SPOTLIGHT TRANSFORMATIVE SOCIAL POLICY

Working Papers Series: UNRISD Global Policy Seminar for a New Eco-Social Contract

TOP STORY

→ CLICK HERE TO DISCOVER MORE

The current state of multiple and overlapping global crises presents an urgent need for a new eco-social contract that considers the interdependence between humans and the environment, addresses skyrocketing inequalities, and remedies entrenched injustices. UNRISD, recognizing this urgency, convened a Call for Papers as part of a global policy seminar that brought together experts, policy makers, civil society organizations and other stakeholders to deliberate on the prospects and promise of new eco-social contracts for sustainable futures. The papers selected through the call were presented at the Global Policy Seminar for a New Eco-Social Contract on 30 August 2024 in Bonn, Germany (see the Bonn Programme), and subsequently published as working papers and blogs.

The papers critically explore how broken social contracts can be reformed and transformed into eco-social contracts to overcome current challenges, protect people and planet, and set us firmly onto more sustainable pathways.

The published working papers are:

Contestation Movements and the Emergence of Eco-Social Contracts in India and Nepal by Alina Saba and Gabriele Koehler
May 2024

This paper explores the political and social transformations in India and Nepal over the past two decades, marked by progressive, rights-based

policy making and the emergence of an eco-social contract addressing political rights, socioeconomic justice and environmental protection. While Nepal faces ongoing contestation and India sees a rollback of such reforms, the paper underscores the crucial role of civil society in driving inclusive change. It concludes with recommendations for advancing eco-social contracts through sustained advocacy and reform, drawing on the experience of both countries.

Pathways to a New Eco-Social Contract in Nepal: Judicial Interpretations of Constitutional Guarantees and Their Implementation by Sachin Siwakoti
June 2024

This paper explores Nepal's democratic transition and the transformative potential of its 2015 Constitution, which guarantees transformative rights across economic, social, cultural, environmental and developmental spheres. It highlights the Supreme Court's critical role in interpreting these guarantees, including protecting natural resources, linking environmental rights with other fundamental rights, and emphasizing the state's responsibility as a trustee of natural resources. By analysing key court decisions and their implementation, the paper identifies challenges to realizing the full promise of Nepal's eco-social contract.

Assessing the Role of Social Enterprises in Shaping Eco-Social Agriculture: Evidence from Smallholder Organic Growers in West Bengal (India) by Arindam Laha, Nilojyoti Koner and Santanu Kumar Ghosh
June 2024

This paper explores the potential of Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) approaches in agriculture to create people-centric, planet-sensitive systems that go beyond commodity production to include environmental, cultural and social services. Focusing on ONganic Foods, a social enterprise in West Bengal, it highlights how partnerships with smallholder organic producers and the state can foster eco-social agriculture. The study addresses a gap in empirical research on social farming in the global South and demonstrates how such initiatives can advance the SDGs at the local level.

Eco-Social Contracting for Environmental Justice: Assessing the Effectiveness of Community-Based Natural Resource Management by Nkosikhona Sibanda
July 2024

This paper examines the role of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) in advancing environmental justice within the framework of a new eco-social contract. By involving local communities in sustainable resource management, CBNRM aligns with principles of fairness and inclusivity. Using case studies from Africa and Asia, the paper highlights key factors influencing CBNRM outcomes, such as governance, institutional frameworks and financing. It advocates strengthening governance, fostering partnerships and empowering communities to address challenges and achieve sustainable resource management, contributing to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Human Rights in the New Eco-Social Contract: Exploring a Just Transition Through Public Services and Social Security by Sylvain Aubry, Matt McConnell, Sarah Saadoun and Lena Simet
August 2024

This paper explores how human rights can guide the development of new eco-social contracts, which have gained traction as a framework for addressing societal transformations amid current crises. Focusing on transformative social policies, it examines human rights norms in areas like universal public services and social security, using the removal of fossil fuel subsidies as a case study. The paper outlines four reflections: (i) the human rights community should embrace the concept of eco-social contracts in its approach to interpreting and developing rights; (ii) human rights can guide equitable social contracts; (iii) human rights can provide a framework for building consensus; and (iv) it can help assess whether eco-social contracts advance social justice. These insights contribute to integrating human rights into eco-social transformations.