

social development research
2005-2009
at unrisd



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RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Social Development Research at UNRISD 2005–2009

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Introduction

The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) re-examines its research agenda periodically, to ensure that projects are attuned to contemporary development trends and concerns, and that they form part of a coherent research strategy. The last revision took place in 1999 and culminated in the “2000+” agenda,¹ which refocused the Institute’s work on the theme of social policy. Through the “flagship” programme Social Policy and Development, research examined the effectiveness of state policies that aim to directly influence the welfare and security of diverse social groups, and the relationship between social policy and economic development. Four additional programmes addressed other important dimensions of social development: Democracy, Governance and Human Rights; Civil Society and Social Movements; Identities, Conflict and Cohesion; and Technology, Business and Society.

Since 2004, UNRISD has been engaged in a consultative process with its research networks and Board to design a research agenda for the 2005–2009 quinquennium.² This report identifies the main themes and issues that are likely to be the focus of UNRISD work in the coming years. The realities of funding and the demands for research from United Nations entities and other key users of UNRISD work mean that, over a five-year period, the content of the agenda may be subject to modifications. In order to implement research projects that address the issues raised in this document, it will be necessary for UNRISD to mobilize additional funding. In this connection, it should be noted that UNRISD is funded exclusively by voluntary contributions from governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), foundations and United Nations agencies. UNRISD receives no money from the United Nations general budget. Core funding comes from a small group of countries and is generally pledged on an annual basis, and project funding is raised on an ad hoc basis by the director and research staff.

Within the Institute’s broad remit to conduct research on social development, attention will focus, in particular, on social policy, poverty reduction and equity. An effort will be made to examine the reciprocal relationships between social, economic and political dimensions of development, and ways in which improvements in social institutions, social relations and social welfare affect not only human well-being, but also economic development and democracy.

The 2005–2009 agenda has three main objectives:

- to adjust research activities in response to global developments and scholarly debates, as well as gaps in knowledge that have emerged in the course of current research;
- to examine issues that are not being addressed adequately or sufficiently by research networks associated with the United Nations system; and
- to consolidate key aspects of the 2000+ agenda by expanding work under certain programmes, and by developing synergies between projects in related areas that had previously been carried out under different programmes.

¹ See UNRISD. 2000. *UNRISD 2000+: A Vision for the Future of the Institute*. UNRISD, Geneva.

² As part of this process, a two-day workshop was held in Geneva in November 2004. It was attended by 25 social scientists. Representatives from regional research networks, including the Latin American Social Science Research Council (CLACSO), the European Association of Development Institutes (EADI) and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) participated, as did scholars from universities in Ghana, Lebanon, Peru, South Africa, Switzerland and Thailand, and specialists from United Nations agencies and research institutions in Europe and the United States.

Research will be organized under six programme areas: Social Policy and Development; Democracy, Governance and Well-Being; Markets, Business and Regulation; Civil Society and Social Movements; Identities, Conflict and Cohesion; and Gender and Development. Work in these areas will be supplemented by research commissioned to feed into special events and activities organized by the Institute, such as conferences or flagship reports.

The following sections present outlines of the main programme areas and highlight key topics on the 2005–2009 research agenda. The table below provides an overview of these programmes and topics.

Before discussing in more depth the programmes and topics, it is important to situate them in the context of UNRISD's mandate and approach to research on social development issues, as well as development concerns and debates that currently preoccupy policy makers, activists and scholars.

UNRISD programme areas and topics, 2005–2009	
Programme areas	Topics
Social Policy and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institutions for social policy and poverty eradication - Financing social policy - Global social policy - Migration and social welfare - HIV/AIDS
Democracy, Governance and Well-Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organized groups and welfare development - Politics of poverty reduction - Decentralization and service provision - Social policy and transitions to democracy
Markets, Business and Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Privatization and commercialization of public services - Institutional dimensions of business regulation - Activism, corporate globalization and policy responses - Business and poverty reduction
Civil Society and Social Movements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transnational activism - Civil society engagement with the policy process - "Uncivil" movements - "Old" and "new" movements in comparative perspective - Social movements and inequality
Identities, Conflict and Cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Migration, generational change and segregation - Religious identity, socioeconomic change and conflict - Indigeneity, minorities and rights - Policy responses to horizontal inequalities
Gender and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political and social economy of care - Decentralization and gender equality - Gender dimensions of judicial reforms - Religion-based politics and gender equality

UNRISD's Approach to Social Development Research

The nature of the topics that make up the future programme reflects the broad definition of social development that UNRISD has always adopted.³ Social development should aim to enhance people's material well-being, social cohesion, participation and social justice. It is, therefore, as much about equity, empowerment and rights, as it is about social protection and poverty reduction. It requires not only resources and entitlements, but also transformations in social relations that discriminate against and marginalize certain groups, as well as improvements in the institutions of governance that manage collective concerns at different levels.

Several of the topics identified in the following sections relate directly to issues specified in the Bulletin of the United Nations Secretary-General that established the Institute over 40 years ago.⁴ UNRISD's mandate calls for research on the relationship between economic and social dimensions of development. In keeping with this orientation, research on poverty reduction, financing social policy, and privatization and commercialization of public services will examine both the social impacts of processes associated with economic growth and liberalization, as well as ways in which social and economic development can be mutually reinforcing. This focus on the relationship between different dimensions of development will be broadened by more systematic examination of the interconnections between democracy and economic and social development, including the ways in which democratization both affects, and is affected by, social policy and development.

The Institute's mandate also calls for research on specific social problems of concern to the United Nations system. In this regard, attention will focus on poverty reduction, HIV/AIDS, migration, youth marginalization, xenophobia and violent conflict. As a United Nations entity, UNRISD must engage in policy-relevant research, examining the positive and negative ways in which public policies affect social development. Work under all six programme areas will examine the effectiveness of different government and international policies and policy regimes in promoting well-being and social cohesion. This perspective is particularly explicit in the research on social policy; identities, conflict and cohesion; and the political and social economy of care.

UNRISD research gives great importance to the linkages between global, regional, national and local contexts and levels of policy intervention. In the contemporary era of globalization, this type of analysis has become even more pertinent. It will continue to feature prominently in research on global and regional dimensions of social policy, and their implications for public policy and social development at the national level. It will also inform work on international migration, decentralization and transnational activism.

³ See UNRISD. 2003. *Research for Social Change*. UNRISD, Geneva.

⁴ United Nations. 1963. *Secretary-General's Bulletin*, ST/SGB/126. United Nations, New York, 1 August.

The focus on policies is, of course, part of a broader concern with institutional dimensions of development. Research will therefore examine how traditional institutional arrangements aimed at promoting human welfare and equality are faring in contexts of globalization, economic liberalization and democratization. It will also analyse the effectiveness of new institutional arrangements associated, for example, with social policy, civil society participation in policy-making processes, decentralization and judicial reform, and the regulation of markets and business.

