



UNRISD

UNITED NATIONS
RESEARCH INSTITUTE
FOR SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT

**Research
for Social
Change**

RESEARCH PROGRAMME



Transformative Social Policy

Promoting universal, rights-based social policy as a driving force for inclusive and sustainable development

UNRISD defines social policy as public interventions that guarantee adequate and secure living standards that enable all people to strive toward and develop their full potential. It comprises basic social services such as education and health, income transfers (including social insurance, child benefits and social assistance), and labour market policies. In a development context, social policy plays a key role in production, reproduction, redistribution and protection against life and market risks while fostering social cohesion.

What UNRISD calls transformative social policy—human rights-based, entailing democratic decision making and working in tandem with economic policies—is essential to address the root causes and drivers of poverty, inequality, and unsustainable policies and practices. A fundamental pillar of new eco-social contracts, transformative social policy enables just transitions and ensures well-being and a dignified life for all.

Through the Transformative Social Policy programme, we analyse the drivers and actors in social policy reforms and adopt an integrated approach on the financing of and investment in social policies. The programme also examines institutional and political contexts, from local to global levels, and unpacks the role of policy makers, civil society and private sector actors—from elites to progressive alliances, social movements, international organizations and business actors.

WHAT WE DO

- Promote an integrated approach to social policy grounded in norms of equity, solidarity, social and environmental justice, and fair and sustainable financing.
- Challenge the dominant residualist narrative on social policy and reassert the centrality of universal social policy approaches in development strategies.
- Produce new evidence, data and analysis on the developmental and political dimensions of social policy.
- Advocate for progressive social policies and institutions to achieve better social outcomes and deliver on national and global development goals and commitments.

OUR PRIORITY CONCERNS

- Social policy
- Eco-social contracts
- Overcoming inequalities
- Poverty and social exclusion
- Migration
- Sustainable and inclusive development

GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS



Global, Asia, Latin America, North Africa,
Sub-Saharan Africa

OUR PARTNERS*



* UNRISD is funded through voluntary contributions, independent of the United Nations general budget. Through this, we maintain our autonomy to undertake critical research and provide a neutral ground for policy discussion. Recent funding partners include ministries, foundations, NGOs, UN agencies and the private sector. For a full list of donors and partners, visit www.unrisd.org/funding.

OUR CURRENT PROJECTS

The TSP programme coordinates and undertakes research on a number of issue areas, provides expert advisory support and fosters new research and advocacy collaborations.

www.unrisd.org/tsp

Migration for Development and Equality (MIDEQ) Hub

South-South migration can reduce inequalities and contribute to development. However, this potential has yet to be fully realized. The Migration for Development and Equality (MIDEQ) Hub works with a global network of partners in 12 countries in the global South, organized into six migration corridors to transform understanding of the relationships between migration, development and inequality. The Hub works to shift knowledge production on migration and its consequences toward the countries where most of the migration is taking place—engaging with contested concepts and definitions, decolonizing research processes, and generating new evidence and ideas. The overarching objective of the Hub is to shift narratives and translate knowledge into policies and practices that work to improve the lives of migrants, their families and the communities in which they live.

[Discover more](#)



Paving the Road to the Second World Summit for Social Development

In 2025, the UN will convene the second World Summit for Social Development (WSSD), 30 years after the first WSSD was held in Copenhagen in 1995. The Summit will be an opportunity to rethink social development and position it firmly on political agendas, to take stock of the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action after 30 years, and to realign behind the goals of poverty eradication, full and productive employment and decent work for all, and social integration. As it did in 1995, UNRISD will play a key role in the lead-up to the WSSD, undertaking a variety of activities linked to the Summit. These include a consultation process involving a horizon scanning exercise and regional dialogues, and a number of written outputs.

[Discover more](#)



socialprotection.org

Socialprotection.org is an online knowledge-sharing and capacity-building platform, open to social protection practitioners, policy makers and experts, as well as academics and students. The platform was set up to respond to a recommendation from the G20 Development Working Group in the aftermath of the financial crisis of the late 2000s to foster global knowledge sharing on social protection policies.

Social protection is key to the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 1, “to end poverty in all its forms everywhere”, via the implementation of universal, national social protection floors, to ensure no one is left behind. Therefore, socialprotection.org is committed to generating and sharing knowledge for the promotion of innovative and effective social protection policies and programmes, with the ambition of contributing to inclusive growth and sustainable development.

The platform has been hosted by UNRISD since May 2024.

[Discover more](#)



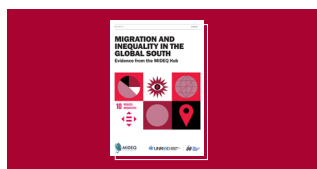
World Social Work Day at the United Nations Office at Geneva

World Social Work Day (WSWD) has been celebrated around the globe since 1983. Celebrating the day in different locations worldwide aims to highlight the achievements of social work, raise the visibility of social work and its key role for the future of societies, and defend social justice and human rights. Since 2017, UNRISD has partnered with the Geneva and Fribourg Schools of Social Work, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) to strengthen collaboration between social workers and the United Nations.

[Discover more](#)

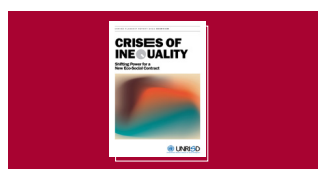


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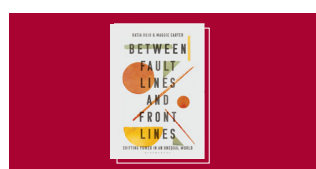
BOOK / REPORT

Migration and Inequality in the Global South: Evidence from the MIDEQ Hub



BOOK / REPORT INSTITUTIONAL

Crises of Inequality: Shifting Power for a New Eco-Social Contract



BOOK / REPORT

Between Fault Lines and Front Lines—Shifting Power in an Unequal World



WORKING PAPER

System Change for Economic Transformation: Toward Fair Fiscal Contracts



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