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# UNRISD NEWS

The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development Bulletin

## Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World

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#### THE LAST WORD

The Challenges of Equality and Difference, by Elizabeth Jelin

Ten years on from the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, many women's organizations working for gender equality around the world are asking how much has really been achieved. This is an important question to ask, but by no means an easy one to answer.

Evaluating progress in gender equality poses many challenges. Standard indicators of income and well-being offer some guidance, but a proper assessment demands much more than what they alone can provide. The challenges lie not only in developing an adequate analytical approach, but also in understanding that what counts as progress is often a contested field, with competing visions of "the good society" and of women's place within it.

Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that the past decade has witnessed significant changes, many of them positive, in women's social and economic status. Girls' enrolment in primary and secondary education has increased the world over. The decline

in fertility in many developing countries has both reduced the risk of maternal mortality and eased the burden of unpaid care work, which invariably falls to women and girls. The presence of women in public life has also grown, whether in politics, in the workforce or in the migrant streams that cross international borders.

Such changes in women's lives are associated with the social transformations that attend economic development, but they are not simply by-products of economic growth. In many instances, change in women's social position has been instigated or accelerated by state reforms and social movements. The last decade of the twentieth century was particularly significant, as it was marked by political transformations that included the transition from authoritarian rule to democracy in many parts of the world. National and transnational women's movements took advantage of the changed political context, to which they had contributed, to advance women's rights. ► PAGE 2

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### Persistent gender inequalities

Yet the positive outcomes of the 1990s must be qualified in the light of continuing gender inequalities, and a less than favourable economic and political environment. In many countries, both developed and developing, the gap between rich and poor households has been growing, while values such as equality and redistribution have been sidelined. Despite the greater numerical presence of women in the world of work and in the domain of politics, gender hierarchies remain firmly in place, imposing limits on women's overall access to income, status and power. Declining fertility continues to improve women's life chances in their reproductive years, but in some instances it has been associated with an increase in artificially high ratios of males to females in the population, as infant daughters are subjected to maltreatment, neglect and abandonment, and new technologies allow sex-selective biases against females. The ambivalent nature of women's achievements is also evident in the "feminization" of the labour force; women's access to paid work has increased in most countries, but the terms and conditions of much of the work on offer have deteriorated.

These various outcomes cannot be attributed to a single cause. Gender inequalities are deeply entrenched in all societies and are perpetuated through a variety of practices and institutions, including policy interventions. Yet mainstream international policy debates on some of the most pressing and contested issues of our time—economic liberalization, democratization and governance reforms, and identity and conflict—are not systematically informed by the knowledge generated through gender research and scholarship.

UNRISD has prepared a research-based policy report on gender and development that aims to fill some of this

lacuna. The report, *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World*, addresses both directly and indirectly eight of the 12 key areas of concern articulated in the Beijing Platform for Action. The report presents the results of specially commissioned research and analysis under four broad themes: macroeconomics, well-being and gender equality; women, work and social policy; women in politics and public life; and gender, armed conflict and the search for peace. The articles on pages 4–5 and 6–7 of this issue of *UNRISD News* take up the second and third themes.

Women's agency is today increasingly visible and impressive in women's movements around the world, in civil society organizations, and in the state and political society. Women legislators have worked hard to make national

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laws responsive to women's reproductive health and rights, and to prohibit violence and discrimination against women, no matter where these violations occur and who their perpetrators are. Landmark international prosecu-

tions of sexual assault during war as a crime against humanity now mean that public actors responsible for sexual violence are beginning to be held accountable not just to the citizens of their own countries, but to global society. A decade on from Beijing, there is indeed much to celebrate.

But there is also much at risk. On the tenth anniversary of the conference, women's movements are considering not only the continued dominance of neoliberalism in some important arenas of policy making, but also the challenges thrown up by recent shifts in geopolitics and new forms of religious-identity politics being played out from the global to the local level. Women's ambitions for social change risk taking a back seat to concerns with security. Unilateralism is eroding the multilateral framework within which transnational feminist networks have nurtured a global women's rights regime. In a polarized ideological climate where security concerns loom large and internal dissent is discouraged, sustaining autonomous spaces where women's groups and movements can address critical and controversial issues of gender equality and liberal freedoms requires political agility and alliance building with other social movements, political parties and states.

Economic liberalization has never been smooth or uncontested, and there have always been spaces for policy experimentation and heterodoxy. Where policy makers have followed orthodox prescriptions—whether under constraint or of their own volition—the outcomes have been disappointing. Livelihoods have become more insecure and inequalities have deepened. Where public health and welfare programmes, infrastructure and social protection mechanisms have not developed or have been weakened, the provision of unpaid care by women and girls has intensified.

In response to widespread discontent with the liberalization agenda, more attention is now being given to social policies and governance issues. But the social distress unleashed by neoliberal economic policies is far more extensive than the remedies that are prescribed. In the context of liberalized trade and mobile capital, it is difficult for governments to raise the kind of revenues needed to finance public services and transfers that can treat the casualties of economic policies. It is also increasingly clear that governance reforms based on standardized blueprints—lean and clean bureaucracies, unfettered market competition, inviolable and individual property rights—do not necessarily promote vibrant private sectors, at least if history is to be taken as the guide. In this abstract model of the “ideal” state and market, gender equality hardly figures. Women have dependents and care burdens; and their political “voice” can be muffled by gender-biased institutions and the restricted notions of participation that some governance reforms entail.

#### **Toward a gender-equitable policy agenda**

Charting gender-equitable macroeconomic policy is in a sense an art, for which there is no simple recipe. There are certain guiding principles, however: avoid deflationary policies that sacrifice growth and employment creation; place equality alongside macroeconomic stability as a central objective of policy making; and ensure affinities and complementarities between sectoral and macroeconomic policies.

While economic growth is a necessary condition for escaping poverty, improving standards of living and generating resources for redistributive policies, it is not sufficient for gender equality. High rates of economic growth, for example, may draw more

women into the labour force, but this can coincide with persistent gender segmentation in labour markets. Thus more specific policies are needed to make growth and gender equality compatible: regulation of all labour

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markets to erode gender-biased social norms and remove discriminations that account for the persistence of gender segmentation; and removal of the structural constraints that prevent women from taking up widening labour market opportunities.

Similarly, higher rates of growth together with taxation policies that generate higher levels of government income do not necessarily lead to a more gender-equitable use of these resources. Thus gender policy objectives have to be set and mechanisms put in place to guarantee that public resources actually reach women and girls equitably, to provide infrastructure and services that reduce women’s unpaid labour time, and to

ensure that women benefit from mechanisms of social protection.

The responsiveness of women in public office to the cause of gender equality depends on a number of factors, including whether they are held accountable to a female constituency, and whether they have the capacity to ensure that political parties place gender equality on their platforms. The effectiveness of women politicians as gender equality advocates also depends on whether the institutions of governance—judiciary, legislature, public administration—are reformed to make social justice and gender equality measures of excellence in public service.

Democratic governance and equality projects are costly because they require strong states; but they are essential for building secure states and societies capable of tolerating diversity and difference. In the short term, inequality, including gender-based inequality, may facilitate rapid growth; but in the long term, it deeply undercuts the contribution of growth to poverty reduction, erodes social cohesion, and can foster extremist political activity and instability.