Some of the work identified below, for example that on global social policy and governance reform, follow in the tradition of critical thinking that characterizes UNRISD research. This often involves questioning the conventional wisdom that underpins mainstream policy, as well as the latest innovations in development discourse and “knowledge”. It also involves examining the politics of institutional reform. Of particular importance is the need to understand processes of policy change in the context of shifts in the constellation of social and political forces, as well as the role of social mobilization, participation and empowerment in improving the situation of the needy and oppressed. This approach will inform research on the politics of social development, the social regulation of business, and social movements. Within the United Nations system the analysis of such aspects is often not explicit, and it is therefore important to take advantage of the space for critical inquiry that UNRISD enjoys on account of its autonomous status.

Contemporary Development Concerns

Since the late 1990s when the 2000–2005 UNRISD research agenda was designed, patterns of social development have been profoundly affected by various social and economic trends, as well as transformations in global politics and the policy and institutional environment. A decade after the World Summit for Social Development, the world's social situation appears more complex and contradictory. Gains related to a few specific social indicators confront the dire reality that global levels of extreme poverty and employment—two of the main concerns at the Copenhagen summit—show little improvement if any, while various forms of inequality continue to rise. There has been a revival of interest in poverty reduction and social policy, and governments in some regions have increased social spending. But this has often occurred in a context where the roll-back of the state, fiscal “reform”, and the privatization and commercialization of public services have restricted the coverage and quality of basic services and social security. Economic liberalization and commodification continue apace in a context where the institutional arrangements to mitigate the perverse effects of markets remain weak. The social situation of women appears highly contradictory: gains that are apparent in relation to the presence of women in the public domain, education and the labour market do not seem to be reflected in substantial improvements in women's well-being and livelihood security. Indeed, in many contexts they have been accompanied by increasing workloads and precarious forms of employment. Patterns of social integration—the other agenda item at Copenhagen—are shifting in problematic ways in contexts that will be the object of study by UNRISD, namely growing inequality, mass migration, marginalized youth, HIV/AIDS, violent conflict, the resurgence of identity politics, and new forms of collective mobilization. Future research, like that of the past, will continue to map the contours of this changing reality.

Over the past decade, policy-making circles have increasingly recognized the importance of institutions; this has been a potentially positive development. It has occurred to address the failure of policies that had focused on “getting the prices right”, and in response to the rediscovery that markets are embedded in institutional arrangements that reduce transaction costs and enhance social and economic stability. But this new focus, which is central to the “good governance” agenda associated with the post-Washington consensus, is problematic, not least because institutional reforms intended to promote and realize rights often place greater emphasis on securing property rights, and free trade and investment, than on social, cultural, civil and political rights. While there is renewed interest in the role of the state in social development, the task of strengthening the regulatory and administrative capacity of government institutions is often undermined by macro-policy regimes and conditionality.

A shortcoming of the “new institutionalism”, which will be addressed in work on global social policy, gender dimensions of welfare and care, and the regulation of business, has been the reluctance of policy makers to recognize the need for reform of the neoliberal macroeconomic regime. As past UNRISD and other research has shown, this regime has

imposed major constraints on social development.⁵ There are also concerns that new institutional arrangements and governance reforms are not fundamentally changing the nature of technocratic decision making and the “one right way” approach that characterized structural adjustment and economic stabilization programmes in the 1980s and 1990s. Some quarters have called for both greater “policy coherence” at the level of international institutions and donor governments, and greater “policy space” for developing country governments to design and implement policies that are more sensitive to regional, national and local realities and priorities. UNRISD research in various programmes will consider such concerns, as well as how concepts of policy coherence and policy space might be applied in practice.

The revival of interest in good governance and processes of democratization has provided a context conducive to “rights-based” approaches to development. Some interpretations of rights-based development focus attention on not only normative aspects related to human rights and international law, but also issues of participation and empowerment—that is, the need to increase the capacity of the disadvantaged to exert claims on those in positions of power. More attention is also being paid to policy intervention and institutional reform at multiple levels—or “multilayered governance”—as well as the role of non-state actors in social policy and market regulation. Social policy is being increasingly shaped at global and regional levels, and decentralization has transferred some authority and responsibility for social development to the local level. The task of “embedding liberalism” through regulatory arrangements that reassert social control over markets and global corporations is being assumed to a greater extent by various supranational entities and processes, as well as by forms of private and non-governmental authority, including transnational corporations (TNCs), business associations, NGOs and public-private partnerships. These developments present a complex pattern of opportunities, constraints and contradictions that will be examined, in particular, through research on global social policy, civil society engagement with the policy process, and business regulation. Examining these new arrangements in historical and comparative perspective will allow an assessment of their relative capacity to sustain commitments associated with social protection and redistribution.

Changes in global politics have affected patterns of social development in diverse ways. Economic liberalization has been accompanied by political liberalization, reflected in the spread of formal democratic systems and institutions that promote participation and accountability. In relation to social development, instruments such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) have been created to institutionalize participation in policy making at the national level. International and bilateral development agencies, as well as an increasing number of global corporations, all recognize the need for greater participation, multistakeholder dialogue and public-private partnerships. Serious questions arise, however, regarding who participates, relative levels of influence, and whether such models effectively address concerns associated with technocratic decision making, policy conditionality and power. Research under the programme areas Democracy, Governance

⁵ See, for example, the following UNRISD reports: *States of Disarray: The Social Effects of Globalization* (1995); *Visible Hands: Taking Responsibility for Social Development* (2000); and *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World* (2005).

and Well-Being, and Markets, Business and Regulation, as well as on civil society engagement with policy processes, will pay particular attention to these issues.

Recent years have also witnessed changes in patterns of contestation, social mobilization and civil society activism. Research under several programme areas will examine the resurgence of religious movements, the strengthening of transnational activism, and the changing dynamics of interest group politics related to social policy. The trend whereby actors and organizations associated with “anti-globalization” causes are directing more attention to the construction of alternatives and concrete reform proposals may also be examined in work on transnational activism and the role of business in poverty reduction. Given the tendency of much international research related to civil society to focus heavily on issues of “agency”, it is also important also to consider structural dimensions of social change. In this regard, research will examine transformations in social relations (for example, those related to class, ethnicity and gender), and collective responses, in the contexts of inequality and marginalization that relate to globalization and liberalization.

