of researchers in the global South to carry out interdisciplinary research and policy analysis on the social dimensions of sustainable development issues, through co-design of research methods and a mutual learning approach;

(c) To provide information on and influence the norms, policies and practices of sustainable development;

(d) To convene and catalyse knowledge-sharing, interdisciplinary engagement and constructive debate;

(e) To secure institutional and financial stability, predictability and sustainability through resource mobilization and effective governance.

12. The strategy and objectives are linked with the five research programmes. Four of the programmes are policy-oriented: transformative social policy, gender justice and development, alternative economies for transformation, and environmental and climate justice. They seek to contribute to policy and practice that reduce inequalities and combat injustice in different dimensions, while helping to shape future social contracts that are more inclusive, ecologically sensitive and aligned with the fulfilment of all human rights. The fifth programme, led by the UNRISD office in Bonn, Germany, concentrates on amplifying the uptake and impact of the Institute's research among policymakers and practitioners.

13. UNRISD collaborates with researchers and institutions in its extensive and growing network – which extends the Institute's global reach and influence – to co-design research and co-produce knowledge. In the reporting period, the Institute

created a new research network, the Global Research and Action Network for a New Eco-Social Contract, in partnership with the Green Economy Coalition. The network brings together researchers, practitioners and policy decision makers working on social, climate and environmental justice. It is a space for dialogue, debate, co-construction and action around the meaning of a new eco-social contract, good practices for its design and mechanisms for its application.

14. The strategy continues the Institute's long-standing commitment to the vibrant and innovative communication of research to existing and new audiences, as well as the co-production of knowledge with a network of researchers and practitioners that is balanced in terms of gender and regional diversity.

### **III. Research agenda: overcoming inequalities**

15. With only seven years remaining in the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, the Institute's research has focused on inequality as one of the greatest developmental challenges. Inequality makes economies, societies and environments vulnerable to crises, widening fractures and divides as a result.

16. In 2022, UNRISD released a new flagship report, *Crises of Inequality: Shifting Power towards a New Eco-Social Contract*. In the report, the Institute builds on its work over the past five years, identifying inequality as a root cause and amplifier of the social, political and environmental crises affecting the world as it enters the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development in a state of fracture. It proposes a new eco-social contract based on sustainable development, reforms to economic and social policy and strengthened multilateralism with the aim of unifying people in the fight for social and environmental justice and sustainable development.

17. A wide range of additional research activities, events and outputs were delivered during the reporting period, with the aim of providing support to the United Nations system, Member States and the global development community in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

#### **A. Transformative social policy**

18. The UNRISD transformative social policy programme focuses on how social policy can address multiple and overlapping inequalities, such as of class, age, disability, location, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics, religion, migration and refugee status. The programme is aimed at exploring how power, institutions and norms shape policy design, implementation and outcomes in different contexts, and what pathways exist to build a new eco-social contract that delivers universal social rights and environmental justice within national and global natural resource boundaries.

19. During the biennium, significant programme resources were dedicated to cross-cutting institutional activities such as the development of the UNRISD 2022 flagship report, preparations for the People's Global Summit, held from 29 June to 2 July 2022 on the theme "Co-building a new eco-social world: leaving no one behind", and celebrations of World Social Work Day at the United Nations Office at Geneva. Significant programme resources were also dedicated to the Global Research and Action Network for a New Eco-Social Contract.

##### **1. Overcoming inequalities in a fractured world**

20. Inequality is one of today's greatest challenges, obstructing poverty reduction and sustainable development. Elite capture of economic and political power catalyses

such disparities, a reinforcing process that compounds inequality, which in turn undermines social, environmental and economic sustainability and fuels poverty, insecurity, crime and xenophobia.

21. A key strategic output during the period was the publication of a new volume, *Between the Fault Lines and Front Lines: Shifting Power in an Unequal World*. Based on cutting-edge research, the book serves to investigate how inequalities have contributed to reshaping structures at both the national and transnational levels, and analyses their consequences.

22. Additional outputs included the publication of four articles in a special issue of the journal, *Critical Social Policy*, which broadly addressed the theme of the political economy of social protection and minimum wages in the global South; occasional papers on business elites' attitudes towards taxation (with a focus on Chile), and on the political power of contemporary elites in Western democracies; and contributions to the UNRISD think piece series, entitled "The time is now! Why we need a new eco-social contract for a just and green world", an initiative of the Global Research and Action Network for a New Eco-Social Contract.

