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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-third session the report of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development on the work of the Institute during 2023 and 2024.

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\* [E/CN.5/2025/1](#).



## **Report of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development on the work of the Institute during 2023 and 2024**

### *Summary*

The present report covers the activities of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) during the biennium 2023 and 2024. It highlights the programmatic achievements of the Institute during the period and presents its institutional and financial situation.

The past two years have presented both opportunities and challenges. In 2023, the Institute celebrated its sixtieth anniversary, providing a chance to highlight six decades of its contributions to the United Nations mission through interdisciplinary, policy-focused research, the convening of stakeholders and thought leaders – particularly from the global South – and the promotion of alternative development approaches aimed at advancing sustainability and inclusion. Throughout this anniversary year, the Institute increased its visibility and impact with a social media campaign and a special exhibition entitled “The art of equality: a journey to justice”. Amid a challenging global context characterized by structural and systemic inequalities and interlinked crises and forms of injustice, UNRISD delivered on its institutional strategy entitled “Overcoming inequalities: towards a new eco-social contract”, through research and impact activities that seek to address the root causes of inequality and promote a new eco-social contract. The year 2024 also marked a significant institutional transition with the appointment of a new Director.

Clustered into five programmes, the Institute’s work addressed system-wide development priorities, captured by the central promise of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind. The Institute’s research directly supported the work of the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council. The Institute’s research findings were also used by United Nations organizations, Member States, civil society and academia. The Institute’s researchers regularly advised or provided briefings to these stakeholders, sharing knowledge, informing debates and proposing evidence-based policy alternatives.

The Institute is funded entirely through voluntary contributions to ensure the fulfilment of its core mandate and functions of support to the United Nations system and Member States. The Institute is grateful to its funding partners during the biennium – Canada, Germany, Finland, Korea, Switzerland and Spain – without which none of the Institute’s activities could take place. In the last quarter of 2024, the Institute’s financial position reached a crisis point, with financial reserves depleted and operations threatened. Considerable efforts are required to diversify core funding and increase project funding.

## I. Introduction

1. The present report covers the activities of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) during the biennium 2023–2024. 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.
2. The Institute was established in 1963 as an autonomous organization 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 focused on researching social issues often overlooked 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 development issues.
4. The work accomplished during the biennium was guided by the institutional strategy 2021–2025, entitled “Overcoming inequalities: towards a new eco-social contract”. The strategy enhances the Institute's primary focus on understanding and addressing inequalities and related injustices as essential conditions for achieving the transformative vision outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The strategy 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 for Sustainable Development. Annual workplans also considered priority concerns and themes of the Economic and Social Council and the Commission for Social Development.
5. UNRISD has established itself as a key player within the United Nations system and the global development community, actively contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Institute serves as a knowledge hub and a convening platform for important multi-stakeholder discussions focused on social development and the Sustainable Development Goals. UNRISD has made significant contributions to high-level United Nations processes and events, including the high-level political forum, the Summit of the Future, and the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In addition, the Institute has launched its engagement strategy for the upcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and the Second World Summit for Social Development.
6. 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 multiple stakeholder communities. The Institute depends on the financial support of Member States to ensure delivery of its core mandate and functions of support to the United Nations system and Member States.
7. Sweden and Switzerland, two long-term supporters of the institute, ended their financial support at the end of 2022, thus the biennium was marked by efforts to establish new partnerships and secure new funding agreements. During this period, Germany significantly increased its annual contributions to the Bonn office, and in 2024, the Republic of Korea provided institutional funding for the first time. In addition, Finland and Switzerland continue to make annual contributions to the

Institute, and negotiations are currently underway for a new funding agreement with Spain. However, after depleting most of its institutional reserves during the biennium, there is an urgent need for additional resource mobilization if the Institute aims to maintain its operational capacity to fulfil its mandate and institutional strategy.

## II. Strategic framework

8. The present report covers the midway point of the UNRISD 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 the implementation of the strategy is aimed at bringing clarity of focus to the overarching theme of understanding and reducing inequalities and dismantling related forms of injustice, and furthermore, calls for renewed social contracts that are more inclusive and ecologically sensitive.

9. Under its strategy, the Institute is conducting research on topics that concern the most disadvantaged people and countries. It recognizes that achieving sustainable development on a global scale is closely linked to promoting greater equality and social justice within and among nations, regardless of income levels. A primary goal of the Institute is to share and disseminate evidence, analyses, ideas and strategies – developed in collaboration with its research networks and stakeholders – that can help shape debates, influence policy formulation and implement practices aimed at reducing various dimensions of inequality. By doing this, UNRISD seeks to promote more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable development outcomes through the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with a particular focus on low- and middle-income countries.

10. The strategy and objectives are connected to five research programs. Four of these programs – transformative social policy; gender justice and development; alternative economies for transformation; and environmental and climate justice – focus on policy-oriented research. They aim to contribute to policies and practices that reduce inequalities and combat injustice across various dimensions. They also seek to shape future social contracts that are more inclusive, ecologically sensitive and aligned with the fulfilment of all human rights, which UNRISD refers to as eco-social contracts. The fifth program, led by the Institute’s office in Bonn, Germany, is dedicated to enhancing the uptake and impact of the Institute’s research among policymakers and practitioners. It also focuses on building partnerships and impact coalitions to support just transitions and eco-social contracts.