UNRISD will launch *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World* during a conference held in parallel with the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (28 February to 11 March 2005 in New York). Preparation of the report was generously funded by the European Union, the Department for Research Co-operation of the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida/SAREC), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the government of the Netherlands.

More information about the report, and the research on which it is based, is available at [www.unrisd.org/research/gender/report](http://www.unrisd.org/research/gender/report).

## Women's Influence on Public Policy and Governance

Anne Marie Goetz

In the past decade, women's visibility in and impact on public life has grown. Although the average proportion of women in national assemblies has only increased from 9 per cent to almost 16 per cent, in 16 countries the proportion has reached 30 per cent or more. What factors promote women's access to representative politics? Do women in public office really promote women's interests in public decision making? Under what conditions can they and their male allies be effective in producing gender-sensitive public policy?

During the last 10 years, there has been considerable experimentation with the use of affirmative action in order to meet the goal of gender parity in representative politics. Quotas on party electoral lists are now in use in over 80 countries using proportional representation. They are most effective where there are large electoral districts and requirements that women are spaced evenly on lists. In simple plurality systems, measures to reserve seats for women have been preferred over quotas of women candidates. Parties on the ideological left, or willing to commit the public sector to compensating for inequalities in the private sphere, have in general been more responsive to gender equality concerns and supportive of women in politics.

Despite women's greater prominence in political life, women in public office have in many cases yet to parlay

their visibility into leadership positions and influence over the decision-making process: there are still many instances where they are simply used as an extension of male power structures. The transition from a heightened presence of women in politics to advance for gender equality issues and women-friendly policies depends on the effectiveness of women's movements in holding governments

diverge on many issues, there has been a patch of common ground on which many converge: the demand for gender parity in public office. Since the late 1990s, civil society campaigns for equal representation with men have gathered momentum, backing reforms to electoral systems that support women's ability to run for office.

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### Women mobilizing to reshape democracy

A notable feature of women's associational activity in the past decade has been the central role women have played in many democratization struggles. Transitions to democratic forms of government in Latin America and South Africa have enabled women to claim space for gender equality in newly emerging or reformed institutions. Though women's movements

While political liberalization has enabled some women's movements to flourish, in some contexts it has been accompanied by loss of momentum in feminist politics. In Eastern Europe, for example, it has taken most of the time since the transitions to democracy for women's movements to recover from their earlier associations with repressive regimes. In other contexts,

where political liberalization has been only partial, disillusionment with states that fail to deliver either development or democracy appears to have contributed to women's deepening engagement with conservative ethnic and religious movements.

Some of these identity-based forms of mobilization assert the superiority of "traditional" gender roles along with systems of patriarchal authority, particularly where "women's liberation" is seen as part of unwelcome modernization. Women's deportment, mobility, dress and roles within the family are often central to the cultural revival or pious society these groups proclaim. Although women

are rarely given access to institutional power within these groups, they are encouraged to engage in mobilizational activity, and even to become highly militant and visible activists because of their great symbolic impact.

#### Gender and “good” governance

Programmes of governance reform have recently attracted considerable international and national attention. Good governance is seen as the essential condition enabling economic reforms to unfold effectively, and is at the core of the emerging “post-Washington consensus”. Although the reform packages of the international financial institutions address issues of government legitimacy and the public participation of socially excluded groups, critics believe they are dominated by a narrower preoccupation: the use of “governance” reforms to expand market activity and its supporting institutions, especially private

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property rights. This focus often leaves out consideration of the effects of public institutional reform on women’s rights.

Women’s associations across the world have prioritized several areas for gender-sensitive public sector reform. These include recruitment quotas to ensure a greater presence of women in the bureaucracy; the introduction of gender equity concerns in performance measurement; consultation with women clients of public services; measures to respond to their complaints; and reforms to legal frameworks and judicial systems to improve women’s access to justice.

#### Decentralization and gender equality

Women are expected to benefit from the improvements in accountability and service delivery that decentralization reforms should provide. Indeed, local government positions are expected to be particularly open to women because the latter do not face the mobility and financial constraints that they do in seeking national public office. A comparison of available statistics on women’s engagement at national and local levels, however, shows that this is not consistently the case—sometimes there are more women in national than in local politics. This alerts us to the significance of resistance to women from traditional patriarchal systems at local levels, and also to the importance of gender-sensitive institutional design that improves women’s access to local government forums and services.

Systems of affirmative action that have been tried include the reservation of a proportion of seats on local councils for women, as in India, and the creation of special electoral wards for women, as in Uganda. Although experience is mixed, there are signs that women in local government are having a tangible impact on local spending patterns and building social acceptance of women’s political authority. In some settings, spending patterns have shifted toward the pro-

vision of services and amenities favored by women, such as water supplies and public health. Local government remains a key arena to

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watch over the next decade, as more and more women assert their leadership ambitions and challenge patriarchal systems at this level.

**Anne Marie Goetz** is a Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, United Kingdom. She coordinated the background research for and wrote “Women in politics and public life”, section three of *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World*.

## Women, Work and Social Policy

Shahra Razavi

### **The feminization and informalization of labour**

Over the past three decades, women's economic activity rates have been rising in most parts of the world, yet labour markets continue to be segmented by gender. The intensification of women's paid work during these decades has been paralleled by a deterioration in the terms and conditions of work; some employment arrangements, for example, avoid labour legislation and deny social benefits. Rural impoverishment continues to fuel migration into urban areas. Many young rural migrant women are found on the lowest, least visible, rung of the informal employment ladder. They typically work in small-scale domestic production, under increasingly competitive pressure from cheaper imported goods, and in a variety of service occupations and petty trading.

Patterns of informalization differ from region to region, but the overall trend is discouraging in terms of realizing women's rights and well-being. However, new forms of organizing among women workers in the informal economy, both domestically and internationally, emerged in the 1990s. Yet many of the new trade unions and non-governmental and community-based organizations responding to women workers' rights face difficulties in expanding their reach and becoming sustainable. They also face challenges in alliance building to broaden the scope of their efforts beyond the more visible "traded" sectors.

### **The changing terms of rural living**

During the 1980s, many African and Latin American countries suffered economic crisis, which was diagnosed by the international financial institutions as stemming directly from heavy state

involvement in the economy. The agricultural sector was seen as the main victim of state intervention. Evidence shows that rural livelihoods have become more insecure, as well as more diversified, in contexts where cutbacks in state support to domestic agriculture have coincided with increasing exposure to competition from large subsidized producers. Volatile and depressed commodity prices have trapped large numbers of rural people in poverty, hunger and even famine.

Where they can, smallholders have moved from producing traditional cash crops to more lucrative crops. In the 1990s, it was assumed that African agricultural outputs did not respond to liberalization because gender roles within households were inflexible and women unwilling to contribute unpaid

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labour to cash crops controlled by their husbands. But these intrahousehold gender constraints and conflicts of interest have been exaggerated, and there is considerable evidence of flexibility in gender roles in agriculture. If

liberalization has failed to increase agricultural production, it has much more to do with the broader constraints on smallholders that are exacerbated by liberalization itself.

