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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 fifty-ninth session the report of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development on the work of the Institute during 2019 and 2020.



Report of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development on the work of the Institute during 2019 and 2020

Summary

The present report covers the activities of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) during the biennium 2019–2020. 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 social development research, and it has fulfilled that role for more than five decades. UNRISD continues its work of generating and convening innovative interdisciplinary knowledge and policy analysis on contemporary development challenges; contributing to evidence-based debate, policy and practice at the international, regional, national and local levels; and engaging with the international development community of policymakers, practitioners, researchers and activists. The Institute's autonomous status enables it to shape debates and engage in policy dialogue, bringing diverse and often marginalized viewpoints to the table and contributing to the critical analysis and diversity in perspectives that help advance more equitable, inclusive and sustainable development.

In the reporting period, UNRISD continued to carry out and convene research under its three programme areas: social policy and development; gender and development; and the social dimensions of sustainable development. In addition, a programme in Bonn, Germany, was initiated that is aimed at creating new inter-agency collaborations and strengthen research uptake linkages to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Through these programmes, the work of the Institute addressed system-wide development priorities related to poverty reduction, inequality, social protection, the empowerment of women and social drivers of sustainability, and contributed to the principle 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 in the above-mentioned areas. 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. 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, in particular those providing unearmarked institutional support – Finland, Sweden and Switzerland – without which none of the Institute's activities could take place.

New institutional funding agreements were signed with Sweden and Switzerland covering the period 2020–2022, and project financing more than doubled compared with the previous biennium. Careful stewardship and greater cost recovery allowed for reserves to be rebuilt and investments to be made in research capacity for the gender and development programme in particular.

Institutional funding cannot be guaranteed beyond this period, and so the Institute is currently exploring all avenues for sustainability beyond the end of 2022.

I. Introduction

1. The present report covers the activities of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) during the biennium 2019–2020. 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 over five 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 a diverse knowledge base and plurality of ideas to inform the work of the United Nations system on social issues.

4. The biennium saw successful completion of the work carried out under the Institute's strategic framework for 2016–2020. Annual workplans took into consideration priority concerns and themes of the United Nations system, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission for Social Development.

5. Project and programme funding continued to expand during the biennium, and new three-year funding agreements were signed with Sweden and Switzerland in 2020. UNRISD therefore had stability to deliver on its ambitious research agenda through a high number of publications and events, although in 2020 several became virtual events as a result of the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

6. 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 for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, and as a knowledge hub and convening platform for critical debates on social development and international governance.

7. The Institute is funded entirely through voluntary contributions and its work is governed by an independent Board. These conditions provide it with the autonomy needed to produce high-quality independent research. 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 final two years of the Institute's strategic framework, "Transformations to equity and sustainability: UNRISD Strategy 2016–2020". In the strategy, the priorities and research themes of UNRISD are set out within an institutional framework that links research, communications, policy engagement, results and impact. It was developed through consultations with stakeholders of the Institute in the United Nations system, Member States, civil society and academia. It responds to contemporary development trends, policy concerns and scholarly debates, and is aimed at filling identified knowledge gaps, while serving to identify social issues that are not yet part of mainstream discourse.

9. Under the strategy, the Institute is undertaking research that will help Governments and others to achieve their sustainable development objectives. An overarching goal of the Institute is to ensure that social development concerns and objectives remain prominent in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

10. The research is organized into three programme areas: (a) social policy and development; (b) gender and development; and (c) social dimensions of sustainable development. Each programme identifies key questions and topics for research that will contribute to addressing the contemporary challenges of inequality, conflict and unsustainable practices. In so doing, they are aimed at contributing evidence that supports efforts at the local, national, regional and global levels to progress along sustainable and equitable development pathways.

11. Work within each programme is realized as a collaborative endeavour with the Institute's global networks of researchers, policymakers and civil society actors. The strategy also includes information on research approaches, methods and data, and a results framework with objectives, activities and outputs.

12. Because the Institute must fully mobilize all the financial resources necessary to implement the strategy, it remains flexible and responsive to the changing context, emerging priorities and specific demands for research from United Nations entities, other research users and funding partners.

13. In 2020, UNRISD has been consulting broadly on its next institutional strategy for the period 2021–2025.

III. Research agenda: transformations to equity and sustainability

14. The 2030 Agenda resonates strongly with the Institute's mandate and institutional strategy. Five years into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Institute's research and policy analysis have become critically important to ensuring that social equity, inclusion and justice remain central to the implementation of the Goals in terms of both policy and practice.

15. In carrying out its work programme, the Institute collaborated with its interdisciplinary research networks, engaging in two-way dialogue with partners to design, implement and deliver research projects, ensuring genuine co-production of knowledge and mutual learning.