23. Research findings and policy recommendations were widely disseminated and presented in different expert group meetings, seminars and international conferences, including the People's Global Summit on the theme "Co-building a new eco-social world: leaving no one behind", World Social Work Day celebrations, the Human Rights Council and the high-level political forum on social development.

## **2. Universities and social inequalities in the global South**

24. The project is aimed at contributing to a better understanding of the role of universities in reducing social inequalities and in promoting sustainable development in the global South and at providing evidence-based recommendations for the innovative design and implementation of tertiary education policies that lead to transformative institutions and outcomes, thus facilitating efforts to support sustainable development and the implementation of Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

25. Launched in 2019, the project's activities and outputs in the reporting period included the publication of a research paper and policy brief on universities and social inequalities in the global South and a working paper that provided an examination of spatial, gender and class inequalities in the higher education system in Ghana. All five working papers of the project were presented at a webinar in 2021 as part of the seminar series entitled "Insights into inequalities", co-sponsored by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Geneva office.

26. The main finding highlighted in the project was that, while the availability of higher education opportunities for school leavers and adult learners has increased over the past decades, countries in the global South still lag behind, compared with those in the global North. Due to fiscal constraints and international trends to commercialize public services, much of the expansion in the global North has been driven by private or fee-paying higher education establishments. This situation has had detrimental impacts on access and equity in contexts where inequalities are high, as well as further knock-on effects that reduce social mobility and the capabilities of countries to harness the full potential of all members of society.

## **3. Global Challenges Research Fund and Migration for Development and Equality Hub: South-South migration inequality**

27. The key objective of the Migration for Development and Equality Hub is to develop an interdisciplinary, evidence-based understanding of the complex and

multifaceted relationships between inequality, development and migration between the countries of the global South (South-South migration).

28. UNRISD is a partner organization in the five-year Migration for Development and Equality Hub project, which is funded by the United Kingdom Research and Innovation Global Challenges Research Fund. The Hub consists of a network of research and delivery partners from 12 official development assistance-recipient countries that constitute six South-South migration corridors between which there are significant flows of people, skills, resources and knowledge: Burkina Faso-Côte d'Ivoire; China-Ghana; Egypt-Jordan; Ethiopia-South Africa; Haiti-Brazil; and Nepal-Malaysia.

29. During the biennium, funding cuts necessitated a reduction in the Hub's activities and reprioritization of funding. Nonetheless, the Institute participated in the Hub's team meetings, provided inputs and reviews of publications, co-organized workshops, co-drafted a journal article and participated in a research symposium.

#### 4. Other results and impacts

30. Other results and impacts include the following:

(a) **Valueworks: effects of financialization along the copper value chain.**

This project started in 2017 and served to examine social dynamics at different nodes of the copper value chain, from mining pits and the surrounding communities in Zambia through towns and harbours along African transport corridors, through Swiss trading firms and banks, to production and recycling sites in China. UNRISD was part of an international consortium that carried out research and outreach for the project with funding from the Swiss Network for International Studies. During the reporting period, the Institute published a research paper in which it examined debates on increased financialization in the copper value chain, its implications for global value chains and transnational commodity trade related to extractive industries;

(b) **Politics of domestic resource mobilization.** Based on the volume published in 2020, a new research and policy brief was published in 2021. The brief provided a summary of the Institute's research showing that while increased international solidarity was indispensable to help shoulder the financial burden of crisis response and of investment in the socio-ecological transformation required to truly meet the Goals, expanding fiscal space and capacity in the global South would be indispensable to building a new, inclusive and sustainable social contract;

(c) **Remembering the legacy of Thandika Mkandawire.** Co-hosted by the South African Research Chairs Initiative Chair in Social Policy, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa and UNRISD, the Social Policy in Africa Conference is a biennial scholarly gathering to reflect on the dynamics of social policy in Africa. The Conference was held from 22 to 24 November, on the theme "Development, democracy and social policy: remembering Thandika Mkandawire", to honour the memory and intellectual legacy of the former Director of the Institute, Thandika Mkandawire. In 2021, a volume based on the Conference held in 2019 was published and contained the Institute's contributions. Together with the Chair in Social Policy and Council, UNRISD also co-organized and participated in the annual Thandika Mkandawire Memorial lectures during the biennium.