Besides the changes in smallholder farming, two other important trends have emerged as companions to liberalization. The first is the growth of large-scale corporate export farming, which is a significant new source of employment for rural women in many parts of the world, even though they are overwhelmingly employed in more insecure, less well-paid and lower-skilled activities, with few opportunities for advancement. The second is the more general diversification of smallholder livelihoods, with men, women and children increasingly propelled into off-farm activities to avert poverty. In some cases, incomes earned are so low that diversification in fact contributes to a cycle of impoverishment.

One of the major lessons of the experience of economic reform and liberalization is that the resource poverty of farmers prevents them from taking up new opportunities. Land remains a critical asset in the rural economy. In many countries, women's rights activists and other civil society groups have been closely involved in policy debates on land tenure. While this resulted in more gender-equitable land tenure laws during the 1990s, there is still a substantial gap between the legal recognition of women's right to own or hold land, and their effective access to land.

### **Cross-border migration of workers**

Movement from countryside to town or across international borders has become an established feature of many people's livelihoods, entailing both opportunities



and negative effects for the countries and individuals involved. Contemporary cross-border flows are characterized by three broad trends: an increasing shift toward temporary migration; rising numbers of undocumented migrants; and the feminization of migration.

Despite continuing differences in migration regimes between countries, there is convergence toward “selective” migration. That is, highly skilled workers are encouraged to migrate, because they are believed to integrate more easily and contribute more to the economy, whereas low-skilled immigrants, who are regarded as hard on the public purse, are discouraged. Such stratifications are also gendered, given men’s preponderance among the highly skilled strata.

Women’s position on the bottom rung of the labour market, the low value accorded to domestic and care work carried out by many migrant women in industrialized societies, and the lack of social protection in irregular occupations, especially in the “entertainment and hospitality” industries, mean that many women are vulnerable to exploitation. The fact that many highly educated women from developing countries undertake unskilled or semi-skilled jobs raises the issue of de-skilling, which is rarely addressed in policy.

The positive side of the picture is that some women are getting upwardly mobile employment, such as in the information technology sector. The downside is the overwhelming presence of women as sex workers and domestic helpers, two areas of employment not covered by labour laws and thus prone to high levels of abuse.

Discrimination against immigrants, combined with racial and gender inequalities, makes migrant women “triple disadvantaged”. At the same time, the experience of migration—whether by women on their own or jointly with

men—has the potential to reconfigure gender relations and power inequalities.

### A new social policy agenda

Livelihoods in today’s world are subject to a range of insecurities. Many developing countries do not have formal social protection mechanisms for

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the millions of women and men who work in the informal economy (and even for some in the formal economy). Ill-health, childbirth and old age may also lead to impoverishment, as earnings fall and assets are depleted to purchase health care in increasingly commercialized contexts.

While the 1990s saw a shift in global policy pronouncements, acknowledging the vital role of social policy in the development process, considerable tensions remain between different approaches regarding the scope and institutional mechanisms of social policy.

Both the process of social policy reform and its outcomes are inescapably gendered. Early efforts to provide formal social protection in many developing countries were biased toward men, who were overrepresented in the formal sector. And while efforts could have been made to cover a much wider range of people, there has in fact been a reversal

over the past two decades. In many regions there has been strong pressure to commoditize social services and social protection by imposing user fees for public services and expanding market-based provision. It is ironic that the earlier bias toward men is being eroded not by gender-equitable reform of state-based entitlements, but by their drastic reduction.

The impacts of commodification are likely to be felt most strongly by women due to gender inequalities and stratifications that cut across both private and public institutions. These include households (where girls are likely to receive a smaller proportion of household investments in health and education than boys); markets (where women tend to be more cash-constrained than men, given their disadvantages in labour and credit markets); the unpaid care economy (where a disproportionate share of unpaid care is provided by women and girls when formal social provision remains out of reach); and the public social care sector (where the effects of public sector reforms are likely to fall most heavily on women workers, who are predominantly located at the lowest rungs of skill, authority and remuneration).

By extending the coverage of social protection programmes to new groups of informal workers, and by facilitating cross-subsidies, some important efforts are being made in several countries to extend the reach of existing social protection mechanisms. These more inclusive social systems are being forged in contexts where there has been a great deal of debate concerning social responsibility, and where there is an ideological commitment to social equality.

**Shahra Razavi**, Research Coordinator at UNRISD, was responsible for the overall coordination of research for *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World*. She also coordinated the background research for and wrote “Women, work and social policy”, section two of the report.

## The Civic and Political Participation of Women in Central and Eastern Europe

Amanda Sloat

While the enlargement process of the European Union (EU) has not explicitly emphasized equal opportunities for women and men, the new member states have implemented equality legislation, and now have statutes to deal with gender issues and non-discrimination clauses in their constitutions. They are also paying more attention to the challenge of increasing women's parliamentary representation. These are among the issues being considered in an EU-funded research project: Enlargement, Gender and Governance (EGG): The Civic and Political Participation of Women in Central and Eastern Europe. This project is managed by Amanda Sloat (Institute of Governance, Public Policy and Social Research) and Yvonne Galligan (Centre for the Advancement of Women in Politics) of Queen's University Belfast. Sloat was a visiting research fellow at UNRISD from February through April 2004.

The EGG project analyses the extent to which representative institutions and other organizations—such as political parties, trade unions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and social movements—enable women's participation and representation in political decision making and governance in the new EU member states. By looking at how the history of communist rule has affected the current political position of women, the project is providing recommendations to the European Commission and country governments in order to underpin effective future policy making. EGG is unique in that it is the first systematic attempt to analyse gender and enlargement, the civic and political participation of women in new

member states, and the effectiveness of attempts by the commission and new member-state governments to legislate on gender equality.

The research focuses on three questions. How have the twin forces of democratization and preparation for EU accession influenced women's civic and political participation in candidate countries? How are women's civic associations embedded in the equality policy framework in candidate countries? Are there specific strategies that could be adopted to enhance women's contribution to governance?

The first phase of the work developed a theoretical foundation, establishing a common vocabulary among participants and a historical framework

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within which to consider women's present civic and political participation; a final six-month dissemination phase will ensure that research results are distributed locally, as individual country reports, and at

European level, as comparative reports.

The project is divided into five substantive "work packages".

- *Analysing Female Visibility*, which collected data on women's representation in political and civic decision-making bodies, comparing and contrasting the situation pre- and post-1989.
- *Mapping Women's Campaign for Change*, which assessed the state of the women's movement in the post-1989 period and mapped the issues on which women's NGOs are lobbying for change.
- *Implementing the Equality "Acquis"*, which assessed the extent to which the EU body of legislation on equality issues has been transposed, implemented and enforced.
- *Identifying Barriers to Women's Participation*, which built on previous work packages that identified the sites of women's underrepresentation, sought to understand why this has occurred and provided policy recommendations.
- *Gender Mainstreaming*, which conducted a full review of the mainstreaming infrastructure across all government departments and examined two specific policy issues (equal opportunities and trafficking) in order to assess the extent to which women's perspectives are incorporated in policy making.