A. Social policy and development

16. Social policy is a crucial instrument for implementing and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring that equity, social justice and human rights are guiding principles for all actors and interventions. The social policy and development programme is aimed at providing new knowledge and evidence to inform development thinking and practice, combining work on conceptual and policy innovations, along with policy, institutional and political analyses at the national, regional and global levels.

17. During the biennium, the programme's key focus was on better understanding and addressing inequality, a cross-cutting objective in the 2030 Agenda. UNRISD research looked at political drivers of inequality, such as the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of elites and ways to overcome multiple inequalities through social mobilization; the role of universities in reproducing or overcoming inequalities in the global South; transformative approaches to address the challenge of protecting

and promoting the well-being, security and rights of displaced people; and South-South migration, inequality and development.

1. Overcoming inequalities in a fractured world

18. 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 its various dimensions undermines social, environmental and economic sustainability and fuels poverty, insecurity, crime and xenophobia.

19. Work during the biennium built upon the outcomes of the UNRISD international conference held in Geneva in 2018 on the theme "Overcoming inequalities in a fractured world: between elite power and social mobilization".

20. Activities included a parallel event at the 2019 high-level political forum on sustainable development on the theme "Inequality and the 1%: is a transformative fiscal policy possible?" and a seminar series held in 2019 on insights into inequalities, with three segments featuring eminent experts. Research outputs included a think piece series¹ with 14 blogs and 14 papers published as part of a peer-reviewed occasional paper series, along with a series of videos and podcasts.

21. Research findings and policy recommendations were widely disseminated and presented in different expert group meetings, seminars and international conferences, including a joint consultation of the World Bank and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat on Goal 10, held in Geneva in April 2019, and the Human Rights Council Social Forum on combating poverty and inequalities, held in Geneva in October 2020.

2. Universities and social inequalities in the global South

22. Through the project, UNRISD explores the role of universities in reinforcing or lessening social inequalities in low- and middle-income countries, given the huge growth in demand for higher education, the important role that universities play in development and the challenges they are facing in those countries.

23. The project is aimed at contributing to a better understanding of the role of universities in reducing social inequalities and contributing to sustainable development and to provide evidence-based recommendations for the innovative design and implementation of tertiary education policies that lead to transformative institutions and outcomes, thus contributing to sustainable development and the implementation of Goal 4.

24. The project was launched in January of 2019 with a call for expressions of interest. Out of 90 proposals submitted, six papers were commissioned and five have been published as working papers.² In the papers issues related to higher education and inequality are explored in the context of seven countries: Brazil, Chile, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Peru and Senegal.

25. Policy recommendations emphasize the need to expand the high-quality free-of-charge provision of public secondary and tertiary education in combination with affirmative action policies; further develop accessible quality distance education; and link tertiary education with labour market policies with a view to increasing employment opportunities for young people. Research findings were synthesized in a brief published in 2020.

¹ Available at www.unrisd.org/Overcoming-Inequalities-Occasional-Papers.

² Available at www.unrisd.org/Unis-Inequalities-South.

3. Valueworks: effects of financialization along the copper value chain

26. The project is aimed at examining 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 industrial 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.

27. The project started in 2017 and published outputs extended into the biennium 2019–2020 with the publication of a UNRISD research paper entitled “The gender implications of transformations in the copper value chain: a case study of the Zambian Copperbelt”. According to the study, increased financialization of global production networks in general and the copper value chain in particular, along with the privatization of mines, has direct and indirect impacts on lives and livelihoods at sites of extraction in the Copperbelt, manifested in the casualization of labour, an emphasis on profit maximization over other societal and environmental goals and, to some extent, an erosion of gender stereotypes and gendered division of labour.

4. South-South Migration Inequality and Development Hub of the Global Challenges Research Fund

28. Migration between the countries of the global South, also referred to as South-South migration, accounts for nearly half of all international migration and nearly 70 per cent in some places. South-South migration has great potential to contribute to development and delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals. Yet that potential remains unrealized, largely owing to existing inequalities at the global, national and local levels; inequalities that determine who is (and is not) able to migrate, where to and under which terms and conditions.

29. The key objective of the South-South Migration Inequality and Development Hub³ is to develop an interdisciplinary, evidence-based understanding of the complex and multifaceted relationships between South-South migration, inequality and development.

30. UNRISD is a partner organization in the five-year Global Challenges Research Fund project. 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.

31. During the biennium, UNRISD provided inputs and supported the design of research plans related to gender, children and income inequality/poverty; participated in the launch of the Hub in Accra in February 2019 and other Hub meetings; gave a presentation on migration and sustainable development during the European Development Days, held in Brussels in June 2019; co-organized an internal online workshop on gender and migration in September 2020; provided inputs and comments on literature reviews, survey design and theory of change; and participated in Hub-related online webinars on the role of international organizations in impact activities, and on research methodologies in times of COVID-19.