11. UNRISD collaborates with researchers and institutions in its extensive and growing researcher network – which extends the Institute’s global reach and influence – to co-design research and co-produce knowledge. In the reporting period, the Institute further expanded its new research network, the Global Research and Action Network for a New Eco-Social Contract, in partnership with the Green Economy Coalition. It also created new partnerships and expanded existing networks around inequality, poverty, care, just transition, social and solidarity economy, sustainability performance measurement and transformative social policy.

12. 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 balanced in terms of gender and regional diversity.

### III. Research agenda: overcoming inequalities

13. With just six years left in the decade of action to achieve the global goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda, UNRISD is focusing its research on inequalities as one of the most significant developmental challenges. Inequalities can make economies, societies and environments more vulnerable to crises, which, in turn, exacerbate divisions and fractures within them.

14. During the biennium, UNRISD released several influential reports and deployed knowledge platforms that have contributed to development discussions and provided policy guidance to the United Nations system, Member States, regional organizations and the private sector. Key highlights include: *Migration and Inequality in the global South: Evidence from the Migration for Development and Equality Hub: Roots of African Resilience-A Transformative Approach*, the online compendium *Global Study on New Eco-Social Contracts*, an inter-agency report *Investments in Childcare for Gender Equality in Asia and Pacific*, the Social and Solidarity Economy Encyclopaedia, the *sustainable development performance indicators online platform: Redefining Sustainable Development Reporting and the Global Digital Community on Care*.

15. During the reporting period, a variety of additional research activities, events, and outputs were conducted to assist the United Nations system, Member States and the global development community in implementing the 2030 Agenda. This support also extended to high-level initiatives such as the Summit of the Future, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, and the Second World Summit for Social Development. Significant efforts were focused on leveraging UNRISD research for training courses, capacity-building and creating research-derived materials to aid policymakers and development practitioners. In addition, there were activities aimed at connecting research and outreach with the arts.

16. The Institute scaled up its engagement with the Group of 20 and Think 20 under the Presidency of Brazil through various collaborations, such as the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, the Working Group on Women's Empowerment and the Development Working Group. It joined the Global Coalition for Social Justice and the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

#### A. Transformative social policy

17. UNRISD defines social policy as public interventions that guarantee adequate and secure living standards that enable all people to strive towards and develop their full potential. Transformative social policy is essential to address the root causes of poverty, inequality and unsustainable policies and practices. 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.

18. During the biennium, the work focused on research, impact, partnerships and outreach activities on how to reduce inequalities, create more inclusive and sustainable societies, establish fair fiscal contracts and harness migration for equality and development. The transformative social policy team concluded its role in the Migration for Development and Equality project, which included coordinating the publication of a policy report summarizing key findings and organizing a policy symposium to launch the report. UNRISD co-convened two editions of World Social Work Day celebrations at the United Nations Office at Geneva. In 2023, UNRISD partnered with the Club de Madrid in preparation for its annual policy dialogue in

Brasília. In addition, the transformative social policy team continued to disseminate and promote the 2022 flagship report, *Crises of Inequality: Shifting Power for a New Eco-Social Contract*, which included a high-level launch event in Berlin, as well as presentations at global conferences, webinars and workshops.

### 1. **Migration and inequality in the global South: evidence from the Migration for Development and Equality Hub**

19. In 2023, UNRISD played a pivotal role in advancing migration research through its collaboration with the Migration for Development and Equality project, focusing on migration and inequality in the global South. UNRISD coordinated the publication of a policy report that summarizes the project's key findings. The report explores migration's complex links to development and inequality in the global South, focusing on six South-South migration corridors. It presents new data on themes such as gender, children and digital technologies, challenging Northern-centric views and highlighting the need for context-specific, human rights-based migration policies that address structural inequalities and amplify the development potential of migration. The symposium engaged international organizations and policymakers, discussing issues of inequalities, gender and racism with attendees both in-person and online. UNRISD also co-hosted a side event at the Global Forum for Migration and Development in 2024. The Migration for Development and Equality project officially ended in February 2024, but the work of the Hub continues.

### 2. **Paving the road to the Second World Summit for Social Development**

20. In 2025, the Second World Summit for Social Development will be convened to address the gaps and recommit to the implementation of the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, as well as to address current social issues. Leading up to the summit, UNRISD has launched a series of research and impact activities, including a global consultation and online regional dialogues with key experts in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Nordic countries. These efforts aim to gather evidence-based policy recommendations on key issues like poverty, inequality and social exclusion to shape the Second World Summit for Social Development political declaration and guide future UNRISD research.

### 3. **Other results and impacts**

21. Other results and impacts include the following:

(a) **Social Policy in Africa Conference.** In partnership with the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa and the South African Research Chairs Initiative Chair in Social Policy (University of South Africa), UNRISD co-hosted the 2024 edition of the Social Policy in Africa Conference, a hybrid conference convened in Pretoria on the theme "Social policy in post-COVID Africa: in search of an inclusive and equitable architecture", and the annual Thandika Mkandawire memorial lecture, honouring the work of the former Director of the Institute, Thandika Mkandawire;

(b) **Partnership with the Club de Madrid annual policy dialogue.** In 2023, UNRISD partnered with the Club de Madrid to promote social development, just transitions and democratic governance, advancing the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Agreement. UNRISD led Working Group 1 on "System Change for Economic Transformation," focusing on fair fiscal contracts, and published a position paper. Recommendations were submitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, with a view to shaping future United Nations processes such as the Summit of the Future, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and the Second World Summit for Social