Following a decade of United Nations summits and mobilization by social movements in response to globalization and neoliberal reform, there had emerged, by the turn of the millennium, a more comprehensive agenda that addressed multiple dimensions of development. In the “post-9/11” world, there are concerns that this agenda is under threat. Trends associated with unilateralism, militarization, terrorism, and new doctrines such as “military humanism” and pre-emptive war, have major social, economic, political and cultural implications. Important in this regard, for example, are new patterns of budgetary and aid allocation and delivery, the infringement of civil liberties, changes in migration patterns and migrants’ rights, the privatization of security, the revival of counter-movements associated with fundamentalist religion, and geopolitics that reinforces the spread of neoliberalism. Such aspects are particularly relevant to research on identities, conflict and cohesion, as well as on social policy.

There are also concerns that the global development agenda is being whittled down by the narrower focus on poverty reduction that characterizes the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the shift in policy priorities and conditionality that favours “targeting” as opposed to universal provision of basic services. While such approaches point to a renewed concern with, and political commitment to, poverty reduction, questions have arisen regarding their actual or potential contribution to social development. Are issues of equality, redistribution and empowerment being sidelined, or being addressed more at the level of discourse than practice? Are approaches to targeting based on a naive assessment of the institutional arrangements required for effective welfare provisioning? And does the “new development agenda” ignore key contradictions associated with the dominant macroeconomic regime? Such questions are to be addressed in research on democracy and governance, gender and development, and social policy.

Social Policy and Development

From a development perspective, the goal of social policy is to promote universal social protection and equity. During the past three decades, such a view has been marginalized by policy approaches that emphasize safety nets and the targeting of vulnerable groups. In recent years, UNRISD work in this field has looked at ways in which social policy can be instrumental to economic development while maintaining its intrinsic goals of social protection and equity. This will continue to be an important focus of the Institute's research.

A core component of research will examine *institutions for social policy and poverty eradication*. Particular attention will be paid to how the effectiveness of such institutions varies under different types of policy regime or models of development, to the synergies between economic and social policy, and to institutional arrangements that ensure that political commitments and policies associated with redistribution are sustained. Important lessons from the more successful welfare regimes are that social policy must be concerned with the redistributive effects of economic policy; ensure protection from the vagaries of the market and the changing circumstances of age; enhance the productive potential of members of society; and reconcile the burden of reproduction with that of other social tasks, enabling responsibilities for reproduction to be shared. Different welfare regimes place different weights on redistribution, protection, production and reproduction, but all aspects must be addressed. There are concerns that this broad remit is being undermined by contemporary policy approaches that have reduced the scope of social policy and promoted a one-size-fits-all perspective.

An inquiry into institutions for social policy needs to examine the administrative and regulatory capacity of the state. This is particularly important in the current context where there is renewed interest in the role of the state, but where state institutions continue to be deprived of essential resources. It is also important in relation to the dominant policy approach that has tended to underestimate the administrative requirements for effective targeting and, only belatedly, directed more attention to "capacity building". Exploratory work will be carried out on measuring government commitments to social policy through a social policy index that ranks governments according to expenditure in different social policy fields. In coordination with work under the programme on Markets, Business and Regulation, research will also examine the role of private and non-state actors in social protection, and the implications of new regulatory arrangements for social policy and state capacity. Other institutional and political dimensions of social policy will be examined under the programme on Democracy, Governance and Well-Being.

During the 1990s problems of poverty received increased attention. The so-called "second generation" adjustment programmes insisted on a "poverty reduction" component. At the international level, a number of development goals—the MDGs—were agreed upon. This was also the period of economic liberalization and globalization. Although it is widely recognized that the link between macroeconomic regimes and national goals for poverty reduction or eradication is mediated by social policy, there is no conceptual or policy framework to understand and promote the role of social policy. Social policy in its

comprehensive form addresses issues of production, protection and redistribution that are the common concerns of macroeconomic management and antipoverty strategies. It thus provides the “missing link” because it not only enhances the human capabilities essential to economic progress, but also determines the distribution of the fruits of such progress and, consequently, how quickly poverty is reduced.

It is remarkable that today’s debates on poverty draw little on the historical and contemporary experiences of “successful” countries or “models” of development. Such an analysis reveals that they often exploit the synergies of policies related to capital accumulation, social protection and strategic integration into the world market. The combination of socially sensitive economic policies, responsive governance and universal provisioning of social services has been key to such experiences. This differs sharply from the new thrust toward means testing and targeting, and the insulation of economic policies from the social demands of full employment and equality. It is important to carry out research on poverty reduction under different models of development to examine both the relative effectiveness of different policy regimes in tackling problems of poverty, and the lessons that can be drawn from past experiences to inform current strategies. UNRISD work on poverty reduction will be organized under a flagship project that will involve all UNRISD programmes.

The capacity of states to implement social policies has been greatly affected by changes in fiscal policy. With increased liberalization of financial capital and trade, governments have to be competitive and allocate resources efficiently. Taxation, which has been the main source of government revenue to finance social policies, has been put under pressure. In recent years there has been a renewed interest in how to finance social policies on the basis of principles of both efficiency and equity. Research on *financing social policy* will thus examine one of the most important interfaces between social and economic policy. Institutions for financing social policy must not only generate sufficient revenues, they must also ensure stable and sustainable resource flows. Furthermore, they should be arranged in a way that is conducive to achieving goals of democracy and economic development. What can be learned from past experience? What challenges confront the achievement of such objectives?

Such questions will be examined in relation to different ways of financing social policies, including systems of levy collection at both local and national levels. If not working properly, or if large sectors of the economy remain outside the tax system as a result of informalization or illegality, the implementation of social programmes will inevitably suffer. Another example is the payment of royalties by extractive industries, which has become a major issue in contexts of permissive fiscal policies and transfer pricing. Recent attempts by some governments to impose royalties offer important lessons about the scope for replicating successful initiatives and how they might be linked to social policy. Occupationally based social insurance schemes can also play an important role in national development projects, but they are often confined to particular industries. The challenge is how to achieve a universal social protection system while maintaining the developmental credentials of social policy. Both social funds and pension funds are coming under pressure to be privatized. What are the implications of these trends for social protection and economic

development? Many countries rely on global sources of finance, such as overseas development assistance and remittances, to support their social policies. In a context where the volume, allocation and sustainability of such sources of funding are changing, it is important to explore how aid and remittances influence social welfare systems.

Social policy has been profoundly affected by globalization, in terms of both supranational processes and international policies. Two aspects of the relationship between globalization and social policy that have received limited attention are the implications of the emergence of a global social policy, and the relationship between international migration and social welfare, particularly in developing countries.