## B. Gender justice and development

31. The Institute's gender justice and development programme is aimed at promoting a deeper understanding of the structural causes of gender inequality and at proposing political and policy options to States Members of the United Nations and,

more generally, to the development community. The change in the name of the programme reflects its focus on the concept of gender justice, which includes the question of redress for past injustices within the current discussions of empowerment. The work undertaken in the programme is guided by the recognition that the lives of people are intersected by other inequalities, such as class, race, sexual orientation, gender identity and age.

32. During the biennium, achievements and activities included brokering new research partnerships with United Nations entities such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), as well as the Asian Development Bank. A significant new collaboration was launched with the International Development Research Centre of Canada, in support of the Global Alliance for Care. The programme also partnered with the National Institute for Women in Mexico on a project that uses the Levy Institute Measure of Time and Income Poverty to inform policy decision-making for the national care system of Mexico. UNRISD also participated in multiple panels, including a high-level panel on economic crisis and development dilemmas in Latin America and the Caribbean, at the 2022 edition of the Latin American and Caribbean Conference on Social Sciences and five panels at the 2021 International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association.

33. In addition, UNRISD continues to mainstream gender perspectives across all research activities, communications and outreach. During the reporting period, the Institute joined the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the accountability framework on gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system, and was placed among the top 10 best-performing United Nations entities in the 2022 reporting. The current Director of the Institute, Paul Ladd, continued as a member of International Gender Champions, a network of senior leaders working to advance gender equality in the executive management of their institutions and in their programmatic work, through concrete and measurable commitments. UNRISD representatives also continued to participate in quarterly meetings of the International Gender Champions network, and in the periodic consultations of the United Nations LGBTI/sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) network. In 2021, UNRISD also joined a new United Nations task team set up to develop a strategy and guidance on preventing discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ+ persons in the United Nations' programmatic work.

## **1. Social care in Mexico**

34. The responsibility for unpaid care work often falls most heavily on women within households and is a major obstacle to their participation in the labour force. As a result, the expansion of social provisioning of care services has been promoted with an eye towards growth and poverty reduction. However, relatively little research has directly examined the linkages between social provisioning of care, the expansion of employment opportunities for women and growth. Even less attention has been paid to the potential impact of labour force engagement for women's time use and time poverty.

35. Based on an estimate of the Levy Institute Measure of Time and Income Poverty for Mexico in 2019, UNRISD initiated a research project during the reporting period that considers the impacts of three policy interventions (universal free quality childcare, extended school days for school-age children and universal elder care) to inform decision making by the National Institute for Women in Mexico for the national care system. The Levy Institute Measure of Time and Income Poverty is a



measurement framework that allows well-informed estimation of poverty rates and depth, taking not only income but also time into account. It is accompanied by a simulation tool that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a policy intervention in reducing time and income poverty simultaneously. This understanding is particularly important to formulate policies that promote gender, social and economic justice in a coherent and integrated manner.

## 2. VoiceIt: strengthening LGBTQI+ voices in politics

36. UNRISD is part of an integrated research-action project entitled “VoiceIt: strengthening LGBTQI+ voices in politics”,<sup>1</sup> aimed at enhancing the inclusion of LGBTQI+ people’s voices, rights and concerns in political decision-making processes in Cyprus, Greece and Italy. The Institute has an advisory role, bringing to the project its long-standing expertise on gender, inequality, political decision-making and participation and social and political inclusion.

37. During the biennium, a survey was carried out in the three countries to gather data on perceptions of LGBTQI+ rights, potential obstacles faced by LGBTQI+ individuals with minority ethnic and cultural backgrounds and the needs for policy reform. The survey engaged responses from LGBTQI+ persons, State and government officials, representatives of political institutions and the general public in each of the three countries. The findings from the surveys were synthesized into three national reports and one overarching policy report for which UNRISD conducted background research and drafted inputs. The reports were then translated into the national languages of the three countries and widely disseminated.