5. Integrated solutions to protracted displacement

32. Globally, the scale and complexity of forced displacement is unprecedented as more than 70 million people are forcibly displaced, with rising numbers in protracted

³ See www.mideq.org/en/.

situations and those living outside of camps. As host countries' resources are overstretched, a development approach that enhances the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is indispensable to achieve durable solutions in the spirit of the global compact on refugees.

33. In late 2019, UNRISD was commissioned to undertake the project as part of a joint effort of the United Nations Development Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to improve the coherence and synergies of interventions deployed by political, security, development, humanitarian and peace actors in situations of protracted forced displacement. The work, carried out in 2020, adopted a multi-stakeholder approach favouring humanitarian, development and peace actors working together in addressing displacement crises, while supporting host countries, displaced people and host communities, in particular in the global South.

34. In consultation with partners, UNRISD developed a theory of change for an integrated triple nexus approach to forced protracted displacement. In the report on the theory, UNRISD explains the opportunities and challenges associated with a humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach, its vision and outcomes, the intervention areas across the three pillars of the nexus and the process of transitioning from parallel humanitarian systems to national solutions.

35. There were four published outputs: working paper 2020-8 entitled "The humanitarian-development-peace nexus: towards differentiated configurations";⁴ the above-mentioned report, together with a detailed scoping study that underpins it; and a short briefing document.

6. Other results and impacts

36. Other results and impacts include:

(a) *Politics of domestic resource mobilization*. Findings from this project were presented at the high-level political forum on sustainable development held in New York in July 2019 and at a special plenary panel at the Social Policy in Africa Conference held in Pretoria in November 2019, and were shared with the Financing for Sustainable Development Office of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in 2020. An edited volume entitled "The politics of domestic resource mobilization for social development" was published in 2020 as part of the UNRISD/Palgrave Social Policy in a Development Context series,⁵ as well as two working papers and a research and policy brief;

(b) *2019 Social Policy in Africa International Conference*. Co-hosted by the South African Research Chair in Social Policy (National Research Foundation and University of South Africa), the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa and UNRISD on 27 and 28 November, the conference, on the theme "Governance of Africa's social policy: subverting development and democracy?", provided a platform to discuss new research on contemporary social policy reforms in Africa and their impact on economic development and democratization, giving UNRISD researchers an opportunity to discuss recent projects and strengthening research networks in the region;

(c) *Global Social Protection Week*. UNRISD co-organized a session during the technical segment of the International Labour Organization's Global Social Protection Week on the theme "Exploring the feasibility of international financing for social protection systems". Discussions focused on the development and enhancement

⁴ Available at www.unrisd.org/humanitarian-dev-peace-nexus-weishaupt.

⁵ See www.palgrave.com/de/series/14480.

of social protection systems that are adequate, sustainable and adapted to developments in the world of work.

B. Gender and development

37. Gender inequality, discrimination and violence affect all countries around the world and are major obstacles to equitable, inclusive and sustainable development. Despite progress, the problems are pervasive and in many contexts reversals in previous gains are occurring. For these reasons, the gender and development programme is focused on the structures and the relations that underpin gendered outcomes, including the linkages between production and social reproduction, between economic and social policies, and between gender-related movements and state institutions.

38. Highlights of the programme during the biennium included the launch of a new project entitled “VoicelIt: Strengthening LGBTQI+ voices in politics”⁶ and the organization of World Social Work Day at the United Nations Office at Geneva, with Swiss partners, on the theme “Social work, gender and sexuality: towards empowerment, equality and inclusion”. UNRISD participated in two official side-events at the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in 2019: “Empowering women and girls through access to public services including water, sanitation and hygiene” and “We want equal access! Austerity politics vs. feminist activism”. Through its office in Bonn, UNRISD also gave presentations in course webinars of the German Diplomatic Academy on topics such as “Confronting violence against women: the power of women’s movements” and the gender-health-inclusion nexus.

39. Concrete steps have been taken by UNRISD to rebuild capacity in the gender and development programme. A team of gender experts conducted a scoping study to identify cutting-edge and policy-relevant research themes around which to frame and build a new gender equality programme.

40. The study, completed in 2020, was used as a basis for relaunching the programme, which included the recruitment of a senior researcher responsible for its leadership who commenced work in November 2020.

1. Mainstreaming gender across the Institute’s work

41. The institutional policy of mainstreaming gender across all research activities and communication and outreach, and the work of the Institute’s gender focal point were maintained, resulting in new partnerships. The Institute took gender parity into account in the planning and implementation of all its activities, and women comprised over 50 per cent of its research network and 53 per cent of contributors to research outputs.