The international regime associated with globalization is not only framing the limits and possibilities of national social policy and development, it is also engendering a *global social policy*. This is implicit in the emerging regulatory and normative order through adherence to new international treaties and conventions, and responses to the international discourse on social rights. It is explicit in a number of social policy commitments related, for example, to poverty reduction, and also implicit in trade and investment regimes. How are social redistribution, social regulation and social rights being shaped at the global and regional levels through various types of international policies and institutions? What is the impact of global and regional social policy orders on national social policy? And are global, regional and national policy regimes working synergistically in the same direction, or are they being designed and implemented in a fragmented and incoherent way?

The considerable research that exists on international migration has tended to focus on the economic, political and cultural implications of migration, and the situation of migrants in the developed countries. Less is known about the relationship between *migration and social welfare*, particularly in developing countries. Migration is less and less a definitive movement; it involves instead a constant flux of people, resources, ideas and political pressure between countries and various groups. It also involves new trends such as feminization, illegality, temporariness and South-South movement. How are such developments affecting social service provisioning and people's access to health care and education in the public and private spheres? More specifically, how is social welfare affected by remittances and changes in the quantity and quality of human resources and care providers in contexts of both out-migration and the return of men and women? And how does the experience of migration affect people's aspirations, expectations and demands associated with social policy and services in their home countries?

The crucial role of social policy has been amplified in the context of the *HIV/AIDS* pandemic. Efforts to combat the disease have been oriented above all toward finding biomedical and behavioural solutions. While such approaches are of vital importance, there is growing concern about the deeper socioeconomic and political roots of the pandemic. Its persistence and increasing incidence in less powerful and economically marginalized communities signal the need for continued assessment of policy and practices relating to HIV/AIDS.

Democracy, Governance and Well-Being

Democracy currently enjoys the status of a core value in the discourse of the international development community, where a consensus seems to have emerged that democracy improves the quality of public policies. It offers prospects for better citizen participation in the formulation of government policies and opportunities to hold officials accountable, greater transparency in policy making, and conflict resolution through constitutional, non-violent, means. However, the performance of many countries in promoting basic rights, public services and the well-being of citizens is inadequate. Many new democracies retain elements of authoritarian practices and seem unresponsive to voters' interests. Scholars and practitioners are increasingly advancing the view that it is not enough for countries to be democratic; the substance or quality of their democracies is equally important.

Democratization in the 1990s raised questions about the authoritarian styles of policy making that underpinned adjustment programmes in the 1980s. Governments and multilateral institutions now have to reckon with the potential power of civic groups and parliaments in reaching agreements on economic reforms. Imposition of policies can no longer guarantee desired outcomes. However, belief in the efficacy of top-down methods of policy making did not change immediately. UNRISD research examined one of the early responses, which was to depoliticize economic policy making through strengthening the role of multilateral financial institutions, private international capital and donor agencies, and insulating technocrats and economic programmes from effective scrutiny. While technocratic styles of policy making are prominent in certain countries, they nevertheless confront the reality that social and economic policy is not simply determined by technocratic choice. Its substance is strongly influenced by the constellation of power and the dynamics of development.

This programme area seeks to understand the conditions under which democratic regimes can improve the well-being of citizens. It aims to answer the following questions: What are the intrinsic properties of democracy that can facilitate or constrain effective social development? Under what conditions can democratic regimes deliver adequate social protection to citizens? How do different democracies promote the well-being of citizens? And what role can social policies play in consolidating complex democratic transitions? Two defining features of democracy are the periodic renewal of the mandates of leaders through competitive elections, and a set of basic rights of expression and organization that facilitate the exercise of political choice. In order to understand how these features of democracy can provide a basis for delivering good social outcomes, the research will focus on four areas: economic reform, organized groups and welfare development in middle-income democracies; political competitiveness, public expenditures and pro-poor policies in low-income democracies; the potential and limits of decentralization and public sector reforms in making services serve low-income groups; and the role of social policies in consolidating complex transitions to democracy.

Democracy had a relatively strong redistributive element during early periods of democratization when organized groups strategically used the vote to influence public

policy reforms. Large-scale economic development produced an industrial working class, which developed a capacity for self-organization through trade unions that bargained for improved incomes, working conditions and social protection. Additional institutions, such as social pacts or corporatism, in which organized groups played a critical role, later strengthened democracies' support for effective welfare development in advanced industrial societies. However, the link between *organized groups and welfare development* weakened as more countries with large agrarian and informal sectors became democratic and economies experienced deregulation. The current phase of democratization has coincided with the end of the long period of postwar economic growth. Economies have experienced large fiscal deficits, and high rates of inflation and unemployment; and calls for welfare state retrenchment as well as residualism and targeting in social provision have become prominent.

Despite deregulation and the close links between economic development and welfare outcomes, there are significant variations in social policy efforts in countries at similar levels of development, including high-income ones. Some countries have been able to obtain fairly high scores in health and education indexes with low levels of per capita income, while others have failed to convert high levels of income into commensurate levels of human development. This suggests that it is important to examine non-income factors to explain variations in welfare efforts across democracies. These non-income factors may be the changing nature of labour markets and unionization under market reforms; relations between interest groups, political parties and policy makers; the welfare orientation of parties in government; and the competitive nature of political systems. Work in this area will focus on new democracies classified as having attained a medium-income level of development. Such countries have demonstrated levels of welfare provision beyond basic service provision.

Poverty reduction has become a central feature of the international development agenda. The lending programmes of the international financial institutions now require recipient governments in low-income countries to develop strategies that will reduce the incidence of poverty in their societies. Bilateral donors have also pledged to focus their aid and debt relief on countries perceived to be pursuing good poverty reduction strategies. The Millennium Summit adopted the Millennium Declaration that commits governments to halve the level of poverty and hunger by 2015. Since then, many international initiatives, such as the Doha Round on international trade, the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, the United Kingdom-funded Africa Commission and the G8 initiative on debt relief have reaffirmed the antipoverty focus of international development. This policy shift may be linked in part to the failure of previous adjustment policies to free low-income countries from the debt trap and economic stagnation. The report of the UN Millennium Project, *Investing in Development*,⁶ stresses that globalization has brought benefits to many developing countries, and that much of the effort to fight poverty will have to focus on the least developed countries, whose economies have not grown sufficiently in the last decade and where poverty levels may be rising.

⁶ UN Millennium Project. 2005. *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals*. Earthscan, London.

Central to the new poverty focus is a concern for good governance, including sound public sector management, the rule of law, human rights and civic engagement with the policy process. In the new so-called global partnership for development, recipient governments, not multilateral agencies or donors, are expected to be the prime movers of poverty reduction strategies, which will form the basis for adjustment lending, increased aid and debt relief. And civic groups are to participate in the formulation and implementation of poverty reduction policies. Despite the recognition of governance issues in antipoverty strategies, limited attention has been paid to the *politics of poverty reduction* – in particular, the kinds of political incentives and arrangements that spur low-income democracies to adopt pro-poor policies. Evidence of strong political budget cycles in new democracies suggests that policy makers are responsive to voters, and may also signal a need for redistributive policies. However, strong cycles do not necessarily translate into effective pro-poor or welfare policies. The composition of public expenditures varies across countries, and the non-poor may capture a disproportionate share of the benefits.