Development in 2025. UNRISD continued its collaboration with the Club de Madrid in 2024, participating in a Working Group on International Tax Cooperation in preparation of the annual policy dialogue 2024 on “Financing for Sustainable Development”;

(c) **World Social Work Day at the United Nations Office at Geneva.** During the biennium, World Social Work Day showcased pivotal themes that address the evolving challenges in social work and global sustainability. In 2023, the focus was on respecting diversity through joint social action, emphasizing social work’s role in fostering unity and understanding across diverse communities. Building on this theme, World Social Work Day 2024, held both in Geneva and online, delved into “‘Buen vivir’” in social work: co-building a sustainable and just future,” exploring how alternative value systems can guide the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and social work toward more harmonious coexistence with nature and promote resilience in the face of global challenges;

(d) **UNRISD flagship report *Crises of Inequality: Shifting Power for a New Eco-Social Contract*: outreach and dissemination.** The 2022 launch of UNRISD flagship report, *Crises of Inequality: Shifting Power for a New Eco-Social Contract*, sparked outreach efforts, including events like the Berlin launch co-hosted with the Robert Bosch Stiftung and presentations at global conferences, such as the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Conference in Bergen, Norway, and a public event in Helsinki, in 2024. Disseminated through webinars, briefings and translated versions, the report reached 6,555 views in 2023 and 2024. It informed key initiatives, such as the Global Research and Action Network for a New Eco-Social Contract and other Bonn programme activities and influenced development partners and civil society organizations. The report also contributed to new research partnerships, such as collaborating with the project on “Transnational elite communities and the reproduction of inequalities” (Oxford University and Wits University Southern Centre for Inequality Studies), capacity-building and training courses, and inspired diverse publications, podcasts and policy tools.

## B. Gender justice and development

22. The Institute’s gender justice and development programme addresses the structural foundations of gender inequality through innovative research and policy analysis. Building on its foundational “diamond of care” framework, the programme examines the intersections of care with critical global challenges, such as climate change, anti-gender movements and LGBTIQ+ inclusion. By integrating feminist perspectives from the global South and employing an intersectional approach, the programme contributes to shaping international policy frameworks that promote gender equality and social justice. Its evidence-based research informs the development of inclusive and sustainable policy solutions.

23. The programme advanced discussions on care, feminist foreign policy and the backlash against gender equality. Policy briefs were presented at important forums, including the sixty-seventh and sixty-eighth sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women, the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Group of Twenty.

24. With the Global Alliance for Care, Fundación Avina, Oxfam and the International Development Research Centre, UNRISD launched the Climate and Care Initiative to integrate care into climate strategies. UNRISD also works with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Asian Development Bank and the

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to recommend inclusive childcare policies for the Asia-Pacific region.

25. The programme developed an intersectionality course tailored to the staff of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation. Research in Mexico with the Levy Institute explored care policy impacts on time use and poverty. In Chile, UNRISD informed care policy reforms.

## **1. Supporting the feminist foreign policy of Spain**

26. UNRISD collaborated with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation on their work related to feminist foreign policy through publications, collaborations and capacity-building initiatives. Key achievements included a paper on anti-gender movements examining how certain actors leverage development narratives to limit LGBTIQ+ rights and restrict sexual and reproductive health. We published two major books: *Care and Ecofeminism*, co-produced with Fundación Carolina, which explores care and economic autonomy in Latin America. The second book, *Desire and Conflict*, co-edited with the Fondo de Cultura Económica, critiques dominant gender discourses and patriarchal structures.

27. In 2023, UNRISD also launched the course “Gender and intersectionality in development and international cooperation,” which the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation adopted for cross-agency learning. This course integrates feminist perspectives into development practices and was featured at the 2022 and 2023 UN-SWAP conferences, demonstrating the Institute’s commitment to advancing feminist and intersectional approaches in global policy.

## **2. Supporting the Global Alliance for Care**

28. This programme explored the intersection of technology, care work and public policies, collaborating with the Global Alliance for Care. UNRISD supported the Equipo Latinoamericano de Justicia y Género in its study on fatherhood and care policies in Argentina and participated in the Gender Lens Investing Forum in Latin America. A significant milestone was the launch of the Global Digital Community on Care in Mexico City, which serves as a global hub for research and policies related to care. UNRISD also established the Care Economy Public Policy Innovations Fund, which provided grants to projects in Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Uruguay. In 2023, UNRISD provided advice on gender equality during the constitutional process in Chile as part of the International Expert Group. In addition, it participated in the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change where it hosted a panel discussion titled “Gender just climate transitions”. This dialogue highlighted six key intersections between care and climate issues, leading to the launch of the Climate and Care Initiative in 2024, in collaboration with Fundación Avina, Oxfam Canada and the Global Alliance for Care, and supported by the International Development Research Centre.

29. In 2024, UNRISD prepared two T20 briefs for the Group of 20 on advancing the care economy and translating Group of 20 commitments into action. At the sixty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, UNRISD led events on the care economy, climate change and African regional challenges. Within the Care and Climate Initiative, UNRISD expanded the framework linking care policies and climate issues.

30. UNRISD also provided input to the study by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on care from a human rights perspective, entitled “The climate care nexus”, which examined climate impacts on care through gendered intersectional lenses and offered policy recommendations.