42. The UNRISD Director continued as a member of the 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 focal points also continued to participate in quarterly International Gender Champions meetings.

2. VoicelIt: strengthening LGBTQI+ voices in politics

43. UNRISD is part of an integrated research-action project entitled “VoicelIt: strengthening LGBTQI+ voices in politics”, which is aimed at enhancing the

⁶ www.voiceitproject.eu.

inclusion of LGBTQI+ people's voices, rights and concerns in political decision-making processes in Cyprus, Greece and Italy.

44. During the first year of the project, a survey was carried out in those countries to gather data on perceptions of LGBTQI+ rights, potential obstacles faced by LGBTQI+ individuals with minority ethnic and cultural backgrounds and the need for policy reform. The findings from the surveys were synthesized into three national reports and one overarching policy report. The reports were then translated into the national languages of the three countries and widely disseminated.

45. Research reveals that while progress has been made in terms of the expansion of rights for LGBTQI+ people in the three countries, and public opinion is shifting accordingly, there remain gaps in terms of perceptions of LGBTQI+ people and knowledge of their rights and legal protections. Drawing on these findings, country partners will develop action plans to address the priorities identified in each country.

3. World Social Work Day at the United Nations

46. In 2019, World Social Work Day was celebrated at the United Nations Office at Geneva under the theme "Social work, gender and sexuality: towards empowerment, equality and inclusion". UNRISD co-hosted the day, which focused on the inclusion of women, as well as marginalized genders and sexualities, in all spheres of society. The event paid special attention to strategies and policies to combat the discrimination and inequality of these groups in all societies.

47. World Social Work Day in 2020 was postponed owing to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The event on the topic "Community engagement for social justice" will be held in March 2021, incorporating a session on the implications of COVID-19 for vulnerable groups and social work.

C. Social dimensions of sustainable development

48. The programme on the social dimensions of sustainable development is focused on understanding, analysing and engaging with policy change processes that address unsustainable practices, climate change and inequalities. The work centres around the interlinkages between social, environmental and economic issues at different levels of governance.

49. During the biennium, work continued in two main streams: the social and solidarity economy, with four projects under way in this area of work; and climate justice, including work carried out by the Just Transition Research Collaborative and research on transformative adaptation to climate change in Southeast Asian coastal cities.

1. Social and solidarity economy

50. The social and solidarity economy includes cooperatives, non-profit organizations, associations engaged in economic activity, mutual organizations, foundations and enterprises that prioritize social and environmental goals over profit. Based on principles and practices of participatory cooperation, solidarity, collective action, distribution of benefits and democratic self-governance, 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.

51. Realization of the potential of the social and solidarity economy requires enabling institutional and policy environments to foster a scaling-up of social and

solidarity economy activities in ways that allow them to expand while maintaining their core values and objectives. 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, and explores how the social and solidarity economy is contributing to the implementation and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

52. Highlights during the biennium included the Institute's groundbreaking work on sustainable development performance indicators, and guidelines for local governments to promote the social and solidarity economy through public policies. UNRISD continues to play a central role in the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy and was involved in numerous activities associated with the Task Force's social and solidarity economy knowledge hub for the Sustainable Development Goals, for which UNRISD is the implementing organization.

(a) Sustainable development performance indicators

53. 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 the 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 the social and solidarity economy – in relation to the vision and goals of the 2030 Agenda.

54. The first phase of the project, completed at the end of 2019, comprised a state-of-the-art review and preliminary guidance on key performance issues, indicators and targets, in view of a testing phase in 2020–2021.

55. In June 2019, UNRISD organized a two-day conference on the theme “Measuring and reporting sustainability performance: are corporations and SSE organizations meeting the SDG challenge?”, bringing together for the first time experts involved in sustainability measurement and reporting, with users of sustainability data such as United Nations entities, companies, social and solidarity economy organizations, non-governmental organizations and academia to discuss key concerns, best practices and ways forward.

56. In 2020, a three-tiered system of sustainability indicators for for-profit enterprises and social and solidarity economy organizations and enterprises was finalized. The system will be piloted with 12 for-profit enterprises and 12 social and solidarity economy organizations and enterprises between 2020 and 2021. An instruction manual for assessment and reporting using the sustainable development performance indicators system was published in 2020.

57. A report entitled “Corporate sustainability accounting: what can and should corporations be doing?” was produced in 2020. Issued along with the report were an overview document and four associated policy briefs on corporate accounting, workplace gender equality, fair remuneration and labour rights. Three working papers on the sustainable development performance indicators⁷ have also been produced within the scope of the project.