Work in this area will seek to understand the sources, fluctuating levels and composition of public expenditures; governance conditionalities attached to external financing of antipoverty strategies; and pro-poor social outcomes in low-income democracies. It will aim to answer the following questions: Why do some low-income democracies pursue effective pro-poor policies, while others do not? Under what conditions can low-income democracies be made to serve the interests of the poor? Donor pressure or conditionality may not be sufficient to account for variations in the effectiveness of pro-poor policy initiatives. The political competitiveness and public pressure that may produce redistributive or pro-poor policies also need to be studied, as these may be weaker in low-income democracies. Competitiveness refers to issues related to alternations in government; the extent to which individuals, even in seemingly homogenous groups, distribute their votes across parties; and the ease of entry of non-established parties, especially those with a welfare or pro-poor orientation, in the political arena and in policy-making institutions. Voters and civic groups may behave differently in different social and political settings, which may affect capacities or decisions to hold leaders to account.

Democratization has often been accompanied by decentralization as governments and donor agencies grapple with the problem of how to ensure that public services reach the poor. This involves the devolution of powers and responsibilities from central to local government for services such as education, health, sanitation, waste management and water. By bringing government closer to where services are consumed, it is believed, decentralization will enable the public to hold government providers accountable, ensure that services meet the needs of the population, and facilitate better mobilization of local knowledge, resources and labour. However, decentralization is often part of a wider set of management reforms that seek to promote market competition in the organization of the public sector and the delivery of services. It is assumed that promoting more competition in service provision can make service providers more sensitive to the needs of clients. Contracting out of services and direct “empowerment” of users with public funds to buy services from private providers are some of the more common features of these reforms at the level of local government. They raise questions about the links between *decentralization, service provision and responsiveness*. To what extent can user groups improve the accountability of private and public providers of

services? If users rely on public funds to buy services, how effective can elected governments be in monitoring and enforcing contractual arrangements for use of funds and supply of services? In what ways have contracting-out arrangements changed the relations of accountability between voters and officials at the local level? And to what extent can voters compel local officials to make contracted-out services serve the poor? Work on these issues will be coordinated with that on gender dimensions of decentralization, which will be carried out under the Gender and Development programme.

Social policies can affect the development of democracy. They can contribute to its consolidation as well as improve its quality. Consolidation and quality are not the same, although regimes have to be consolidated before their quality can be improved. A democracy can be consolidated at a very low level of welfare or income security, as the examples of many new democracies seem to suggest. However, no developing country democracy that was consolidated in the second wave of democratization (1945–1970) is in the category of countries having low human development. Democratic consolidation involves behavioural and attitudinal changes in which the overwhelming majority of citizens uphold the intrinsic values and procedures of democracy in settling differences. Several factors are generally identified as helping consolidation, including quality of civil society, degree of consensus among elites on the rules of contestation and alternation of power, and development of an effective bureaucracy and the rule of law.

What role has social policy played in the consolidation of democracy? It is not easy to separate out the effects of social welfare provision on democratic consolidation from issues such as incomes, employment and economic growth. Some correlations have been established between levels of income and democratic consolidation; and income distribution, capital mobility and democratic consolidation. One may hypothesize that social policies that improve the security of the overwhelming majority of citizens have the following effects: they may improve social solidarity (a cornerstone of citizenship), lock in disadvantaged groups to the democratic regime by undermining revolutionary or violent alternatives, weaken clientelist social relations, and enhance 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. Work on *social policy and transitions to democracy* will focus on complex transitions in which social policy has played a crucial role in resolving differences and legitimizing the democratic regime. Complex transitions often involve negotiated political pacts and may demand attention to redistributive or social protection policies. They may include situations marked by high levels of ideological polarization; racial or ethnic polarization; and transitions to market economies with high social costs. Countries mired in protracted conflicts where political change has altered the structure of opportunities between groups may benefit from the findings generated by such a study.

Markets, Business and Regulation

State-market relations have undergone profound changes in recent decades as a result of policy and institutional reforms related to economic liberalization, privatization and “good governance”. The implications of these reforms for social well-being, equity and democracy are profound. The privatization and commercialization of basic services, for example, raises serious questions of access and affordability for low-income groups. Business enterprises, ranging from large TNCs to cooperatives, are engaging more proactively in poverty reduction efforts through public-private partnerships, corporate social responsibility (CSR), fair trade schemes and other initiatives involving poor communities and social groups. Increasing reliance on corporate self-regulation and non-governmental regulatory authority has brought new actors and institutions into the process of regulatory design and implementation, but it has also had the effect of shielding TNCs from mainstream democratic politics and oversight bodies, as well as trade unions. Such trends have prompted or been promoted by various forms of contestation, with certain social movements, civil society organizations (CSOs) and political parties calling for greater corporate accountability, “fair trade” as opposed to “free trade”, stricter regulatory controls over privatized services or re-nationalization.

To understand the impact of regulatory reforms in relation to social protection, equity and well-functioning markets, it is important to examine not only issues of institutional design and administrative capacity, but also the ideological and political context in which reforms take place. Such aspects help explain whether regulation is fundamentally geared toward efficiency or equity objectives, as well as the effectiveness and sustainability of regulatory institutions. Many regulatory arrangements seem to pull in different directions and serve different interests. Some are components of the new institutionalism associated with neoliberalism, which has emphasized rules to protect property rights, “free” trade and investment regimes, administrative arrangements aimed at improving efficiency, as well as the deregulation of labour markets. Some relate to attempts to “embed” liberalism by ensuring that the socially perverse effects of markets and business activities are minimized by state regulation, CSR, public-private partnerships and forms of “civil regulation” involving NGOs and multistakeholder entities. Others are part of “alternative globalization” agendas, which emphasize not only stricter rules governing foreign direct investment and corporate accountability, but also the downsizing of corporate power, as well as institutional arrangements promoting various forms of solidarity economy. Although there has been a revival of interest in the role of regulatory institutions, relatively limited attention has been focused on how reforms impact different interest groups, and the ideology and politics underpinning regulatory reform.

Building on past UNRISD work on the commercialization and privatization of water and health services, new public management, and the potential and limits of voluntary initiatives associated with CSR, future research will examine the implications for social development of changes in state-market-society relations, in particular the social, political and developmental dimensions of recent trends and initiatives associated with privatization, business regulation and the proactive engagement of the private sector in poverty reduction.