### 3. Social care in Mexico

31. Led by UNRISD and the Levy Economics Institute of Bard College, this project provides key insights for Mexico's National Care System by evaluating the impacts of three social care policies – universal childcare, extended school hours and elder care services – on employment, time use and poverty. Using the Levy Institute Measure of Time and Income Poverty, the project assesses how these policies can reduce time and income poverty and redistribute employment.

32. Conducted in two phases, the study focuses first on childcare and school hours and then on care for older persons. In 2023, two working papers offered policy guidance to Mexico's National Institute of Women emphasizing the broader benefits of care policies on women's employment and gender equality.

33. In 2024, a policy brief outlining policy implications from the project "Evaluation of the Impact of the Expansion of Social Care in Mexico: Time Use, Employment and Poverty" was developed. The brief emphasizes the potential of comprehensive care services to reduce poverty, advance gender equality, and foster economic development, focusing on the impact of unpaid care work on women's access to employment and political participation.

### 4. Gender equality, inclusive growth and investment in the care economy

34. UNRISD contributed to a new report published as part of the UN-Women and ILO Joint Programme on "Promoting Decent Employment for Women through Inclusive Growth Policies and Investments in the Care Economy." UNRISD helped consolidate and review findings from case studies assessing fiscal stimulus packages in 11 countries using a gender equality perspective, based on a policy assessment tool developed by UN-Women. The report findings were presented at an expert group meeting convened by UN-Women and hosted by Istanbul Technical University.

### 5. Other results and impacts

35. Other results and impacts include the following:

(a) **Investments in childcare for gender equality in Asia and the Pacific.** In 2023, UNRISD collaborated with the Asian Development Bank, ILO and UNDP to study childcare provision across 48 Asia-Pacific countries. The report highlights the positive impact of childcare investment on gender equality, decent work and sustainable development. It offers policy recommendations and insights from case studies in Georgia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, advocating for greater investment in inclusive, affordable and quality childcare systems;

(b) **Working Group for Women's Empowerment.** In 2024, UNRISD was invited to join the Working Group for Women's Empowerment, where member countries, guest countries and representatives from international organizations are actively participating, including the ILO, UN-Women and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). UNRISD is participating in the process of drafting a ministerial declaration focused on advancing gender equality and empowering women. This involvement underscores the commitment by UNRISD to the promotion of women's rights and addressing structural inequalities at the global level.

## C. Alternative economies for transformation

36. The alternative economies for transformation programme examines different policy approaches and economic models that are viable, equitable, and environmentally sustainable. It aims to identify innovative methods for measuring the sustainability of these models in terms of environmental, social and governance performance, in alignment with the 2030 Agenda. The programme also explores the underlying norms and values of these models, their organization, their connections to collective action and progressive politics, and their role in reducing inequalities and fostering a new eco-social contract.

37. During the biennium, the programme gained momentum, advancing its work on egalitarian and environmentally sustainable economic models that address environmental, social, economic and governance dimensions. It also continued to explore innovative ways to measure sustainability in alignment with United Nations-wide efforts to move beyond gross domestic product.

38. From January 2023 to October 2024, significant progress was made in advancing sustainability reporting and exploring alternative economic models. Subscribed users to the sustainable development performance indicators platform increased markedly. Furthermore, the indicators were endorsed by prominent global and regional standard setters and consulting firms, such as the European Financial Reporting Advisory Group, the European Commission, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Impact Management Platform and KPMG, marking them as a key framework for the future of sustainability reporting indicators and methodologies.

39. In addition, a groundbreaking research initiative on life economies was launched, presenting a new economic paradigm focused on holistic, sustainable systems. This paradigm received endorsement from the Development Working Group of the Group of 20, highlighting its relevance on the global stage.

### 1. Sustainable development performance indicators

40. In 2023, UNRISD reached a key milestone with the launch of the sustainable development performance indicators online platform. The platform offers a user-friendly tool for assessing sustainability in for-profit enterprises and social and solidarity economy organizations. During the biennium, UNRISD focused on promoting the platform through events, workshops and webinars, including collaborations with Social Economy Europe and the American Sustainable Business Network. Partnerships with impact investors like money:care and Noble Profit helped integrate the performance indicators into investment frameworks, boosting their impact. The platform's reach grew through media coverage and translations for German and Japanese audiences.

41. In 2024, the platform's influence continued to grow, attracting over 1,000 subscribers. The sustainable development performance indicators framework received recognition from major global and regional standard setters, including the European Financial Reporting Advisory Group, the European Commission, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Impact Management Platform, Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales and KPMG. In addition, the European Elections Manifesto highlighted the sustainable development performance indicators as a key tool for enhancing environmental, social and governance performance, further reinforcing its role in promoting sustainability and social change on a global scale.

## 2. Social and solidarity economy

42. Over the past decade, UNRISD has advanced research on the social and solidarity economy, culminating in the adoption of General Assembly Resolution [77/281](#), which promotes the social and solidarity economy for sustainable development. The resolution officially defines and acknowledges the potential of the social and solidarity economy in contributing to sustainable development and highlights the Institute's pioneering research on the subject. In 2023, UNRISD published an important working paper analysing the background and implications of the resolution, which set the stage for the General Assembly negotiations leading to its adoption.