(b) Promoting the social and solidarity economy through public policies: guidelines for local governments

58. Local governments are increasingly interested in the social and solidarity economy in local contexts since it plays a significant role in providing social services, broadening access to finance, managing common-pool resources, protecting the

⁷ See www.unrisd.org/SDPI-working-papers.

environment and regenerating and forward fitting economic systems through the local production and exchange circuit. The project is aimed at generating a broader and deeper understanding of the policy and institutional frameworks that foster the development of robust social and solidarity economy ecosystems at the subnational level.

59. Based on interviews with policymakers at different levels of governance, and case studies of seven cities that have developed policies, programmes and institutions for the social and solidarity economy,⁸ key elements and good practices of social and solidarity economy ecosystems were identified. The project also included proposals for guidelines that policymakers could use in their own cities to design, implement and assess public policies and frameworks that support social and solidarity economy organizations and enterprises. The seven case studies have been published as UNRISD working papers.

(c) Protecting vulnerable urban groups in contentious times: role of the social and solidarity economy

60. The project examines the performance of social and solidarity economy organizations and enterprises in addressing the economic, social and political problems facing migrants and refugees, along with the policies in place that promote the social and solidarity economy as a vector for social inclusion and integration in a host society.

61. Research was undertaken in three medium-sized cities: Bergamo, Italy; Geneva; and Heraklion, Greece. The project culminated in the publication of a policy brief entitled “Social and solidarity economy for the integration of migrants and refugees: experiences from three European cities”⁹ and a round-table discussion in Geneva. Research carried out for the project highlights the importance of an enabling policy and institutional environment for social and solidarity economy organizations and enterprises to mitigate the vulnerabilities faced by migrants and refugees.

(d) Social and solidarity economy knowledge hub for the Sustainable Development Goals

62. While there is a growing body of research and knowledge on the social and solidarity economy, there has been little attempt to systematically analyse the linkages between social and solidarity economy practices and the Sustainable Development Goals. The social and solidarity economy knowledge hub for the Sustainable Development Goals¹⁰ redresses this by synthesizing existing knowledge, evidence and information, and supplementing these with research and analysis.

63. The core activity of the knowledge hub during the reporting period was a call for papers, for which UNRISD managed the peer review process. Two conferences were organized as a result, one on the theme “Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: what role for social and solidarity economy?” and the other on the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals and the co-construction of the means of implementation.

64. During the biennium, more than 100 draft papers and working papers were published in which the relationship between the social and solidarity economy and the Goals were explored.

⁸ Barcelona, Spain; Dakar; Durban, South Africa; Liverpool, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; Mexico City; Montreal, Canada; and Seoul.

⁹ Available at www.unrisd.org/rpb31.

¹⁰ See www.unsse.org/.

(e) Opportunities and challenges of statistics on the social and solidarity economy

65. The project is aimed at producing an overview and analysis of current statistics on the social and solidarity economy, and at making recommendations for their improvement. It also serves to enrich discussions on statistics on the social and solidarity economy both within and outside the United Nations system.

66. In support of the project, an expert workshop on opportunities and challenges of statistics on the social and solidarity economy was jointly organized by the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy, UNRISD and other partners in November 2019. In parallel, an online consultation has been carried out and working papers prepared to explore methodologies, state-of-the-art knowledge, data availability and the evolution of social and solidarity economy statistics and data sets. In 2020, three working papers on the mapping of social and solidarity economy statistics, a critical review of social and solidarity economy statistical methodologies, and policy recommendations for national statistics for the social and solidarity economy were published.

2. Climate justice

67. Sustainable development entails prosperity and human well-being within the ecological limits of the planet. In an eco-social approach to policymaking and implementation, one that understands and creates linkages between environmental and social policies, economic activities are a means to reach equity and environmental sustainability. UNRISD has applied this framing to its research on the social dimensions of climate change and its impacts.

68. The work of UNRISD on climate justice is aimed at providing evidence and analysis for policies and practices that effectively tackle climate and environmental injustices, leading to policies that decarbonize the economy and protect people from the unavoidable impacts of climate change while addressing existing inequalities and questions of justice.

69. During the biennium, two main lines of work under the broad framing of climate justice were pursued: just transition(s) to low-carbon development and transformative adaptation to climate change in coastal cities. The previous UNRISD work on transformative eco-social policies served as the basis for both.

(a) Just Transition Research Collaborative

70. The Just Transition Research Collaborative continues to provide a space for experts from academia and civil society to analyse and explore the varying narratives and framings of “just transition” 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. During the biennium, two additional projects were undertaken.