38. UNRISD also participated in a number of activities during the reporting period, such as a webinar on LGBTQI+ rights in everyday life, two seminar series with LGBTQI+ persons, civil society, state officials and representatives of political institutions, a conference showcasing the project’s findings and outputs and a peer learning and exchange workshop where national action plans for the three countries were discussed.

## 3. Networking and partnerships

39. Partnering with, and building networks of, gender justice researchers are important activities of the programme that are aimed at co-creating mutual benefits. A range of joint initiatives under the current workstreams are being carried out with partners. New partnership agreements were signed in 2022 with three leading Mexican higher education institutions: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Colegio de México and Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. The agreements strengthen the Institute’s collaborations in the region on applied, localized research and policy analysis to overcome inequalities, advance gender justice and development and co-construct knowledge on alternative, equitable economies.

40. During the reporting period, UNRISD developed a collaboration with Fundación Carolina, a foundation that promotes cultural relations and cooperation in educational and scientific matters between Spain and the countries of the Ibero-American Community of Nations. The Institute published a study through this collaboration in *Análisis Carolina*, a current affairs text series aimed at unravelling key issues and offering policy recommendations. A paper was also published, providing reflections from a feminist perspective on whether the COVID-19 work and care crisis could become an opportunity to advance gender equity policies. Work under the programme benefits from the support of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation.

<sup>1</sup> [www.voiceitproject.eu](http://www.voiceitproject.eu).

## C. Alternative economies for transformation

41. The alternative economies for transformation programme serves to explore alternative policy approaches and economic models that are viable, egalitarian and ecologically sound. It also provides a way to identify innovative ways to measure how sustainable those models are in terms of environmental, social and governance performance and in relation to the 2030 Agenda.

42. The social and solidarity economy continued to be a key area of focus in the programme during the biennium, covering cooperatives, non-profit organizations, associations engaged in economic activity, mutuals, foundations and enterprises that prioritize social and environmental goals over profit. The social and solidarity economy is becoming more prominent in the context of global and multidimensional crises, and social and solidarity economy activities are increasingly seen as a complement, or alternative, to growth- and profit-centred economic activities. Through research projects in this portfolio, UNRISD assesses institutional and policy environments for the social and solidarity economy at the global, regional, national and local levels. The Institute also explores how the social and solidarity economy is contributing to the implementation and achievement of the Goals.

### 1. Social and solidarity economy knowledge hub for the Sustainable Development Goals

43. UNRISD is the implementing agency of the knowledge hub of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy. Established in 2013, the Task Force aims to raise the visibility of the social and solidarity economy and enhance its recognition within and beyond the United Nations system. The mission of the Task Force also includes activities to facilitate multi-stakeholder initiatives that aim to realize the transformative potential of the social and solidarity economy in creating an economy for people, the planet and a fairer world.

44. A key highlight during the biennium was the publication of project outputs that review the current statistics on the social and solidarity economy and make recommendations for their improvement. Three working papers were published in this regard, including a final paper outlining areas for future research. In addition, a new project was launched to develop a social and solidarity economy encyclopedia to provide policymakers and academics with an easy-access reference tool on various topics associated with it. The draft entries were made available in 2022 in digital format ahead of the launch of the encyclopedia's print version in 2023.

45. The Institute will continue to contribute actively in this and other areas of the Task Force's work, as outlined in the task force's new workplan 2022–2024.

### 2. Promoting social and solidarity economy through public policies: Guidelines for local governments

46. Local governments are becoming increasingly interested in the social and solidarity economy since it plays a significant role in providing social services, broadening access to finance, managing common-pool resources, protecting the environment and regenerating economic systems through the local production and exchange circuit. The project is aimed at generating a broader, deeper understanding of the policy and institutional frameworks that foster the development of robust social and solidarity economy ecosystems at the subnational level.

47. During the reporting period, the project results were disseminated at two international events, one mainly aimed at practitioners and the other for academics. In addition, French and Spanish translations of the project's previously published

working papers were released. These working papers detail case studies focused on public policies and the social and solidarity economy in seven cities: Barcelona, Spain; Dakar; Durban, South Africa; Liverpool, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; Mexico City; Montreal, Canada; and Seoul. Guidelines for policymakers based on these case studies were published in English, French, Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese.