The ongoing *privatization and commercialization of public services* has major implications for social development. Particularly important is the question of how privatization has impacted access to and affordability of water, health and education services, especially in relation to poorer sections of the community. How might social policies and regulation be better designed, taking into account both equity and efficiency objectives? While the transfer of state assets to the private sector and the introduction of market principles into public service provisioning continue apace, there is growing recognition that the early phase of privatization and commercialization of basic services, such as health care and drinking water, disregarded crucial regulatory and political questions. In the best of cases, attention was focused on technical and organizational aspects of regulation—setting prices and quantity produced, specifying market entry and exit conditions, creating administrative bodies, etc. Less attention was paid to three important aspects: first, governance of the regulatory process—that is, the way to put transparent and predictable regulatory systems in place and sustain them over time; second, state capacity needed to switch from the traditional role of service provider toward actor and facilitator in the regulatory process; and third, social and political contestation. In certain societies where state regulation is ineffective, cultural norms and social relations have served to mitigate the perverse effects of privatization and commercialization of health services at the local level. Very little is known, however, about the way in which the impacts of commercialization and privatization vary in different social and cultural settings.

The process of privatization has involved not only the transfer of state assets to private enterprises, but also the rise of private regulatory authority and corporate self-regulation associated with voluntary initiatives that aim to minimize corporate malpractice and improve the social, environmental and human rights record of companies. In recent years such approaches have been complemented by others that involve a more prominent role for public and civil society organizations. NGOs are taking a lead in various regulatory initiatives, trade unions are engaging in new forms of regulatory action, and state and international organizations are promoting these and other initiatives. There is also considerable interest in forms of “co-regulation”, or multistakeholder approaches, where a combination of business interests, CSOs, and governmental and multilateral institutions collaborate in setting and implementing standards. Furthermore, there have been demands for greater corporate accountability, which involve a hardening of voluntary initiatives and the use of legalistic approaches to hold TNCs to account through monitoring, reporting and sanctions for non-compliance with agreed standards.

These new modalities of business regulation have generated considerable debate as to their social, developmental and governance implications. As the menu of regulatory approaches and instruments expands, and as the line between public and private authority becomes increasingly blurred, research on the *institutional dimensions of business regulation* would help clarify the potential and limits of different initiatives and approaches in different economic sectors and societal settings. Do new regulatory actors—or traditional ones that are re-engaging in business regulation—have the capacity to assume these roles? This is particularly relevant in the context of institutional weakening that has affected some national governments, international agencies and trade unions in recent decades. As new modalities of privatized and non-governmental regulation develop, are they

complementing, reinforcing or undermining traditional institutions of labour protection involving state entities and trade unions? The expanding arena of dialogue and collaboration between civil society, business, state and intergovernmental organizations also raises important conceptual and political questions, not least the meaning of civil society, as corporate interests constitute themselves as CSOs and gain voice and influence in the public policy process, and as NGOs increasingly engage in commercial activities. Does the trend toward collaboration signal the end of confrontational forms of social regulation, as the mainstream discourse on CSR often suggests? And given the limited accountability of both corporations and NGOs, what are the implications of these trends for democratic governance? Is regulatory design part and parcel of technocratic governance, relatively isolated from democratic politics? To what extent are different actors from the global South participating in and shaping these new agendas?

It is particularly important to understand the politics of business regulation. Do proposals for regulatory reform have the backing of social and political forces that ensure that regulatory institutions actually have some teeth and are sustainable? The perception or reality of “corporate globalization” has given rise to new forms of social contestation targeting TNCs. Various campaigns and civil society networks are denouncing privatization and corporate malpractice, and are calling for corporate accountability and a renewed role for the state in the provision of basic services. While many civil society demands are resisted by organized business interests, some are accommodated by the mainstream CSR movement in which many global corporations and business associations actively participate. Research on *activism, corporate globalization and policy responses* will examine the relationship between social contestation associated with privatization, corporate malpractice and accountability, and the policy process, and how TNCs, political parties and governments are responding. Work in this area will be coordinated with research on civil society engagement with the policy process, to be carried out under the Civil Society and Social Movements programme.

Efforts to give globalization a human face, and to promote good governance and poverty reduction, have given rise to a range of initiatives involving the proactive engagement of business in poverty reduction efforts. This is particularly apparent in relation to what, in some industries, are increasing levels of corporate social welfare, anti-sweatshop initiatives, fair-trade schemes involving small and medium enterprises and cooperatives that pay premium prices to small producers, living wage initiatives that involve the payment of decent wages to workers, public-private partnerships associated with poverty reduction projects and programmes, and increased corporate giving for hunger eradication and community development. More recently, the attention of some scholars and United Nations entities has focused on ways in which companies can contribute to poverty alleviation by stimulating micro- and small enterprise activity, as well as through increased commodification and consumerism at the “bottom of the pyramid” – that is, among low-income groups and poor communities that account for the majority of the world’s population.

It is important to assess both the social and developmental implications of these initiatives and approaches. Research on *business and poverty reduction* needs to embrace two aspects. First, the effectiveness of particular initiatives in terms of the specific goals they set themselves. Can public-private partnerships be scaled up effectively to make a meaningful

contribution, and are they compatible with national development priorities and capacities? In a context where, for example, supply chains are becoming longer and there is greater reliance on subcontracting and homework, have the efforts of apparel and footwear companies to comply with the demands of the anti-sweatshop movement really made a difference? Have fair trade schemes effectively reduced the vulnerability of small agricultural producers? And are they sustainable given the niche status of markets for fair trade products, increasing competition from large firms in the fair trade arena, and in contexts of rising international commodity prices?

The second aspect concerns the effectiveness of business “proactivity” as a more general approach to poverty reduction. Such an assessment needs to consider not only the scale, impact and sustainability of particular initiatives, but also how they fare in relation to other approaches to poverty reduction centred, for example, on pro-poor macroeconomic policies, social policy, the strengthening of certain labour market institutions, micro- and small enterprise, and local development. An assessment of the effectiveness of business engagement in poverty reduction efforts needs to be contextualized. Is proactivity taking place in a policy and institutional environment that is conducive or hostile to poverty reduction, and how are business interests shaping that environment? Given the tendency of much analysis of these trends and initiatives to ignore history, it is important to revisit the past experience of attempts in various countries and regions to eradicate, for example, sweatshop conditions or to draw low-income groups into commodity relations, in order to see what can be learned about the policies, institutions and politics that have resulted in positive outcomes.

Civil Society and Social Movements

In the 1970s, UNRISD defined participation as “the organized efforts of the hitherto excluded to increase their control over resources and regulative institutions”. Such efforts, involving grassroots action, CSOs and social movements, play a crucial role in the politics of institutional reform and social transformation. But the potential for change associated with collective action often fails to be realized, and activism may yield unintended and contradictory effects from a development and governance perspective.