Prior to 1989, women comprised at least 20 per cent of parliamentarians in all 10 Central and Eastern European countries. In 1980 Lithuania and Latvia had the most women representatives, with 36 per cent and 35 per cent respectively. On the lower end of the spectrum were Poland (23 per cent in 1980), Bulgaria (22 per cent in 1981), and Estonia (21 per cent in 1985). However, this apparent equality was a myth: the Communist Party selected candidates, and weak national parliaments rubber-stamped party proposals. As political institutions regained power and legitimacy following the 1989 transition to democracy, men grabbed positions and pushed women aside. For example, the proportion of women representatives after Hungary's first free elections in 1990 dropped to 7 per cent (from 30 per cent in 1980); Lithuania's first democratically elected parliament post-1989 counted 8 per cent women (down from 36 per cent in 1980). Women began to increase their share of parliamentary representation during the 1990s, with Bulgaria, Latvia and Poland breaking 20 per cent and Slovakia close behind. However, women in Hungary, Lithuania and Romania are still finding it more difficult to make a noticeable advance.

The development of a vibrant non-governmental sector is also vital to young democracies. Women took particular advantage of new civic opportunities post-1989, working on areas such as political concerns and rights (increasing parliamentary representation, fighting discrimination), the promotion of business and professional activities, social services (health care, education), and activism to prevent violence against women and domestic abuse. But because women's NGOs are poorly funded and reliant on foreign donors, many are unable to initiate large-scale projects and concentrate instead on delivering so-

cial services formerly provided by the state. A confused understanding of feminism, which is often interpreted as anti-family, anti-children, anti-men and anti-feminine, also handicaps women's work in the political and civic arenas.

Consequently, gender equality is not seen as a problem in many Central and Eastern European countries.

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Reinvigorated conservatism post-1989 abolished many social measures that had previously protected and promoted women, and campaigns for gender equality had come to be seen as unnecessary as a result of communist-era propaganda that emphasized women's (supposed) liberation. The idea that women should support women to achieve common objectives is still not widely held, which may also partly explain the low percentage of women in elected political positions.

The EGG project will hold a conference on 20 June 2005 in Prague, Czech Republic, in order to disseminate the project's final results and

obtain feedback from participants. The meeting is open to all civic and political actors, including politicians, civil servants, NGOs, academics and the general public. For details about the conference, please contact the local organizer at [hana.haskova@microshop.cz](mailto:hana.haskova@microshop.cz). More information about the EGG project—including executive summaries of each work package—will be found at [www.qub.ac.uk/egg](http://www.qub.ac.uk/egg).

During her three-month stay at UNRISD, **Amanda Sloat** took advantage of the Institute's intellectual resources, including staff expertise and publications; presented some of the initial findings of the EGG research and obtained valuable feedback; acted as a peer referee for several of the papers on Central and Eastern Europe commissioned for *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World*; and developed institutional links, providing evidence of wider collaboration between UNRISD and universities.

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## REQUIRED READING

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### From Unsustainable to Inclusive Cities

edited by David Westendorff

**Contents** § Introduction: Sustainable Cities: Views of Southern Practitioners—David Westendorff § Part 1—Case Studies Promoting Environmentalism, Participation and Sustainable Human Development in Cities of Southeast Asia—Adrian Atkinson • Sustainable Urban Development in India: An Inclusive Perspective—Darshini Mahadevia • Metropolization and the Ecological Crisis: Precarious Settlements in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam—Sebastian Wust, Jean-Claude Bolay and Thai Thi Ngoc Du • Sustainable Development in an Urban Tanzanian Context—Batilda Burian and Alphonse T. Kyariga • Unsustainable Development: The Philippine Experience—Karina Constantino-David • Sustainable Development and Democracy in the Megacities—Jaime Joseph § Part 2—International Trends and Actors Affecting Sustainability Alliances in International Co-operation: A Change of Paradigm in Urban Governance?—Isabelle Milbert • Sustainable Development for the Urban Poor: Applying a Human Rights Approach to the Problem—David Westendorff

David Westendorff is a researcher and consultant on urban governance issues based at the Centre for the Study of Modern China at Tsinghua University in Beijing, China. He was formerly Research Coordinator at UNRISD.

Order from UNRISD; paperback, ISBN 92-9085-048-5, 256 pages, 2004, \$30.

### Au cœur des crises nationales au Rwanda et au Burundi: La lutte pour les ressources

Marc Rwabahungu

**Contents** § Haine, violence et lutte pour les ressources § L'évolution de la crise § Lien entre le pouvoir et les ressources § Débordement dans la région § Ailleurs en Afrique

Marc Rwabahungu is an agronomist and development expert. He was formerly Research Assistant at UNRISD.

*Au cœur des crises nationales au Rwanda et au Burundi* is co-published with Editions L'Harmattan; paperback, ISBN 2-7475-6530-0, 215 pages, 2004, 19.50 euros. Order from Editions L'Harmattan, 5-7, rue de l'Ecole-Polytechnique, 75005 Paris, France; phone 33 (0)140 467920, fax 33 (0)143 258203, presse.harmattan5@wanadoo.fr.

### Living Longer: Ageing, Development and Social Protection

edited by Peter Lloyd-Sherlock

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Peter Lloyd-Sherlock is Lecturer in Social Development at the School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia. He was External Research Coordinator for the UNRISD Project on Ageing, Development and Social Protection.

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Shahra Razavi is Research Coordinator at UNRISD, working in the area of gender and development; Ruth Pearson is Professor of Development Studies and Director of the Centre for Development Studies, Institute for Politics and International Studies, University of Leeds, United Kingdom; Caroline Danloy is Associate Information Officer at UNRISD and was, formerly, Research Assistant working in the field of gender at the Institute.

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# Gender Equality

## *Striving for Justice in an Unequal World*

A new UNRISD report

The Fourth World Conference on Women was a high point in international efforts to advance women's human rights. Now, 10 years on, many around the world are taking stock of what has really been achieved. With this new report, UNRISD aims to make a contribution to this process of reflection and debate, tackling difficult and controversial issues that currently preoccupy many people across the globe.

Based on the findings of the Institute's ongoing gender research and over 60 specially commissioned studies, the report's analysis is centred on the economic and political reforms of the 1990s. If most of these reforms did not directly address gender equality, they nevertheless received considerable scrutiny from a gender perspective. And whatever their intentions, they had significant and mixed implications for gender relations and women's well-being.

As its title alludes, achieving gender equality and gender justice will be very difficult in a world that is increasingly unequal. The report presents strong arguments for why gender equality must be placed at the core of efforts to reorient the development agenda. Indeed, if some of the key contemporary challenges—economic growth and structural transformation, equality and social protection, and democratization—are to be met, this is essential.



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## Consultation Meeting on Future UNRISD Research

22–23 November 2004, Geneva

UNRISD is engaged in a year-long effort to design a new research programme for the 2005–2009 period. A crucial component of this endeavour is a series of consultations with development researchers to identify key concerns and priority issues, and to ensure that UNRISD thinking is in step with national and regional perspectives on contemporary development trends and policies.

As part of this process, some 25 social scientists from Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and the Middle East participated in this two-day consultation in Geneva. They provided feedback on a set of preliminary research ideas put forward by UNRISD, and considered how the Institute might strengthen its relations with research networks and institutions, particularly in developing countries.