43. Building on its foundational research, UNRISD continued to be at the forefront of shaping social and solidarity economy knowledge during the biennium, publishing the Social and Solidarity Economy Encyclopaedia in 2023, which provides knowledge on the linkages of social and solidarity economy with other alternative economic approaches to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. To promote social and solidarity economy knowledge, UNRISD along with several international organizations like EMES +a research network for social enterprises, co-hosted virtual presentations of the Encyclopaedia. In 2024, UNRISD launched a podcast series titled "Social and solidarity economy essentials" featuring 11 Encyclopaedia entry authors. Further, as the implementer of the UNTFSSSE Knowledge Hub, UNRISD launched the Ana María O'Neill Award to promote research on the social and solidarity economy. UNRISD also significantly contributed to the 2024 report of the Secretary-General on the social and solidarity economy and decent work and increased its visibility among the social and solidarity economy research and practice community and beyond.

## 3. Other results and impacts

44. Other results and impacts include the following:

(a) **The development-environment-peace nexus in borders and borderlands.** As climate change and environmental degradation drive migration, more countries are fortifying their borders, leaving borderland populations at greater risk of exclusion from development. In 2023, UNRISD concluded a project producing four case studies and guidelines on integrated development approaches in borderlands across Myanmar, the Mekong region, Darfur and the Great Lakes Region. In collaboration with UNDP in Sudan, a pilot project was developed to strengthen livelihoods in Darfur. Although funding was approved by the Korean International Cooperation Agency, it was suspended in April 2023 owing to the civil conflict in the Sudan. In November 2023, UNRISD co-hosted a workshop with UNDP in Geneva to explore integrated approaches for fragile countries, engaging participants from international organizations and United Nations agencies;

(b) **Debt management and credit counselling: scoping study.** In 2022, UNRISD conducted a scoping study on household debt management practices across various countries, examining the effectiveness of debt counselling and its impact on individuals and socioeconomic conditions. This research led to the publication of three papers in 2023, focusing on Australia, France, Germany, Ireland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. In addition, a fourth working paper was released in April 2024, addressing financial assistance programmes in Southeast Asian emerging economies, specifically Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia;

(c) **Life economies to address inequalities.** Launched in 2024, the project examines how life economies – economic systems that prioritize sustainability,

inclusivity, and equity – can address root causes of inequality. In collaboration with The Fourth Sector Group, Impact Hub, Research and Information System for Developing Countries, the Society for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit), the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development, UNDP and OECD under the auspices of Global Action for Life Economies Research and Innovation, it provides insights to policy makers on innovative economic practices, such as circular, green, and social and solidarity economies. In July 2024, the Group of 20 Development Working Group commissioned a study on life economies for the Group of 20 development agenda. In September 2024, UNRISD participated in a high-level side event at the United Nations Summit of the Future, hosted by the African Union, to discuss going beyond gross domestic product to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 and integrating life economies into global agendas for enhanced well-being and ecological sustainability.

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

45. The environmental and climate justice programme acknowledges that human-induced environmental and climate disruptions pose significant threats to global well-being and prosperity. It examines climate and environmental changes through a rights-based perspective and adopts an intersectional approach to explore the connections between social, climate and environmental justice. The programme provides evidence, analysis and recommendations that promote sustainability and equality in both policy and practice. Its primary focus areas, under the current institutional strategy, include facilitating progressive just transitions to low-carbon development and fostering transformative adaptation and resilience.

46. The programme convened a dialogue on just energy transition partnerships and critically examined how researchers and civil society representatives perceive them in terms of inclusivity and justice considerations. In addition, the programme concluded its project on the state of resilience in Africa.

### **1. State of resilience in Africa**

47. In collaboration with the UNDP Resilience Hub for Africa, the project aims to identify and address some of the critical shortcomings and gaps in current resilience policies and actions. It seeks to propose a comprehensive resilience profile tailored to the continent, one that operationalizes and models effective and practical applications of resilience building that supports risk-informed development. The project's first phase concluded with a comprehensive report on *Roots of African Resilience*, delivered at the UNDP Resilience Hub for Africa in February 2023. This included six case studies developed from feedback at the Naivasha stakeholder dialogue. During the second phase, UNRISD revised the resilience approach based on feedback from the African Union Commission, involving regular meetings with the UNDP Resilience Hub and the African Union Commission Disaster Risk Reduction Unit. The project achieved a significant milestone with the African Union Commission inter-departmental roundtable held in Bishoftu, Ethiopia, from 1 to 3 October 2023. This event led to further revisions and final endorsement of the work, culminating in the launch of the report at the Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Windhoek, in October 2024.

48. The *Roots of African Resilience* report offers a holistic approach to resilience tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities of the African context. Developed through extensive stakeholder engagement and rigorous research, *Roots of African Resilience* underscores the importance of integrating local knowledge with scientific insights. It introduces a tree of resilience that connects structural drivers, resilience

capacities and enablers, and policy entry points to build resilience across scales. This tool guides stakeholders in exploring the interconnections between risks and resilience. It fosters a shared understanding of resilience across Africa while being adaptable to specific geographic, social and political contexts. The report was launched and discussed with policymakers at the Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in October 2024.