Given the scale and urgency of global socioeconomic problems, and the increasing scope for influencing policy through international networks, a new wave of global movements are becoming key actors on the global policy stage. Despite the “anti” label and confrontational image often associated with them, many of the leading activists and organizations place considerable emphasis on concrete proposals for change, as well as constructive engagement with mainstream political and development actors and institutions. Research on *transnational activism* will explore the complexities and potential for change associated with such movements. A set of studies is already under way to examine the structure and participatory practices of movements and international campaigns associated with debt relief, changes to international trade rules, global taxation, anti-corruption and fair trade. Of particular interest is how they interact with groups and organizations in developing countries, and their ability to construct global alliances. How, and to what extent, have national and local groups translated broad goals and objectives into concrete actions and plans?

While these movements and campaigns have proved to be quite effective in popularizing certain development issues, there are numerous underlying ambiguities in their claims and policy recommendations, and tensions with other approaches to institutional reform, that have not been carefully examined. This is particularly apparent in relation to the implicit or explicit critique of development strategies that emphasize the importance of high rates of growth, export-oriented growth and foreign direct investment. The tendency of many NGOs and networks to focus on single issues also complicates the task of developing the type of integrative perspective that national development strategies require, as well as an awareness of trade-offs and contradictions, and how they might be addressed. Given the umbrella nature of the so-called alternative globalization or social justice movement, it is important to examine the consistency of the proposals and demands of the multitude of organizations and networks involved, and the compatibility of their demands with the analyses and approaches of economists and other specialists concerned with equitable development but who may have very different perspectives on growth, trade and institutional reform.

The modalities and dynamics of *civil society engagement with mainstream policy-making processes* have undergone important modifications in recent years, particularly in contexts where governance is becoming more multilayered, where mainstream policy-making processes associated with development are more receptive to the idea of multistakeholder approaches, and where transnational movements increasingly recognize the need for engagement, collaboration, compromise and participation in broad-based alliances. What are the implications of these evolving patterns of engagement for institutional reform associated

with global democracy and social development? To what extent and how is the political and development establishment, including the United Nations system, attempting to accommodate key demands and policy proposals? And how do different patterns of accommodation and resistance affect movements' structure and long-term functioning?

Whether or not the proposals of social activists are given credence in mainstream policy-making circles relates partly to the legitimacy of the CSOs and networks backing those proposals. This issue is attracting considerable attention in a context where the good governance agenda has highlighted the importance of accountability. Serious questions have arisen about CSOs that claim to speak on behalf of developing countries, the poor, workers or other groups. Their legitimacy in this regard partly depends on the political channels that CSOs are able to utilize and the participation of the groups they claim to represent. Whereas in the past, major social movements tended to be linked to political parties, which acted as a conduit for wider claims and interests, the current social justice movement intentionally maintains a certain distance from political parties and electoral politics. At a time when dominant political parties have seen a decline in membership, the movement has attracted considerable public support. What are the implications of this for sustained popular mobilization and democracy in different contexts? In particular, do certain forms of transnational activism challenge the traditional roles of political parties?

Besides the dynamics of civil society engagement with the policy process and mainstream political institutions, there is the crucial question of how the internal functioning of CSOs and networks affects their efficacy in the long term. How, and to what extent, are the very organizations that frequently call for democracy and human rights themselves characterized by downward accountability, plurality of views and equal opportunities? And are they legitimate representatives of the groups on whose behalf they speak? How do these aspects vary across sociopolitical and cultural settings, and within different movements? In particular, when are specific participatory models and practices effective in producing more favourable outcomes and levels of support?

Research and policy debates have so far tended to focus mainly on the positive side of global civil society, seeing it as both a means to social progress and a desirable end in itself. Any attempt to gain deeper understanding of contemporary transnational activism must recognize the multiplicity of social movements, including those organizations and movements that are heavily influenced by antisocial structures and ideologies (xenophobia, religious extremism, criminal violence, terrorist activities, etc.). There is a lack of information on the structure, functioning, communication tools, activities, membership and popular support, leadership and patterns of alliance associated with these organizations and networks. One difficulty of conducting research on "*uncivil*" movements is defining which actions in civil society are "*uncivil*". To what extent do these movements differ from those of "*respectable*" groups in terms of overall structure, modus operandi and internal functioning, as well as their ability to effect political change?

The debate about the similarities and differences between so-called "*old*" and "*new*" social movements (for example, labour, peasant, civil rights versus environmental, consumer, human rights) that preoccupied scholars in the 1970s and 1980s has been reinvigorated by

the rise of movements that appear to have very different characteristics in terms of their philosophical and ideological leanings, social base, priority concerns, strategies and tactics. The growth of single-issue transnational networks, loosely networked “umbrella” movements and faith-based movements highlights the need for new understandings. There is a danger, however, that the focus on “the new” diverts attention from the ongoing relevance and vibrancy of “the old”, or the fact that the latter might be experiencing a resurgence. On the whole, how “new” are new movements in terms of their philosophical origin, tactics and strategies?

The comparative study of movements is important in order to address issues associated with “agency”, including organizational forms, relations with internal and external actors and stakeholders, governance structures, strategies and tactics. Another question relates to whether new movements have learned anything from old ones in terms of organizational structures and strategies, mobilization of resources, tensions between autonomy and funding sources, co-optation and modes of leadership. Comparative analysis of old and new movements can also shed light on their sustainability. Are new movements here to stay, or will they soon fade? What lies behind the apparent revival of trade union activism in several countries? Crucial issues in this regard relate to the relative strength and sustainability of funding sources, the nature of the membership base or constituency of support, and the capacity of movements to adapt to changing circumstances and to reform internal structures.

Since collective action is fundamentally about the struggle to transform redistributive structures of power and resources, a useful starting point for any comparative inquiry into the origins of movements and evolving forms of collective action is an examination of the relationship between *social movements and inequality*. Yet much of the present development debate seems to move away from the larger redistributive issues to poverty reduction and social safety nets. Furthermore, when issues of inequality are considered, they are often associated with one particular type. It is crucial, however, to recognize the multiple dimensions of inequality related to income, power, class, gender, ethnicity and race, as well as spatial, regional and global dimensions. In the context of globalization it is also important to understand the conditions under which people who feel marginalized and oppressed choose to respond through individual strategies—involving, for example, apathy or migration—or to engage in collective action.