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*There are a number of common concerns related, for example, to the perverse social and developmental effects of economic liberalization and donor conditionality; the weakening of traditional centres of higher education and development research in the South, and the marginalization of conceptual and critical thinking.*

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Among the participants were representatives from regional research networks—the Council for the Development of Social Science Research

in Africa (CODESRIA), the European Association of Development Institutes (EADI) and the Latin American Social Science Research Council (CLACSO). Scholars from universities in Ghana, Lebanon, Peru, South Africa, Switzerland and Thailand, as well as specialists from United Nations agencies and Europe- and United States-based research institutions, also attended.

A series of regional presentations on the first day drew out a number of common concerns related, for example, to the perverse social and developmental effects of economic liberalization and donor conditionality, the weakening of traditional centres of higher education and development research in the South, and the marginalization of conceptual and critical thinking in a context where “consultancy culture” is proliferating. They also revealed new issues and concerns related to the “post-9/11” world and United States hegemony, and their implications for development aid, democratization, new social movements and identity politics.

On the second day, participants met in smaller groups for more in-depth discussions on six sets of issues: social policy; democratization and social development; identities, conflict and cohesion; civil society and social movements; gender and development; and markets, business and regulation. The discussions served to endorse or critique the preliminary research ideas and to identify areas that might be given greater emphasis. These included the analysis of alternative visions and models of development, global citizenship, the role of the state in development, and the role of ideas and institutions in the construction of both dominant and alternative knowledge systems.

Several new areas were also proposed for study, including the social and developmental impacts of unregulated and illegal markets, and specific social issues related to diasporas, ageing and human trafficking.

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*Areas that might be given greater emphasis include the analysis of alternative visions and models of development, global citizenship, the role of the state in development, and the role of ideas and institutions in the construction of both dominant and alternative knowledge systems.*

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One session considered how UNRISD might interact more effectively with the international research community, particularly institutions and networks in the South. Proposals included undertaking collaborative projects with the regional research networks, promoting conceptual work in developing countries, mobilizing more resources for the translation of publications, and providing more opportunities for researchers from the South to spend time at UNRISD.

UNRISD is drawing on these discussions in revising the proposal for the Institute's future research agenda, which will be submitted to the UNRISD Board in March 2005.

## Global Civil Society Movements: Dynamics in International Campaigns and National Implementation

25–26 November 2004, Buenos Aires

In early 2004, UNRISD launched a major research project, Global Civil Society Movements: Dynamics in International Campaigns and National Implementation, to examine the strengths and weaknesses of civil society movements and networks related to debt relief, international trade rules, global taxation, anti-corruption and fair trade/solidarity economy.

A major contribution of the research will be an assessment of how global civil society movements actually fare in national and local contexts. For this purpose, in-depth country studies are being carried out in Argentina, Bolivia, the Philippines, Senegal and Turkey. These countries have high levels of public debt, suffer unfavourable conditions in international trade, have experienced major financial crises, and face problems of corruption in both the public and private sectors. However, they have also been the scenes of important civil society initiatives.

This project workshop, co-hosted with the Institute of Economic and Social Development, brought together the UNRISD research coordinator, national researchers and other invitees. The researchers presented the outlines of their studies, and this was followed by detailed discussion of the theoretical foundations of the project, definitions of key concepts, and relations between the national and international levels of analysis.

Participants agreed on the following broad goals for the national-level research:

- to clarify the meanings of the term “social movement” in

different country contexts, highlighting the key actors engaged at local and national levels, as well as their linkages with regional and international movements and networks;

- to examine the forms of contention and institutionalization, including the question of why certain issues attract more popular mobilization than others;

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*The project will draw wider policy conclusions on the developmental implications of social movements, including the issue of how constructive dialogue and cooperation might be promoted between social movements and national and international institutions, the academic community, NGOs, the media and other actors.*

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- to analyse the impacts of social movements on local livelihoods, civil society structure, public opinion and national development debates; and
- to draw wider policy conclusions on the developmental implications of social movements, including the issue of how constructive dialogue and cooperation might be promoted

between social movements and national and international institutions, the academic community, NGOs, the media and other actors.

The studies will also seek to evaluate whether the social forces associated with the selected movements are accepted and viable actors in national contexts, and the extent to which they are able to make significant policy impacts.

On the methodological side, the studies are using a common framework that ensures consistency while allowing for the diversity of cases. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was decided on, including surveys, interviews, case studies, and the extensive use of secondary documentation and primary sources. Participants in the project workshop also discussed publication and dissemination plans, including the organization of a stakeholder meeting in each of the countries that would bring together civil society actors, relevant government departments, academics and the media to consider the principal research findings.

The project Global Civil Social Movements: Dynamics in International Campaigns and National Implementation is supported by a grant from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and UNRISD core funds.

## Community Responses to HIV/AIDS

2–3 August 2004, Geneva

This workshop was organized by UNRISD to present case study proposals received through a call for papers and to discuss analytical frameworks and methodologies that will shape new UNRISD work under the project Community Responses to HIV/AIDS. Five case study proposals were selected and funded for the project—Brazil, India, Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

The project documents and analyses different coping strategies put in place by communities in response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The equity and effectiveness of different levels of response—individual, household and social group—are being evaluated. The project is also exploring the role and effectiveness of civil society and state organizations in supporting (i) responses to risk environments for HIV, particularly those of women and fe-

male adolescents; (ii) responses to the impacts of AIDS in economically and socially marginalized households; and (iii) coping mechanisms used by economically marginalized communities and orphan households.

The first area of research addresses the responses by social groups to confronting risk environments for HIV, particularly where there is a growing HIV epidemic. It is investigating different responses that link individuals at risk in widening networks with a shared risk perception, and that drive interventions to address both micro- and macro-environmental determinants of HIV.

The second area of research is the organization of social support for households and families responding to the impacts of AIDS, particularly in contexts where the pandemic continues to

grow. It is hypothesized that the burden of AIDS will be borne in a more sustainable way when communities organize and build social networks to share the costs of AIDS, and to direct resources and services toward vulnerable households and families in order to relieve costs of caring and support. The extent to which this actually takes place, and what effects such responses have, are being examined.

The case studies on Brazil, India and Uganda are based on primary data collection, while those on Kenya and Zimbabwe are based on secondary data and literature review. The first drafts of all studies are expected in spring 2005.

This workshop and the project, as well as related research on Politics and Political Economy of HIV/AIDS, are funded by the Royal Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway and UNRISD core funds.

### UNRISD EVENTS IN 2004

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#### APRIL

20–21 Social Knowledge and International Policy Making—International Conference, Geneva

22–23 UNRISD Board Meeting, Geneva

#### JUNE

28–29 Privatization, Commercialization and Universal Access to Water—Project Workshop, Geneva

#### JULY

1–2 UNRISD Policy Report on Gender and Development—Advisory Group Meeting, Geneva

6 Policy Reform and Income Distribution—Seminar, Geneva

#### AUGUST

2–3 Community Responses to HIV/AIDS—Project Workshop, Geneva

#### NOVEMBER

4 New Approaches to Poverty: Measurements and Concepts—Seminar, Geneva

22–23 Consultation Meeting on Future UNRISD Research, Geneva

25–26 Global Civil Society Movements—Project Workshop, Buenos Aires

## Inequality, Growth and Poverty

6 July 2004, Geneva

UNRISD invited Giovanni Andrea Cornia (Professor of Economics, University of Florence, Italy) to present some of the main findings of his recent work on trends in within-country inequality. This research is published in *Inequality, Growth and Poverty in an Era of Liberalization and Globalization* (Giovanni Andrea Cornia [ed.], WIDER Studies in Development Economics, Oxford University Press, 2004).