### **3. Sustainable development performance indicators**

48. In recent years, sustainability measurement and reporting have improved, but questions remain as to whether current measurement and reporting models are fit-for-purpose. The aim of this four-year project is to contribute to the measurement and evaluation of the performance of a broad range of economic entities – in both the for-profit sector and in the social and solidarity economy – in relation to the vision and goals of the 2030 Agenda.

49. During the reporting period, UNRISD published a synthesis report of the pilot testing of sustainable development performance indicators. These indicators were designed to measure the actual sustainability performance of economic entities, in both for-profit enterprises and social and solidarity economy organizations and enterprises. In addition, UNRISD published a user manual for the sustainable development performance indicators and initiated a platform to help economic entities to generate an authentic assessment of their sustainability performance.

### **4. Integrated approaches to the Sustainable Development Goals**

50. This area of work focuses on the development-environment-peace nexus. It is aimed at further understanding integrated approaches that seek to operationalize linkages between economic and social development, the environment and peace – looking at both theory and practice. In the reporting period, UNRISD launched a new research project, with funding from the Korea International Cooperation Agency, to explore the development-environment-peace nexus approach in borders and borderlands.

51. The project is aimed at facilitating the exchange and co-production of knowledge and experiences, contributing to setting an agenda for an integrated and transformative approach to borders and borderlands, deepening and enriching discussions and understanding on the topic, and helping policy decision makers and practitioners to imagine and design development cooperation programmes and projects that respond to the specificities of borders and borderlands.

52. During the biennium, highlights included the commissioning of an analysis of United Nations agency projects that showed that only 2 per cent of projects surveyed used integrated approaches designed to achieve multiple Goals. UNRISD has commissioned additional case studies to explore the issue further.

## **D. Environmental and climate justice**

53. The environmental and climate justice programme examines the wide range of factors that shape the interactions between people and nature and that lead to environmental stress and disruption, including the role of social norms, institutions and actors, power asymmetries and technology. It explores the social consequences of economic and environmental change processes, and how people and communities organize and mobilize collectively to enhance their well-being while managing or protecting their natural resources.

54. During the biennium, three main lines of work under the broad framing of climate justice were pursued: just transition(s) from fossil fuels to low-carbon development; resilience in the face of climate and other exogenous shocks; and transformative adaptation to climate change in coastal cities. The Institute was also engaged in other projects during the biennium, including one providing a critical reflection on climate philanthropy and another on examining how and whether city networks working on climate issues refer to questions of justice.

## **1. Just Transition Research Collaborative**

55. The Just Transition Research Collaborative provides a space for experts from academia and civil society to analyse and explore the varying narratives and framings of “just transition” – the idea that justice and equity must form an integral part of the transition towards a low-carbon world – to inform science-policy dialogue around it, and to offer policy recommendations on how the approach can be used to foster the transition to equitable low-carbon development.

56. During the biennium, the Just Transition Research Collaborative embarked on a new two-year phase of the project that focuses on co-constructing an updated version of its 2018 report entitled *Mapping Just Transition(s) to a Low-Carbon World* and further enhancing online collaboration and stakeholder engagement, aimed at contributing to more progressive understandings of just transition and fostering transformative change and climate justice for all. This phase builds on the existing Just Transition Research Collaborative reports, webinar series and network to conduct a mapping that highlights the recent development of just transition debates and how efforts can differ in terms of their impacts on various dimensions of justice.

57. A range of communications and outreach channels were used during the reporting period. Information on the project was communicated through regular UNRISD newsletters as well as targeted messages to the Just Transition Research Collaborative Network and social media. In addition, UNRISD participated in events at the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

58. During the reporting period, the Just Transition Research Collaborative launched the Just Transition Care initiative together with academic and civil society partners. The initiative is aimed at establishing a discussion space about the relationship between care and the politics of just transition. The initiative was rolled out through workshops during the biennium to address a different aspect of the COVID-19-climate-care nexus through the experiences and perspectives of different stakeholders, with academics playing the role of facilitators and active listeners.

## **2. Network for Equity in Transitions from Fossil Fuels**

59. The Network for Equity in Transitions from Fossil Fuels, of which UNRISD is a part, is aimed at offering policy-relevant insights and advice on socially just and acceptable solutions for a rapid transition away from fossil fuel dependence to Governments and other policy stakeholders at the national and international levels.