*Phase II**Cities in transition: urban struggles for just transition(s)*

71. Building on the theoretical framework and assessment produced in 2018 by the Just Transition Research Collaborative, urban and local-level approaches and case studies of just transition were analysed in the second phase of the project to gain a deeper understanding of the role of cities in implementing climate and environmental policies that imply a fair distribution of costs and benefits, protecting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and including them in the process.

72. At a workshop held in Berlin in June 2019, experts assessed how city-level just transition policies influenced higher-level policy change and climate justice.¹¹ The event also explored examples of just – and unjust – transition and underlined the need to take context into account when assessing transitions. The discussions informed further case study research and the production of a policy¹² report published for the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Madrid in December 2019.

73. An edited volume published with Pluto Press in 2019 served to explore the overlaps, synergies and tensions between various understandings of the just transition approach, drawing on a range of perspectives from the global North and South.

Phase III

Working towards transformative change and climate justice for all

74. The third phase of the project, initiated in 2020, is aimed at further strengthening interactive stakeholder engagement in discussions of different aspects and case studies of just transition. Six webinars and a think piece series focus on case studies and current developments and approaches promoting a just transition.

(b) Transformative adaptation to climate change in Southeast Asian coastal cities

75. Rapidly urbanizing coastal regions face the complex challenge of adapting to increasing climate impacts and ensuring equitable development while overcoming poverty and sharp inequalities – a particularly difficult challenge for local policymakers.

76. The project is aimed at exploring adaptation decision-making processes and barriers to transformative solutions and how decision-making processes can be made more inclusive and integrated. It also serves to improve policymaking and strengthen policy acceptance of transformative adaptation as an aid to overcoming inequalities and root causes of vulnerability in coastal cities. Case studies of Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam, and Jakarta were used to explore 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.

77. UNRISD co-convened an expert workshop in Bonn in June 2019, where initial findings of the case studies on Jakarta and Ho Chi Minh City were presented,¹³ followed by a discussion on visions, opportunities and challenges for transformative adaptation. At the workshop a debate was initiated on how transformative change can move from abstract goals to concrete actions and policy change at the local level.

78. The case study papers on Ho Chi Minh City and Jakarta, together with a discussion paper,¹⁴ were finalized for the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. These initial outputs and research findings built the basis for local stakeholder consultations carried out in 2020 to discuss findings and policy recommendations with experts and decision-makers at the city level.

¹¹ See www.unrisd.org/eb10.

¹² Available at www.unrisd.org/jtrc-report2019.

¹³ See www.unrisd.org/eb7.

¹⁴ <https://www.unrisd.org/discussion-document-adaptation-synthesis>.

D. Integrating knowledge and capacity development for the Sustainable Development Goals: new work programme and office of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development in Bonn

79. With a new programme and office in Bonn, established in February 2020, UNRISD aims to create new inter-agency collaborations and strengthen research uptake linkages to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The new office is strategically located, given that Bonn has become the centre for the climate and sustainability efforts of the United Nations, hosting over 20 United Nations organizations working on those issues.

80. UNRISD has already established a strong network within Bonn, and its new programme has three main focuses in working with partner organizations: training and capacity-building for an integrated approach on the social dimension of sustainable development; joint research and capacity-development strategies through identifying and mapping relevant knowledge gaps and implementing corresponding research activities; and strengthening evidence-based implementation of, and research uptake on, the Goals by United Nations and development partners.

81. Key training initiatives undertaken in 2020 by the office in Bonn included a “just transition” online seminar on the Goals for the German United Nations Association in May; a keynote speech during the training programme on managing a just transition to environmentally sustainable economies and societies, organized by the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization in May; a presentation at a panel discussion and the organization of a side event during the United Nations Summer Academy organized by the United Nations System Staff College in August; a webinar presentation during the United Nations University’s Summer Academy on the theme “World risk and adaptation futures: social protection” in September; and a presentation during the European Forum on Science and Education for Sustainability 2020, held in October.

82. A number of joint efforts are under way, including collaboration with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction on a study on risks and COVID-19; with the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD) on a concept for a social and equality framework for the Programme; and with the Green Economy Coalition regarding the creation of a new partnership to promote an eco-social approach to policymaking and implementation.

E. Cross-cutting institutional activities

1. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

83. UNRISD launched a survey in April 2020, primarily targeted at the Institute’s network of academics and practitioners, that sought to gather insights on whether the policy responses put in place to address the COVID-19 pandemic were sensitive to the needs of vulnerable groups and people. In July 2020, UNRISD published a report on protecting and supporting vulnerable groups through the COVID-19 crisis,¹⁵ and subsequently presented it in a webinar. The survey responses supported the narrative that, as a result of lockdowns, many people around the world faced a terrible choice

¹⁵ Available at www.unrisd.org/covid-19-vulnerable-groups-report.

between lives and livelihoods. In addition to the report, seven blogs were published in the UNRISD COVID-19 series.¹⁶

2. 2020 high-level political forum on sustainable development and high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council

84. The theme of the 2020 high-level political forum on sustainable development and the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council was “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”. In the light of ongoing COVID-19 concerns, many of the meetings and sessions were hosted virtually. Evidence from UNRISD research was a vital component at the 2020 high-level political forum on sustainable development and the Economic and Social Council segments, ranging from thematic consultations to online workshops and interventions in official sessions.