Cornia challenged several premises of the Washington consensus, in particular that liberalization, privatization and the market provision of public goods, as well as macroeconomic stability, would reduce rent-seeking behaviour, improve competition, increase trade opportunities for developing countries, and promote the convergence of living standards between poorer and more developed countries.

He based his arguments on the data presented in the above volume, which re-

sult from the first empirical assessment of the relation between policies toward liberalization and globalization, and income inequality. The findings include:

- Countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development presented high inequality rates in the early post-Second World War period. These were subsequently reduced as a result of improvements in employment and social security standards, and wage stability.
- Inequality in China followed a U-shaped pattern during the post-war period. Social and agricultural policies in the 1950s and 1960s promoted egalitarian growth, while market reforms in agriculture during the 1970s and 1980s led to income disparities and exacerbated rural-urban inequalities.
- In Africa, inequality has traditionally reflected the urban-rural gap, which adjustment policies of the

1980s aimed to reduce. The research findings show that while the urban-rural income gap has declined over the years, inequality within both rural and urban areas has increased.

Cornia's research shows that while the traditional causes of inequality—access to education, land and natural resources, and urban bias—still matter, new causes are increasingly significant. These can be endogenous factors, such as technology and a skilled labour force, and policy factors, such as trade liberalization. Cornia concluded that the old sources of inequality need to be fought through land reform, tax reform and targeted investments in the most deprived regions, and the new sources through pro-poor macroeconomic policies that minimize output volatility and the effects of economic recession.

## New Approaches to Poverty: Measurements and Concepts

4 November 2004, Geneva

Poverty reduction is high on the international agenda. But while various policies and strategies have been proposed to reduce poverty, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), the concept of poverty itself is not always clearly defined in the development discourse. Methods of measurement may be vague as a consequence, and this lack of clarity can hamper poverty reduction efforts.

At this public seminar convened by UNRISD, two leading scholars in the field, Stein Ringen (Professor of Sociology and Social Policy, and Fellow of Green College, University of Oxford) and José Figueredo (Senior Econo-

mist, Social Protection Sector, International Labour Organization/ILO), reviewed the current debates on poverty and discussed new research on the concept and its measurement.

In his presentation, Ringen asserted that poverty is an unacceptable moral problem. He argued that in order to approach it effectively, the very meaning of poverty and its measurement must be reopened to serious investigation. Instead of an income approach, he proposed a social reporting approach that could more accurately reflect the reality of poverty. Ringen also elaborated a "poverty matrix" that shows various dimensions of poverty in real life.

Figueredo presented the new ILO concept of economic security and discussed the associated Economic Security Index (ESI) that has been calculated for over 90 countries representing more than 85 per cent of the world's population. The concept is based on seven forms of work-related security including income, labour markets, employment, skills, work, jobs and representation. According to the ILO findings, economic security—coupled with democracy and government spending on social security—not only benefits growth, but can also promote social stability.

## Commercialization, Privatization and Universal Access to Water

28–29 June 2004, Geneva

This workshop brought together researchers carrying out work under the UNRISD project Commercialization, Privatization and Universal Access to Water. It was an opportunity to present first drafts of the country case studies carried out in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Finland, India, the Philippines and South Africa, as well as to provide comments, discuss findings and clarify the policy implications emerging from the research.

With this research, UNRISD is placing particular emphasis on the outcomes of privatization and commercialization schemes under which water services are provided not by the public sector, but by a multinational company, a public-private partnership or a local service provider. In theory, such schemes seek to benefit from market mechanisms, via cost recovery and provision of water at the “best price”. Cost recovery mobilizes additional resources, providing the

company with revenues to continue and expand activities.

But various schemes of service provision have different impacts on the most vulnerable members of society, especially in countries where a high proportion of the population lives below the poverty line, meaning low ability to pay, and/or in peripheral areas with little and/or difficult access to basic services.

The cases provide a range of perspectives on different service provision schemes, from state divestiture (Chile) to concession agreements (Buenos Aires, Argentina; Cochabamba and La Paz, Bolivia; Manila, Philippines) to corporatization (Johannesburg, South Africa) to innovative measures undertaken by municipal companies (Maharashtra, India). The case of Finland considers “softer” forms of private sector involvement. All the case studies consider water and associated regulatory institu-

tions as public goods, recognize the high initial investment needed for infrastructure and its high maintenance costs, and take into account the existence of market externalities and general lack of competition in the provision of water services.

On this basis, the studies argue convincingly for the importance of regulatory institutions and policies, and for the need to link the privatization/commercialization of water services to the behaviour of other markets (such as financial markets) and to figure in problems related to governance and incentives for compliance with contracts.

Following final revisions and peer review, selected studies will be published as UNRISD Programme Papers. An edited volume is also foreseen.

Support for the workshop and the project is provided by UNRISD core funds.

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## The Challenges of Equality and Difference

*CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24*

uniqueness, and these are anchored in the “right to difference”.

One can read the struggles of the last 30 years through the lens of how this paradox and the ingrained dilemmas and tensions between principles of equality and the right to difference have emerged in various ways in social and political action. The future will imply facing political choices and decisions linked to this recurrent dilemma, finding at best unstable and partial “solutions” to it.

Perhaps the greatest challenge of the present is to be found in the fact that

recent decades have seen a growth in belief (and institutional) systems that negate the fundamental equality of humanity. Claiming the right to be different and cultural pluralism can then lead to practices that violate human integrity. Yet there is more to this matter. A major danger lies in the fact that these belief and institutional systems may seek to assert a particular way of life as the only “right” one and thereby justify oppression or destruction of the “wrong” others.

Much is at stake when the line between pluralism and fundamentalism is crossed—and this can happen when

the affirmation of one’s own superiority overshadows and obstructs the quest for basic human equality. Here is where we can locate, in abstract yet simple terms, the seeds of a future political agenda.

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## Macroeconomics and Social Policy

During the last two decades, progress in most aggregate indicators of human well-being slowed down, was limited to fewer sectors and was more unequally distributed. This situation poses policy makers and researchers with two broad challenges. The first concerns social policies that improve well-being while simultaneously promoting economic growth; the second economic policies that lead simultaneously to growth and social progress, or pro-poor macroeconomics.

This UNRISD project, Macroeconomics and Social Policy, takes up the second challenge, focusing in particular on two macroeconomic characteristics that have emerged since the 1980s. The first is the growing instability of the global financial economy, which is associated with more frequent financial crises, greater volatility of growth, and an asymmetric distribution of the benefits and costs of financial globalization. The second involves a loss of domestic policy-making capacity in

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*In an increasingly unstable world economy, the first task of pro-poor macroeconomics is to adopt policies that reduce volatility and the risk of macroeconomic shocks.*

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an open economy, which poses policy makers with serious dilemmas when dealing with poverty and inequality.

In an increasingly unstable world economy, the first task of pro-poor

macroeconomics is to adopt policies that reduce volatility and the risk of macroeconomic shocks. Research is thus being carried out on (i) controlling and harnessing capital inflows, (ii) establishing the ideal features of a pro-poor exchange rate regime, and (iii) features of a global insurance mechanism that would come into play when shocks originate from the global economy.