60. While overall fundraising for the project is ongoing, seed funding was secured to prepare a draft concept paper based on background research and conduct an initial strategy workshop with relevant experts and potential network members to further refine the concept. The draft paper was discussed at a workshop and will serve to inform a concept paper and future fundraising efforts.

### 3. State of resilience in Africa

61. Efforts to build and strengthen resilience are critical to protecting poverty reduction and sustainable development achievements in Africa against shocks and to ensuring steady progress into the future. In order for those efforts to be successful, it is important to address the shortcomings and gaps in the concept of resilience and how it is measured. UNRISD has partnered with the United Nations Development Programme Resilience Hub for Africa to assess what resilience means within the African context, while considering the diverse political, social and economic landscapes in the continent. The objective of the project is to develop a resilience profile that can be used to assess resilience in different contexts and track progress over time.

62. During the biennium, the Institute developed a mapping and conceptual state-of-the-art paper on resilience in Africa, defining relevant dimensions of resilience and outlining how it manifests in Africa (based on a desktop review and initial consultations at the country and regional levels). A high-level dialogue with States members of the African Union was also held to inform and validate the conceptualization and inform the subsequent work of the project, including the drafting of the Africa Human Development Report on Resilience, which is to be published in 2023.

### 4. Transformative adaptation to climate change in coastal cities

63. The effects of climate change on coastal cities call for rapid action to both reduce the extent of impacts and prepare for unavoidable ones. The project used Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam, and Jakarta as case studies for exploring the compounding risks of rapid and partly informal urbanization, land subsidence and water-related risks such as urban flooding, sea-level rise and health risks, to enhance the understanding of transformative adaptation to climate change in coastal cities. On that basis, the project is aimed at promoting policy changes to reduce disaster risk and the vulnerability of local populations.

64. Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the last deliverables of the project were finalized in 2021. The project served to showcase the relevance of adopting an approach to transformative adaptation that was centred on social justice and to identify both entry points and challenges in the context of the two case studies. Two UNRISD research and policy briefs were published to synthesize the key findings from each case study into policy-relevant messages. In addition, three think pieces featuring examples from other countries showcased more generally the relevance of bringing a social justice lens into adaptation planning.

## E. Integrating knowledge and capacity development for the Sustainable Development Goals: the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development in Bonn

65. With the support of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development and the German Federal Foreign Office, UNRISD has established an office in Bonn with a focus on:

- (a) Training and capacity-building for an integrated approach on the social dimension of sustainable development;
- (b) Joint research and capacity-development strategies through identifying and mapping relevant knowledge gaps and implementing corresponding research activities;

(c) Strengthening evidence-based implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and research uptake by the United Nations and development partners.

66. In addition, the presence of the UNRISD office in Bonn has allowed the Institute to make its own unique contribution to the city's global development ecosystem during the biennium, by hosting its own events and networks and participating in the events of United Nations entities and other partners based there.

### **1. Global Research and Action Network for a New Eco-Social Contract**

67. A major output during the reporting period was the launch of the Global Research and Action Network for a New Eco-Social Contract. The network is a space for dialogue, debate, co-construction and action around the meaning of a new eco-social contract, good practices for its design and mechanisms for its application. Network members collectively represent a progressive knowledge and action alliance of researchers, practitioners, activists and policy decision makers working for social, climate and environmental justice.

68. The network was launched in late 2021 and brought nearly 100 members together at its first meeting in early 2022. UNRISD also initiated a think piece series, on the theme "The time is now! Why we need a new eco-social contract for a just and green world", with members of the network contributing over 10 articles on the theme. Working in different subgroups, network members have also begun co-developing policy briefs that set out new visions of eco-social contracts. Two policy briefs have been published to date.

### **2. Strengthening evidence-based Sustainable Development Goals implementation and research uptake**

69. During the biennium, a key highlight of UNRISD efforts to strengthen evidence-based implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals was the training provided on inequalities and the Goals to members of the Global Research and Action Network for a New Eco-Social Contract and to guests of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit. Attended largely by policymakers and development practitioners, the majority of whom were from the global South, the training covered various topics such as intersectionality, climate justice and the political economy of inequalities. The Bonn office also organized or contributed to a number of events during the period, including a presentation on evidence-based decision-making for the transformative implementation of the Goals at the 2021 high-level political forum on sustainable development.