## **2. Just Transition Research Collaborative: assessing just energy transition partnerships in the context of multilateral climate policy**

49. The project, initiated in April 2023, focused on mapping civil society stakeholders to discuss just energy transition partnerships. Collaborating with Climate Action Network International, Public Services International and the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative, UNRISD organized a dialogue series with over 50 global experts (60 per cent from the global South, 53 per cent women). The series addressed conceptual, policy and implementation challenges of just energy transition partnerships, focusing on governance, finance, national ownership and justice. Insights from these dialogues contributed to a discussion document and policy brief launched during a webinar held on 7 December 2023 during the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to enrich multilateral policy debates on energy transitions.

## **3. Network for equity in transitions from fossil fuels**

50. In 2023, UNRISD conducted a mapping exercise to identify key experts focused on justice and equity in energy transitions, highlighting new voices from the global South. The mapping aimed to integrate diverse perspectives from various political and environmental spaces, often needing more cross-engagement. After several weeks of bilateral discussions, UNRISD organized two multi-actor discussions involving academia, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and social movements from different regions. These discussions, featuring case studies from Indonesia and South Africa, laid the groundwork for a vision document on a more inclusive, global South-led just transition, fostering ongoing dialogue and collaboration.

51. In 2024, UNRISD released a policy brief entitled “Care work in the just transition: providing for people and planet,” highlighting important yet often overlooked aspects of the just transition debate. It emphasizes the need for equity and the fulfilment of human needs while safeguarding the environment. The brief draws on the experiences and demands from various sectors, including caregiving, food provisioning, health care, environmental care and education. It calls for a reorientation of just transition strategies to better value and fund care work, asserting that policies should recognize care workers and protect their rights to benefit both people and the planet.

## **E. Integrating knowledge and capacity development for the Sustainable Development Goals: Bonn programme**

52. 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 focused on four objectives: (a) to identify knowledge-capacity gaps regarding the social dimensions of sustainable development and link these to UNRISD research; (b) support integrated approaches to Sustainable Development Goal implementation with interdisciplinary evidence and knowledge products; (c) create partnerships and platforms for voices from the global South and the Bonn

ecosystem of development actors; and (d) build an eco-social contract network that connects policymakers, researchers and activists across the globe.

53. In 2023 and 2024, UNRISD made significant strides in advancing the dialogue around eco-social contracts and reducing inequalities. A launch event for the UNRISD flagship report *Crises of Inequality: Shifting Power for a New Eco-Social Contract* took place at the Robert Bosch Stiftung in Berlin, engaging German policymakers, members of parliament, civil society and academics. An international seminar hosted at the United Nations premises in Bonn brought together members from the Global Research and Action Network for a New Eco-Social Contract and partners from the Bonn sustainability hub and featured a keynote from Carlos Alvarado Quesada, former President of Costa Rica.

54. During the biennium, the Global Research and Action Network for a New Eco-Social Contract expanded in size and scope, producing several impactful outputs and activities, such as the *Global Study on New Eco-Social Contracts* and a four-day training course and production of guidelines for reducing inequalities in collaboration with the Society for International Cooperation. Active participation in high-level conferences, such as the Berlin Global Solutions Summit and the Hamburg Sustainability Conference, further enhanced outreach. The network actively engaged with the Summit of the Future through side events, webinars and the launch of a call for action, which outlined key ideas for the Pact for the Future and its implementation.

#### **1. Integrating knowledge and capacity development for the Sustainable Development Goals**

55. During the biennium, the UNRISD Bonn programme advanced sustainable development through knowledge generation, capacity-building and stakeholder engagement. The launch event of the German version of the Institute's 2022 flagship report, *Crises of Inequality: Shifting Power for a New Eco-Social Contract*, co-hosted with Robert Bosch Stiftung in Berlin, featured high-level keynotes and discussions on tax justice, care work and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Bonn programme engaged in several advisory and collaborative activities, including supporting the position paper of the Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development on inequality and leading work on eco-social contracts as an active member of the Society for International Cooperation Community of Practice on Economic Transformation for Development. The Community of Practice is actively engaging with Group of 20 processes, in particular during the recent presidencies of India and Brazil.

56. Capacity-building and training activities included the online course "Crises of inequality" and the production of guidance notes on reducing inequalities in development policy and practice. The Bonn office engaged stakeholders through a newsletter, a podcast series on eco-social contracts, and the UNRISD Think Piece Series "The Time is Now! Why We Need a New Eco-Social Contract for a Just and Green World."

57. In 2024, the programme strengthened its local and global presence through strategic partnerships, hosting student groups and collaborating with the Institute for Development and Sustainability on its Shaping Futures Academy and through participation in the Institute for Development and Sustainability international workshop on "Social contracts and environmental change in the Middle East and North Africa region and beyond." It showcased its work at key City of Bonn events like the Celebration of Democracy and United Nations Day and at high-level international events such as the Global Solutions Summit in Berlin and the Hamburg Sustainability Conference.

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

58. Since its launch in 2021, the Global Research and Action Network for a New Eco-Social Contract has brought together research, practice, advocacy and policymaking communities working for social, climate and environmental justice in a progressive knowledge and action alliance. During the biennium, the Network has grown significantly, reaching over 380 members from more than 70 countries by September 2024, representing academia, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector, United Nations agencies, government bodies and media. The Network formed working groups focusing on youth empowerment, gender justice, transforming economies and societies and disabilities and intersectionalities. Five UNRISD Issue Briefs were published on reimagining the eco-social contract through alternative imaginaries, addressing the ecological divide, the role of rights-based civil society activism in the eco-social contract of Nepal, informal workers and just transitions, and evaluating current efforts towards a just energy transition. A key highlight was a global policy seminar, hosted by UNRISD and the Green Economy Coalition, which brought together 200 experts, policymakers, civil society organizations and other stakeholders from over 60 countries to deliberate on the prospects and promise of new eco-social contracts for a sustainable future. The two-day hybrid event featured keynotes, plenary sessions, expert panels and presentations, and marked the launch of the Global Study on New Eco-Social Contracts – a compendium of short articles, issue briefs, blogs, podcasts and videos that explore visions, processes and implementation challenges associated with new eco-social contracts.