Once a country has been hit by a shock, stabilization is necessary and beneficial, including for the poor. The project is thus exploring the following types of issues.

- *The distributive and poverty effects of devaluation-based versus monetary/fiscal-based stabilization in different developing countries.* The former generally maintains employment while reducing real wages for all, and the latter tends to affect employment prospects for some.
- *The optimal choice of stabilization targets (usually reduction of inflation and budget deficit) and the pace of adjustment.*
- *The nature of (permanent and temporary) domestic safety nets compatible with the new macroeconomic characteristics.* Economic and social rationality demands that pro-poor and efficient public spending be preserved, or even accelerated, during crisis situations. The project explores the conditions and political coalitions that facilitated the adoption of efficient expenditure cuts and reallocations in some countries but not in others.
- *Debt relief, fiscal flexibility and public deficit.* Countries

hit by external shocks or facing enduring crises often try to reduce the public deficit by freezing, reducing or cancelling part of the debt. The project analyses the fiscal benefits and impacts on the poor of these different approaches, and considers alternatives such as automatic and costless “debt standstills” and fiscal flexibility.

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*Economic and social rationality demands that pro-poor and efficient public spending be preserved, or even accelerated, during crisis situations.*

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Thematic papers analysing policies that prevent and moderate macroeconomic shocks have been commissioned, as have case studies of alternative policy regimes and their poverty impacts in Brazil, Chile, China, India, Mauritius, Malaysia and Uzbekistan. A project workshop is planned for February 2005 in Florence, Italy, at which first drafts of these studies will be presented and discussed.

This research is part of a group of projects on Social Policy in a Development Context, which is funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) and UNRISD core funds.



## Democratization and Social Policy

This project, for which commissioning of research began in March 2004, explores the complex ways social policy and democracy can be mutually reinforcing. Even though comprehensive social policies have been pursued in authoritarian societies, the worldwide trends in democratization suggest that economic and social development in many countries today occurs through institutions and processes that are at least formally democratic. But globalization and the spread of neoliberal policy prescriptions raise questions about whether new democracies can pursue social policies that improve the welfare of the majority of their citizens. To gain insights into these linkages in established or relatively stable democracies, the project examines the cases of Botswana, India, Jamaica and Japan, as well as Europe and Latin America.

A major attribute of democratization is that it may open up opportunities for citizen participation in the policy process and subject decision makers to periodic renewal of their mandates. As a result of these dynamics,

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*Globalization and the spread of neoliberal policy prescriptions raise questions about whether new democracies can pursue social policies that improve the welfare of the majority of their citizens.*

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social policy may be high on the preferences of voters and decision makers. However, the vote may not

always be an effective instrument for holding decision makers accountable, and social policy may compete with other priorities when citizens cast their ballots. This project examines the extent to which individuals, interest groups and political parties have used the power of the vote to advance social policy agendas in different democracies; the development of advocacy groups and coalitions to push through welfare reforms or policies; and the institutional arrangements or social pacts that have emerged around social policy issues in different democratic settings. In order to understand the coverage of social protection and why certain types of social policies have been emphasized over others, it analyses the structure and evolution of national economies and labour markets. Three sets of social policies receive particular attention: social security, including income support and pensions; social services; and subsidies.

The project also seeks to explore the way social policy has been used to consolidate or improve the quality of democratic institutions. Democratic consolidation involves behavioural and attitudinal changes in which citizens uphold the intrinsic values and procedures of democracy in settling differences, even during severe crisis. Factors that help consolidation include the quality of civil society, the degree of consensus among elites on the rules of contestation and alternations of power, and the development of an effective bureaucracy and rule of law. However, it is not easy to separate out the effects of social welfare provision on democratic consolidation from those of other issues such as incomes, employment and economic growth.

The findings of the research should lend support to the project's main

hypotheses: social policy that improves the security of the majority of citizens enhances social solidarity (a cornerstone of citizenship), offers disadvantaged groups non-violent

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*Social policy that improves the security of the majority of citizens enhances social solidarity (a cornerstone of citizenship), offers disadvantaged groups non-violent mechanisms via which they can express demands for change, weakens clientelist social relations, and enhances the capacity of citizens to participate in public life as autonomous actors.*

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mechanisms via which they can express demands for change, weakens clientelist social relations, and enhances the capacity of citizens to participate in public life as autonomous actors. In other words, social policy may impact the political system and democracy through social cohesion.

This research is part of a group of projects on Social Policy in a Development Context, which is funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) and UNRISD core funds.

## UNRISD in Cyberspace

Six UNRISD publications on corporate social responsibility have been posted on the Web site of the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, an independent, international, non-profit organization that works in partnership with Amnesty International and leading academic institutions. [www.business-humanrights.org](http://www.business-humanrights.org)

L'Observatoire des Usages d'Internet (OUI) has posted the summary of *Les Emigrés sénégalais et les nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication*, by Serigne Mansour Tall (PP TBS 7, UNRISD, May 2003). OUI is an association that studies and shares information about social uses of the Internet. [www.oui.net](http://www.oui.net)

UNRISD publications on corporate social responsibility are also available on a social standards information Web site set up under a public-private partnership project that aims to establish a system for the auditing and upgrading of suppliers in 11 countries, based on the international standard for social accountability SA8000. [www.social-standards.info](http://www.social-standards.info)

*Gender Justice, Development and Rights*, edited by Maxine Molyneux and Shahra Razavi (UNRISD and Oxford University Press, 2002) has been selected for inclusion in Oxford Scholarship Online, a Web site that facilitates the online publication of academic and research books in the humanities and social sciences. The site was launched in 2003 with 750 books in four disciplines—political science, philosophy, economics and finance, and religion. [www.oxfordscholarship.com](http://www.oxfordscholarship.com)

Forced Migration Online, established by the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford, has selected a number of UNRISD publications over the years. The latest addition to the site is Michael Cernea's "Bridging the research divide: Studying refugees and development oustees", chapter 21 of *In Search of Cool Ground: War, Flight and Homecoming in North-east Africa*, edited by Tim Allen (UNRISD and James Currey, 1996). Forced Migration Online is a free-access, non-profit academic Web portal. [www.forcedmigration.org](http://www.forcedmigration.org)

## UNRISD in the Media

A *Financial Times* article titled "Companies pressed to adopt higher standards", by reporter Vanessa Houlder, quotes *The Greening of Business in Developing Countries*, edited by Peter Utting (UNRISD and Zed Books, 2002), and notes that UNRISD, other organizations and scholars remain critical of corporate voluntary environmental initiatives. The article was published in the 16 October 2003 edition. [www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com)

The *Baltic Times*, a weekly newspaper that covers political and economic events in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, has published excerpts from the comparative study prepared as a background document for the UNRISD international conference on Ethnic Structure, Inequality and Governance of the Public Sector (25–27 March 2004, Riga, Latvia). [www.baltictimes.com](http://www.baltictimes.com)

"Good governance: The itinerary of an idea", by UNRISD Director

Thandika Mkandawire, has appeared in *D+C Development and Cooperation* (Vol. 31, No. 10, 2004). Mkandawire writes, "Originally, the term 'good governance' was meant to stand for more than official accountability geared towards market efficiency. The African scholars who first used it were demanding more equitable state-society relations. Democracy and social inclusion were considered core elements". [www.invent.org/E+Z/content/heft-eng/tribune\\_art1.html](http://www.invent.org/E+Z/content/heft-eng/tribune_art1.html)

## UNRISD and Training

*Introduction to Infrastructure Policies*, a professional reference published by the Institute of Chartered Financial Analysts of India, includes "Sustainable urban development in India: An inclusive perspective", by Darshini Mahadevia, chapter two of the new volume, *From Unsustainable to Inclusive Cities*, edited by David Westendorff (UNRISD, 2004).