85. The contribution of UNRISD to the session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development on the theme “Are we leaving no one behind in eradicating poverty and working towards the 2030 Agenda?”, held on 8 July, was based on the UNRISD report on protecting and supporting vulnerable groups through the COVID-19 crisis.

86. UNRISD participated in the high-level political forum on sustainable development as a co-convenor of the virtual consultation for the integration segment of the Economic and Social Council on the theme “Responding to the economic shock, relaunching growth, sharing economic benefits and addressing developing countries’ financing challenges” and as a provider of expertise to the integration segment on the theme “Bolstering local action to control the pandemic and accelerate implementation”. Prior to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, UNRISD contributed evidence-based inputs to the thematic consultations for those two segments of the Council.

87. UNRISD also co-hosted an online workshop on the theme “Sustainable and just economies: lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis and enabling factors for the SDGs” at the Sustainable Development Goals learning, training and practice component of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, including a contribution on just transition.

3. Strengthening evidence-based implementation of and research uptake on the Sustainable Development Goals

88. In December 2019, UNRISD, along with partners from think tanks, governmental bodies and international organizations based in Geneva, co-organized a conference on the theme “From science to practice”. The conference brought together key actors to discuss the barriers to research uptake and brainstorm ways to develop new and strengthen existing interactions between the worlds of science and policy. A final report entitled “From science to practice: strengthening research uptake to achieve the SDGs”¹⁷ was produced. The conference built upon the two-day round-table discussions on strengthening the United Nations research uptake, held in April 2016.¹⁸

89. Building on those earlier activities, UNRISD, along with the Geneva Science-Policy Interface, the Think Tank Hub, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network in Switzerland and the SDG Lab, and funded by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, has launched a call for “evidence” submissions from

¹⁶ See www.unrisd.org/covid-19-series.

¹⁷ Available at www.unrisd.org/science-to-practice-report-2019.

¹⁸ https://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:5851/Geneva_Conference_Report.pdf.

October to December 2020¹⁹ to allow contributors to assist in influencing critical political decision-making processes.

90. The call for evidence focuses on three entry points: human well-being and capabilities; sustainable and just economies; and food systems and patterns. The evidence submitted will be synthesized in three papers to be presented and discussed in Geneva in early 2021 and will be followed by seminars in Geneva and New York to engage with the broader audience of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The papers will feed into the high-level political forum on sustainable development to be held in New York in 2021.

IV. Communications and outreach

91. The mandate of the Institute requires that its research be policy-relevant and engage with 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. The Institute responded to the global novel coronavirus pandemic in 2020 by increasing its digital activities, in particular webinars, as noted below.

92. During the biennium, the Institute:

(a) Produced and disseminated a wide range of research-based outputs, including 30 research papers, 10 policy briefs and other briefs, 4 reports, 19 peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters, and 29 blogs and think pieces; 92 conference and draft papers for the International Conference of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy; 4 commentaries on the social protection and human rights platform; and 29 videos and 6 podcasts;

(b) Used digital media to both deliver research and engage with a wide audience, generating over 77,000 publication downloads,²⁰ 411,000 video views²¹ and 136,000 podcast downloads (from iTunes and PlayerFM), and attaining a gross following of over 67,000 users on UNRISD social media sites²² by October 2020; the average attendance at UNRISD webinars was 112 participants from, on average, 32 countries, with an attendance-registration ratio of 43 per cent;

(c) Fostered engagement and dialogue through nearly 51 events organized (or co-organized) with various stakeholders;

(d) Dispatched 12 e-bulletins²³ to share news and research findings and 8 tailored e-newsletters to respond to the needs of Member States and of United Nations development policy actors.

93. An important channel for the Institute to influence research is 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

¹⁹ Available at www.unrisd.org/from-science-to-practice.

²⁰ From www.unrisd.org.

²¹ From www.youtube.com/unrisd.

²² Gross following is the sum of likes, followers, subscribers and unique visitors of the Institute on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn. The Institute's gross following was 59,467 in 2019.

²³ Available at www.unrisd.org/ebulletin-list and www.unrisd.org/ebulletin-list-mailchimp2020.

or written inputs as required. Institute staff carried out over 85 such activities in 2019 and 2020.