59. During the biennium, the Network focused on activities related to the Summit of the Future, contributing to civil society consultations and the drafting of the Pact for the Future. The Working Group on Youth Empowerment contributed an article to the report *Meaningful Youth Engagement: Time to Deliver*, published and launched by NORRAG, the Global Education Centre of the Geneva Graduate Institute, during the Summit. The Network also launched a “Call for Action”, outlining key proposals for the Pact for the Future, emphasizing the urgent need to build new eco-social contracts, promote just transitions, strengthen participation, implement equitable fiscal policies and recognize the rights of nature. In addition, the Network organized a webinar on “Youth Empowerment for a Sustainable Future: Integrating Eco-Social Contract, One Health and Planetary Health Approaches,” invited experts for discussions of the gender justice working group and updated its communication processes, including the development of a new website to host network outputs.

## IV. Communications and outreach

60. Effective communication is essential to the mission of UNRISD of ensuring that its progressive research reaches those capable of driving transformative change in social development policy and practice. During the biennium, the Communication and Outreach Unit played a crucial role in amplifying the Institute’s voice and expanding its global influence. To mark the sixtieth anniversary of UNRISD, the Unit launched a campaign that strengthened partnerships, revitalized the brand and enhanced stakeholder engagement. Innovative activities, such as the “Art of Equality” exhibition and the Social Justice Day concert at the United Nations Office at Geneva, increased visibility, reached new audiences and reinforced the Institute’s position as a leading knowledge broker on inequalities and social justice.

61. With a focus on fostering dialogue and expanding digital outreach, the Unit implemented a robust social media strategy that strengthened our online presence and

grew our social media following. In addition, the Unit designed and managed an improved monitoring system to enhance planning and reporting.

62. During the biennium, the Institute:

(a) Produced and disseminated a total of 121 research and research-derived outputs, including 13 research papers, 16 policy briefs and other briefs, 14 books and reports, nine journal articles and book chapters, 14 blogs and think pieces, 32 videos and 23 podcasts;

(b) Used digital media to both deliver research and engage with a broad audience, generating over 103,000 publication downloads<sup>1</sup> and 57,000 video views<sup>2</sup> and reaching a gross following of over 119,000 users on UNRISD social media sites<sup>3</sup> by September 2024;

(c) Fostered engagement and dialogue through 52 events organized (or co-organized) with various stakeholders; average attendance at UNRISD webinars was 150 participants from, on average, 49 countries, with an attendance – registration ratio of 41 per cent;

(d) Dispatched 10 e-bulletins<sup>4</sup> sharing news and research findings, and 7 e-newsletters targeting Member States representatives and United Nations development policy actors and connecting research results with United Nations international days.

63. The Institute can influence research and policymaking through the involvement of its staff in advisory and consultative activities. This engagement includes work with Governments, United Nations entities, civil society organizations, universities, research institutes and practitioner groups. In 2023 and 2024, Institute staff participated in over 472 activities, which involved attending expert meetings and providing both verbal and written inputs.

## V. Institutional issues

64. UNRISD does not receive funding from the United Nations budget and is primarily dependent on donations from Governments and foundations. In recent years, the funding landscape for research has changed significantly. Donors have shifted their focus from institutional funding to project-based funding obtained through competitive processes. In addition, recent global developments have led to a diversion of funds away from long-term priorities, like inequalities and social development, favouring more immediate crisis response efforts instead.

65. The unique characteristics of the Institute have made it challenging to replace decreasing unearmarked institutional funding with funds designated for specific projects. These characteristics include a long-term focus, a commitment to critical, heterodox and interdisciplinary research, and an emphasis on collaborating with and strengthening the capacities of researchers from the Global South. Furthermore, the stipulations associated with project calls often limit the potential contributions of international organizations and may not allow for full cost recovery. Despite the challenges, during the biennium, UNRISD has mobilized and diversified its resource base.

<sup>1</sup> From [www.unrisd.org](http://www.unrisd.org).

<sup>2</sup> From [www.youtube.com/unrisd](http://www.youtube.com/unrisd).

<sup>3</sup> Gross following is the sum of followers, subscribers and unique visitors of the Institute on Facebook, X, YouTube, Instagram and LinkedIn. The Institute's gross following was 100,000 in 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Available at [www.unrisd.org/ebulletin-list](http://www.unrisd.org/ebulletin-list).



66. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation withdrew as long-standing institutional donors in 2023 after contributing a combined total of \$1.190 million in 2022. Despite efforts to mobilize new institutional and programme funds, UNRISD had to use its reserves, which it had built up until 2022, to cover its institutional expenditures. The draw on the reserves was limited to approximately \$1.301 million thanks to a focus on cost recovery and careful stewardship. Total reserves stood at approximately \$205,000 at the end of the biennium.