An online communication rights learning initiative organized by the World Association for Christian Communication—Latin America is using *Communicating in the Information Society*, edited by Bruce Girard and Seán Ó Siochrú (UNRISD, 2003).

## UNRISD Staff Outreach

### Yusuf Bangura

— was a member of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Board of Experts that selected papers on

“Good governance practices for the promotion of human rights” for an international conference in the Republic of Korea.

— chaired a session on conflict and recovery at the UNU-WIDER conference, Making Peace Work, in Helsinki, Finland.

#### Nicolas Bovay

— wrote and delivered a statement on “Women and human rights” at the United Nations Sub-Commission on Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland.

#### Kléber B. Ghimire

— gave a seminar on “Rural youth, future of agriculture and social mobilization” at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands.

— made a presentation on “Civil society movements and the market question” at the Faculty of Economics, University of Urbino, Italy.

#### Huck-ju Kwon

— gave a seminar on “Social policy in a development context” at the Institut universitaire d’études du développement (IUED) in Geneva, Switzerland.

— gave a seminar on “Transforming the developmental welfare state in East Asia” at the Institute of Applied Social Science, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom.

#### Thandika Mkandawire

— wrote “Disempowering new democracies and the persistence of poverty”, in Max Spoor (ed.), *Globalization, Poverty and Conflict: A Critical ‘Development’ Reader*, (Kluwer Academic Publishers/Springer-Verlag, 2004).

— presented his paper, “Africa in the 21st century: Integration and renaissance”, at the First Conference

of Intellectuals from Africa and the Diaspora, organized by the African Union in Dakar, Senegal.

#### Shahra Razavi

— presented her paper, “Gender and the silences of contemporary social policy debates” at the IDEAs, ECLAC, FLACSO and UNAM workshop, Constraints to Development and Strategic Alternatives in the Current Conjunction, in Mexico City.

— was an external referee for *Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*, the final report of the United Nations Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality.

#### Cecilia Ugaz

— chaired a session of a training seminar for Europe-based Peruvian diplomats on the promotion of investments, organized by UNCTAD and the Ministry of External Affairs of Peru in Geneva, Switzerland.

#### Peter Utting

— wrote “New approaches to TNC regulation: The potential and limits of multistakeholder initiatives”, published in German as “Neue Ansätze zur Regulierung Transnationaler Unternehmen: Potenzial und Grenzen von Multistakeholder-Initiativen”, in Tanja Brühl et al. (eds.), *Unternehmen in der Weltpolitik: Politiknetzwerke, Unternehmensregeln und die Zukunft des Multilateralismus* (Dietz Publishers, 2004).

— presented his paper, “Learning from networks”, at a planning workshop held to establish Globethicsnet in Bossey, Switzerland.



UNRISD is an autonomous agency engaging in multidisciplinary research on the social dimensions of contemporary development problems. Its work is guided by the conviction that, for effective development policies to be formulated, an understanding of the social and political context is crucial. The Institute attempts to provide governments, development agencies, grassroots organizations and scholars with a better understanding of how development policies and processes of economic, social and environmental change affect different social groups. Working through an extensive network of national research centres, UNRISD aims to promote original research as well as strengthen research capacity in developing countries.

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# The Challenges of Equality and Difference

Elizabeth Jelin

Anniversaries are always occasions for stocktaking, for recalling memories of the past, for reflecting on what has happened to aspirations and projects. The future we hoped for in the past is now the present. Such occasions are also times when people refresh and develop new ambitions for a “future” future.

Ten years have passed since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 20 years since the conference in Nairobi, 30 years since Mexico City. Over time, these and other world conferences and summits (on environment, human rights, population, social development, racism and so on) have emerged as important arenas for debating and confronting different worldviews about equality and justice; for planning to redress past injustices; for building bridges, alliances and partnerships among various actors seeking to fulfil shared aspirations and strategies for a better world—a world with declining inequalities, fewer people living in poverty, less environmental damage and less oppression.

During these years, there has been a growing recognition of the need to carry out rigorous social, political, cultural and economic research on issues of inequalities, on historical trends in gender relations, on shifts in the global political economy, on the differential impact of such major societal processes (including a consideration of violence and war) on women and on diverse subordinate populations. *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World*, the UNRISD report prepared for the tenth anniversary of the Beijing conference, allows a deeper understanding of such trends in the world today, and is proof of the significant ways in which the results of serious research can make a major contribution to political and policy debates.

From the perspective of women’s rights, the first scene on the stage of contemporary global public action was played in 1975. The United Nations called for an International Women’s Year, and convened the first conference on women in Mexico City where government delegates were to discuss issues related to the “advancement” of women. Outside the official conference, however, something else was happening: a diverse array of women’s movements and collectives were coming together to express their own hopes and wishes, to demand a place for their own voice in deciding their fate rather than having well-intentioned “others” decide it. Many governmental and international officials may have considered such action outrageous.

Much has changed in the world in the past 30 years. The presence of women in deciding goals and policies for women became standard, accepted and legitimate. Existing international geopolitical arrangements shifted and, often, broke down entirely. New regional arrangements emerged. The political economy of neoliberal restructuring and market reforms gained ascendancy, with the effects of widening gaps and increasing inequalities of all sorts now recognized. These last decades also saw democratization forces calling for widening citizenship and for the empowerment of a range of social actors. Indeed, the demands of the excluded and the “voiceless” are increasingly couched in terms of rights and entitlements, empowerment and participation.

The process has never been linear or easy. It has involved the convergence of the evolving human rights paradigm—which grew in importance during the late 1970s and early 1980s, in part as an international solidarity response to dictatorial regimes in Latin America—and the concerns for the fate of significant categories of the world’s population in historically and structurally determined subordinate positions: women in all societies, indigenous peoples, and ethnically and racially defined “minorities”. Feminist thinking and the feminist movement have played a major role in this paradigmatic shift.

Introducing the language and understandings of human rights to oppressed, segregated and subordinated groups has entailed major debates and conflicts about ideas and ideals; debates that remain, to this day and throughout the world, the subject of dilemmas and politics.

There is something inherently paradoxical in the process. Recognition of “the right to have rights” as the basic human right implies recognition and acceptance of fundamental equality in the human condition. It therefore sets humanity the goal of working toward this ultimate equality of all the world’s human beings. Yet who sets the standard of equality to be achieved? Is it the powerful of yesterday and today? Only through the concurrent acknowledgment of human diversity and the right to bring to the public arena one’s own identity and form of life can this be achieved. Thus, demands for inclusion and equality by formerly subordinated and oppressed groups, particularly as these groups gain voice and are empowered, are at the same time demands for recognition of their diverse identities, of their own views and

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