### **3. Improving the evidence base**

70. During the biennium, the Bonn office and its academic and United Nations entity partners issued a call for papers on sustainable development. Contributions were published in a special issue of the journal *Sustainable Development* and in a new volume, *Financial Crises, Poverty and Environmental Sustainability: Challenges in the Context of the SDGs and COVID-19 Recovery*.

## **IV. Communications and outreach**

71. The mandate of the Institute requires that its research be policy-relevant and focused on pressing issues of concern to the United Nations system and Member States. The Institute aims to ensure that its research reaches a broad range of actors concerned with different facets of social development and that its findings inform

intergovernmental and national policy processes, civil society advocacy and scholarly debates. During the biennium, the Institute pursued a range of innovative and traditional communications and outreach activities to make its research available, accessible and relevant to key stakeholders; to increase its reach and visibility in the global community; and to foster engagement and interaction with audiences.

72. During the biennium, the Institute:

(a) Produced and disseminated a wide range of research-based outputs, including 27 research papers, 19 policy briefs and other briefs, 21 reports, 37 peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters, and 25 blogs and think pieces; 57 social and solidarity economy encyclopedia entries and two publications for the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy; and 30 videos and six podcasts;

(b) Used digital media to both deliver research and engage with a wide audience, generating over 52,000 publication downloads<sup>2</sup> and 105,000 video views,<sup>3</sup> and attaining a gross following of over 100,000 users on the Institute's social media sites,<sup>4</sup> by September 2022; the average attendance at UNRISD webinars was 127 participants from, on average, 38 countries, with an attendance-registration ratio of 40.5 per cent;

(c) Fostered engagement and dialogue through nearly 50 events organized (or co-organized) with various stakeholders;

(d) Dispatched 10 e-bulletins<sup>5</sup> to share news and research findings, and six tailored e-newsletters to respond to the needs of Member States and United Nations development policy actors.

73. The Institute can influence research through the engagement of its staff in advisory and consultative activities for government and United Nations entities, participation in expert meetings and the provision of verbal or written inputs as required. Institute staff carried out over 75 such activities in 2021 and 2022.

## V. Institutional issues

74. UNRISD receives no funding from the budget of the United Nations and is therefore reliant on the resources it receives, primarily from Governments and foundations. The funding context for research, and for UNRISD, has shifted significantly in the last decade, as donors have moved away from institutional funding towards project funding through competitive processes. Recent global developments have also seen funds shift away from longer-term priorities such as inequality and social development to more immediate crisis response.

75. The Institute's unique characteristics have made it challenging to replace declining unearmarked institutional funding with funds earmarked for specific projects. These characteristics include a long-term horizon, a commitment to critical, heterodox and interdisciplinary research, insistence on working with and strengthening the capacities of researchers from the global South, and the Institute's position within the United Nations system. Project call stipulations themselves often

<sup>2</sup> Available at [www.unrisd.org](http://www.unrisd.org).

<sup>3</sup> Available at [www.youtube.com/unrisd](http://www.youtube.com/unrisd).

<sup>4</sup> The Institute's gross following includes the number of likes, followers, subscribers and unique visitors of the Institute on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn. The Institute's gross following was 67,000 in 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Available at [www.unrisd.org/ebulletin-list](http://www.unrisd.org/ebulletin-list) and [www.unrisd.org/ebulletin-list-mailchimp2020](http://www.unrisd.org/ebulletin-list-mailchimp2020).

limit the potential contribution of international organizations or do not allow for full cost recovery.

76. Nevertheless, during the biennium, UNRISD has continued to be successful in mobilizing and diversifying its resource base. The Institute has grown on average by 10 per cent per annum since 2017 and it has expanded its project portfolio. Project funding during the biennium 2021–2022, compared to the previous one, increased by 58 per cent to \$3.223 million. The project pipeline extends into 2023.

77. A greater focus on cost recovery, along with careful stewardship, has allowed financial reserves to be rebuilt, helping to safeguard the Institute against future shocks and to fully cover closing costs should the Institute cease to operate. The reserves have also allowed investments in some institutional priorities, including the new institutional strategy, a new website and the launch of the gender justice and development programme. Total reserves of \$1.610 million are projected for the end of the biennium.