V. Institutional issues

94. UNRISD receives no funding from the budget of the United Nations and is therefore reliant on the resources it receives, which come primarily from Governments and foundations. The funding context for research, and for UNRISD, has shifted significantly in the past decade, as donors have moved away from institutional funding towards project funding through competitive processes.

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

96. Nevertheless, during the biennium, UNRISD continued to be successful in expanding its project portfolio. Project funding during the biennium, compared with the previous one, more than doubled to \$2.042 million. The project pipeline extends into 2022.

97. A greater focus on cost recovery, and careful stewardship, has allowed financial reserves to be rebuilt, helping to safeguard the Institute against future shocks, and fully cover closing costs should the Institute cease to operate. They have also allowed investments in some institutional priorities, including in the gender and development programme and on researching the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups. Total reserves are estimated to amount to approximately \$1.4 million at the end of the biennium.

98. New three-year institutional funding agreements were reached with Sweden and Switzerland in 2020, covering the three years, 2020 to 2022. 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 allowed the initiation of a programme on integrating knowledge and capacity development for the Sustainable Development Goals.

A. Management and staffing

99. As at 31 October 2020, 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. UNRISD is receiving support from Germany for the office in Bonn from 2019 to 2021.

100. UNRISD projects are supported by junior researchers employed as consultants: during the biennium 2019–2020 there were four research analysts. In addition, three consultants supported communications activities. The Institute also hosted six visiting research fellows and benefited from the support of interns.

B. Governance and Board

101. The Board of the Institute met in Geneva on 4 and 5 April 2019 and virtually, owing to the COVID-19 outbreak, on 3 April 2020.

102. The composition of the Board changed during the reporting period. The Secretary-General approved a two-year extension of the Chair of the Board, Joakim Palme, effective 1 July 2019. Mr. Palme had already been serving as a Board member since July 2013.

103. The terms of members Jimi Adesina, Asef Bayat, David Hulme and Onalenna Selolwane expired on 30 June 2019.

104. The first term of Saraswati Menon expired on 30 June 2019. Her renomination to serve until 30 June 2021 was confirmed by the Economic and Social Council.

105. The first term of Sylvie Durrer (2017–2021) is ongoing.

106. At its thirty-fourth plenary meeting, the Economic and Social Council confirmed the nomination by the Commission for Social Development of Hanif Hassan Ali Al Qassim, Ha-Joon Chang, Shalini Randeria and Imraan Valodia to serve on the Board for a four-year term expiring on 30 June 2023. Godwin Murunga's nomination to the UNRISD Board was approved by the Council in 2020 for a four-year term expiring on 30 June 2024.

107. As such, at the time of reporting, the Board had eight nominated members and two seats were vacant.

108. During the biennium, UNRISD made progress in updating its founding statutes. At the time of writing, the Commission for Social Development was due to consider a process for issuing new statutes that update the Institute's working modalities, including those of the Board, to ensure that they are fit for the times and that governance and oversight are strengthened.

C. Financial report

109. The Institute receives no money from the United Nations general budget and is funded entirely by voluntary contributions from Governments, research foundations, United Nations agencies and other institutions.

110. At the time of writing and with 2020 accounts still open, the total income of the Institute (excluding miscellaneous income) for 2019–2020 was estimated at \$5.938 million (see table). Estimated total expenditures were \$5.383 million.

111. As at 31 October 2020, institutional (unearmarked) funding is estimated at \$3.896 million, of which \$400,000 is from Finland, \$2.360 million is from Sweden and \$1.136 million is from Switzerland (see table).

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

113. Two three-year funding agreements with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (2020–2022) were concluded and signed in 2020.

114. Earmarked (project) funding is estimated at \$2.042 million. Germany (both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and

Development) provided support for the newly established programme and office in Bonn. Other funds were provided by the International Labour Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, foundations and non-governmental organizations (see table).

Funding sources, 2019–2020*

(United States dollars)

Donor

Countries

Finland, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	400 000
Germany, Federal Foreign Office	100 331
Germany, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development	319 279
Sweden, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	2 360 414
Switzerland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	328 000
Switzerland, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	935 997

United Nations agencies

International Labour Organization	18 252
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	92 000

Research foundations and other funders

Centre for Social Entrepreneurship Studies	693 980
Coventry University	46 793
Global Social Economy Forum	184 981
Kentro Merimnas Oikogeneias Kai Paidiou	13 294
Korea Land and Housing Corporation	7 150
Rosa Luxemburg Foundation	210 245
Statistics Korea	168 511
University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland	6 030
University of British Columbia	24 000
University of Geneva	28 846

Total	5 938 103
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* Estimates as at 31 October 2020, excluding miscellaneous income and in-kind contributions.