67. The Robert Bosch Stiftung provided a further increase in their institutional support in 2023 and agreed to sign a new partnership agreement for 2025. Increased financial contributions from Germany (the Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development and the Society for International Cooperation) supported the UNRISD Bonn office and its work programme; while support from Spain supported activities in the Gender Justice and Development programme.

68. In 2024, UNRISD became the host of the knowledge-sharing platform on social protection.<sup>5</sup> This independent platform was established in 2015 in response to a request from the Group of 20 to create an effective knowledge exchange resource dedicated to social protection. The transition to UNRISD aims to enhance the platform's impact and synergies with UNRISD research. UNRISD receives funds on behalf of the platform for its activities and charges a 6 per cent fee on income received for the platform to cover administration costs. However, both organizations keep their own independence and rely on their own funding for the implementation of their activities, including staffing.

## A. Management and staffing

69. In December 2023, the position of Director was advertised. The previous Director, Paul Ladd, left the Institute on 31 August 2024, and Katja Hujo was appointed as Acting Director for the transition period. In October 2024, the Secretary-General appointed Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona (Chile) as the Institute's new Director. Ms. Sepúlveda took up her position on 1 November 2024. As at 1 November 2024, the Institute employed nine staff members. This team includes the director, three senior research coordinators (one of whom also serves as the Head of the Bonn Office), one research officer, one programme officer (funded by the social protection platform website), one communications and outreach staff member, and two administrative support staff members.

70. UNRISD projects are supported by research analysts employed as consultants: during the biennium 2023–2024 there were seven research analysts. In addition, two consultants supported communications activities. The Institute also hosted Visiting Research Fellows and benefited from the support of interns.

## B. Governance and board

71. The Board of the Institute met in Geneva on 4 May 2023 and on Zoom on 29 April 2024.

72. The composition of the Board changed during the reporting period. An additional five members – Naila Kabeer (Bangladesh), Leila Patel (South Africa), Diego Sánchez-Ancochea (Spain), Dzodzi Tsikata (Ghana) and Timo Voipio (Finland) – joined the Board.

<sup>5</sup> See [socialprotection.org](https://socialprotection.org).

73. As such, at the time of reporting, the Board had 11 nominated members, with the Director of the Institute serving in an ex officio capacity.

74. During the biennium, UNRISD made progress updating its founding statutes. The final draft was submitted by UNRISD to the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General in March 2024, with approval still pending.

## C. Financial report

75. The Institute does not receive money from the United Nations regular budget and is funded entirely by voluntary contributions from governments, foundations, United Nations agencies and other institutions. As previously noted, the funding landscape for research and for UNRISD has changed significantly in recent years. Donors are increasingly shifting from providing general institutional funding to earmarked project funding. This trend makes it increasingly difficult to support essential institutional roles in management, administration, and communications.

76. At the time of reporting, and with 2024 accounts still open, the Institute's accumulative income (excluding miscellaneous income) for 2023–2024 was estimated at \$7.317 million (see table). Estimated total expenditures were \$7.925 million. Project funding in this biennium compared with the previous one increased by 83 per cent to \$5.895 million as a result of the funds received on behalf of the social protection platform website. UNRISD project funding received during 2023–2024 was 4 per cent less compared with 2021–2022, if the funding received for the social protection platform website is not taken into account.

77. UNRISD institutional (unearmarked) funding was estimated at \$1.422 million, of which \$351,620 was from the Bosch Foundation, \$400,000 from Finland, \$470,639 from the Republic of Korea and \$200,000 from Switzerland (see table).

78. Earmarked (project) funding was estimated at \$5.895 million, of which \$2.859 million is for the social protection platform website. Germany provided \$868,000 for the UNRISD Bonn programme. The funds received on behalf of the social protection platform website are provided by Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany (Society for International Cooperation), Spain, the United Kingdom, the United States, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, ILO, UNICEF and the World Food Programme (see table).

### Funding sources, 2023–2024

(United States dollars)

<i>Donor</i>	<i>Amount</i>
<b>Countries</b>	
Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*	1 295 933
Brazil, Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger (MDS)*	212 052
Canada, International Development Research Centre (IDRC)	692 259
Finland, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	400 000
Germany, Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)	868 821
Germany, Society for International Cooperation (GIZ)	63 650
Germany, Society for International Cooperation (GIZ)*	278 812
Korea Republic of, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	470 639
Spain, Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID)	695 842
Switzerland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	200 000

<i>Donor</i>	<i>Amount</i>
United Kingdom, FCDO/DAI Global*	387 277
United States (USAID)*	300 000
<b>United Nations agencies</b>	
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*	22 211
International Labour Organization*	85 282
United Nations Development Programme	50 000
UNICEF*	73 696
World Food Programme*	139 796
<b>Research foundations and other funders</b>	
Association for Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals	10 000
Bosch Foundation	351 620
Centre for Social Value Enhancement Studies	128 148
Club de Madrid	3 808
Coventry University	126 861
Ford Foundation	60 000
Fraunhofer Institute	16 921
Hyundai Motor Chung Mong-Koo Foundation	265 430
Korea International Cooperation Agency	(16 117)
Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation	50 000
Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung	54 495
University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland	20 526
University of Lausanne	8 979
<b>Total</b>	<b>7 316 941</b>

*Note:* Estimates as at 17 October 2024, excluding miscellaneous income.

\* Received on behalf of [socialprotection.org](https://socialprotection.org).