78. New three-year institutional funding agreements were reached with Sweden and Switzerland in 2020, covering the 2020–2022 period. The Robert Bosch Stiftung also provided new institutional funding during the biennium. The continuance of institutional funding cannot be guaranteed after this period, and the Institute is therefore exploring all options related to its long-term sustainability. New support from Germany has allowed the initiation of a programme on integrating knowledge and capacity development for the Goals, while support from Spain funded activities in the gender justice and development programme.

## **A. Management and staffing**

79. As at 30 September 2022, eight staff members were under contract at the Institute: the Director, three senior research coordinators (one of whom is also the head of the Bonn office), one research officer, one communications and outreach staff member, and two administrative and support staff members.

80. UNRISD projects are supported by research analysts employed as consultants: during the biennium 2021–2022 there were five research analysts. In addition, four consultants supported communications activities. The Institute also hosted nine visiting research fellows and benefited from the support of paid interns provided by partner organizations.

## **B. Governance and Board**

81. The Board of the Institute met via Zoom on 15 April 2021, and in Geneva on 7 and 8 April 2022.

82. The composition of the Board changed during the reporting period. The Secretary-General appointed Azita Berar Awad to serve as the Chair of the Board from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2025. She replaced Joakim Palme, who served first as Board member and then as Chair until 2021. An additional two members, Olivier de Schutter and Grazi a Moraes Silva, joined the Board, as two outgoing members, Saraswati Menon and Sylvie Durrer, were thanked for their service.

83. As such, at the time of reporting, the Board had seven nominated members, with the Director of the Institute serving in an ex officio capacity.

84. During the biennium, UNRISD made further progress in updating its founding statutes. The Board provided further advice on refining the mandate of the Institute at its April 2022 meeting.



## C. Financial report

85. The Institute receives no money from the United Nations general budget and is funded entirely by voluntary contributions from Governments, research foundations, United Nations entities and other institutions. The funding context for research, and for UNRISD, has shifted significantly in the wake of recent global developments, as donors have moved away from institutional funding towards earmarked funding.

86. At the time of writing, and with 2022 accounts still open, the total income of the Institute (excluding miscellaneous income) for 2021–2022 was estimated at \$6.747 million (see table). Estimated total expenditures were \$6.495 million.

87. Institutional (unearmarked) funding was estimated at \$3.524 million, of which \$279,018 was from the Bosch Foundation, \$400,000 from Finland, \$1.696 million from Sweden and a gross amount of \$1.149 million from Switzerland (see table).

88. The Institute is currently dependent on two principal funders for financing institutional costs and key research, communications and impact activities, namely Sweden (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) and Switzerland (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and Federal Department of Foreign Affairs).

89. In addition, a three-year funding agreement with the Bosch Foundation (2022–2024) was concluded and signed in 2022.

90. Earmarked (project) funding was estimated at \$3.223 million. Germany provided support for the newly established office in Bonn. Other funds were provided by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, the International Development Research Centre in Canada, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Development Programme and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), foundations and non-governmental organizations (see table).

### Funding sources, 2021–2022

(United States dollars)

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*Donor*

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#### Countries

Canada, International Development Research Centre	364 166
Finland, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	400 000
Germany, Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development	578 918
Germany, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	7 946
Germany, Society for International Cooperation	493 929
Mexico, National Institute for Women	258 071
Spain, Agency for International Development Cooperation	419 967
Sweden, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	1 695 894
Switzerland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	166 190
Switzerland, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	948 968

#### United Nations entities

International Labour Organization	72 819
United Nations Development Programme	210 000
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)	30 000

*Donor***Research foundations and other funders**

Association for Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals	85 000
Bosch Foundation	279 018
Centre for Social Entrepreneurship Studies	296 600
Coventry University	27 977
EDGE Funders Alliance	6 000
Kentro Merimnas Oikogeneias Kai Paidiou	6 446
Korea International Cooperation Agency	227 012
Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung	144 203
University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland	22 389
University of Leeds	5 819
<b>Total</b>	<b>6 747 332</b>

*Note:* Estimates as at 31 October 2022, excluding miscellaneous income.