From a policy-applied perspective, analysis of the structural context is crucial. An understanding of how movements originate may reveal that mainstream approaches are inadequate for dealing with certain forms of collective action. If the international development community attempts, for example, to explain the rise of certain fundamentalist movements (see *Identities, Conflict and Cohesion*) with simple explanations centred on poverty or “the clash of civilizations”, this may result in misguided policy responses. Further reflection, research and policy debate are warranted in order to improve understanding of the alternative visions and approaches elaborated and put into practice by social movements and others seeking to challenge the negative effects of certain forms of modernization, cultural and political hegemony, free market economy and environmental deterioration.

Identities, Conflict and Cohesion

Identities affect patterns of exclusion and solidarity, and provide a basis for both social cohesion and conflict. The closing decades of the twentieth century witnessed an escalation of conflicts based on identities. This reality challenges long-held beliefs and assumptions that the hold of ethnic, religious and other primordial identities slackens as nations modernize and are integrated into the world economy. When the benefits and costs of economic change correspond to ethnic, racial or religious affinities, individuals may perceive development in terms of such cleavages. Alternative discourses of power may emerge among disaffected groups to challenge dominant projects. But it is not always easy to determine what, at any one time, constitutes a group's identity. The identity of an individual intersects along numerous lines associated, for example, with family, clan, gender, age, neighbourhood, class and professional status. At certain conjunctures, and depending on how relations in society are managed, the values associated with particular identities may displace other loyalties and become the core or central basis of identity. In other words, they may become totalizing, making ethnic, religious or racial conflict a likely outcome in a society. However, despite these problems, identities can also provide a basis for social cohesion and development. They offer possibilities for states to gain legitimacy, for individuals to acquire a sense of direction and order, and for the social protection and economic advancement of particular groups.

Past UNRISD work on ethnic conflict and political violence examined the causes, processes and consequences of ethnic conflict; the policies to resolve and prevent ethnic conflicts; and the discourse of violence adopted by certain movements. Much is now known about the general causes, dynamics and effects of ethnic conflicts, as well as the policies that may be used to contain, manage or resolve them. New research in this area will build on this knowledge by promoting work on how processes of development and social change, and public policies, shape identities, inequalities, social marginality and conflicts, as well as social and policy responses.

The issues of *migration, generational change and segregation* call attention to the relevance of the theme of identity (trans)formation among longer-settled members of migrant communities as well as their descendants. Multiethnic countries offer interesting case studies of the complexity of ethnic and national identities, how such identifications evolve over time, and how they are reconfigured by political and economic developments or changes. The emergence of new forms of identification—or “new ethnicities” or “new identities”—among diasporic groups and their descendants undermines the claim that ethnic minorities function collectively as a cohesive unit in an economy or society, combining forces to protect vested interests. Old discourses of the fixed origins assumed to bind diasporic communities tend to be repeated, and few studies to date have captured the significance of the identity transformations that occur in newer generations of such communities.

The rise of a new generation that appears to place greater importance on national over ethnic identity suggests that there is a need to examine not only ideas or concepts such as “new identities”, but also those of “multiple identities” and “cultural fluidity”. Political leaders

seem to be unaware of, or reluctant to recognize, the identity transformations that have taken place among youth. Old political discourses thus persist, as do forms of mobilization that are increasingly alien to and rejected by a large segment of the younger generation. Marginalized youths may display two contrasting behavioural tendencies. They may be flexible and adaptable, and live a life that is relatively free of ethnic and racial prejudice. National borders may not figure prominently in the construction of their worldviews and identities. On the other hand, marginalized youths may also provide a social base for extremist movements. Although certain features of globalization and city life attract marginalized youths, urban, national and global power structures often exclude them from participation in the productive economy and the social mainstream. In response, they may rebel. Many societies face the challenge of reconfiguring, developing and sustaining the links between education, productive employment and social change in order to include and integrate marginalized youths so that they see no need to resort to crime, violence and warfare. Comparative research will focus on societies with a recent history of conflict in which youth marginalization is a problem.

The resurgence of religious movements in different regions of the world has been linked to the collapse of secular ideologies and movements; long-running economic, social and political crises associated with global economic change; and problems of war and large-scale migration. These developments raise questions about the relationship between *religious identity, socioeconomic change and conflict*. During periods of rapid change, religion provides an anchoring set of values that helps individuals organize their everyday lives. Religious movements, including new revivalist movements, seek to address a range of issues relating to spirituality, morality, well-being, community development and political change. They often fill a void in social provisioning and protection associated with state failure and marginalization. The interconnections of religion, ethnicity and other cleavages also need to be considered.

How Islam-based movements and politics affect women and gender equality will be examined under the Gender and Development programme. Another dimension that has received little attention is the issue of intra-religious divides – that is, the diversity of beliefs among people of a common religious faith. An innovative method of uncovering the nature of this heterogeneity is through a study of the business enterprises formed by religious groups. While most studies have built on the work of Max Weber that examined the impact of Protestantism on capitalism and economic development, there has been less attention to the links between religion, identity and business. The literature on economy and religion has also disregarded what the persistence of breakaway groups reveals about cleavages between members of a common religious faith. The values and institutions of members of a similar religious faith are not universal. The complexity of different groups and the diversity of their interpretation of their basic beliefs may be manifested in the operation of their businesses. Analysis of the evolution of the commercial ventures of religious groups, as well as the impact of these firms in funding and spawning religious movements locally and internationally, can provide important new insights into identity formation and reformation among members of these communities.

There have been efforts by many states to promote a civic order that respects cultural pluralism and diversity. Cultural rights have entered the domain of human rights. However, conservative interpretations of culture and religion by religious movements and some governments entail a cultural relativism that may conflict with universal human rights standards. They tend, for example, to seriously undermine women's rights, leading to profound tensions in societies where such movements have taken root. It is important to examine the complex ways identities and socioeconomic conditions propel conflicts linked to *indigeneity, minorities and rights*. Socioeconomic inequalities may be traced to the different ways groups are configured in a country. Tribal communities, also referred to collectively as indigenous peoples, have been severely marginalized leading to the infringement of their rights by their own governments as well as international institutions. This infringement has included violation of property rights over ancestral land and its resources. An assessment of the efforts of indigenous peoples to respond—to national governments, international institutions and foreign companies—will shed light on the structure and interlocking nature of state and international organizations. The focus on indigeneity and rights will emphasize how power is deployed within the state and international institutions, and between the state and indigenous groups.

The topic of indigeneity, minorities and rights also draws attention to the issues of ownership and control. In some developing countries, ethnic minorities control key economic sectors. The prevailing belief is that this may contribute to ethnic crises, and that the problem can be resolved by curbing democracy until equity is achieved in terms of wealth and income distribution. Such an argument implicitly justifies authoritarian rule, and is thus an important thesis that needs to be reviewed. While ethnic minorities may have corporate ownership, they may have little control over these assets as the authoritarian regimes that are in power can expropriate their wealth. Moreover, identity transformations among members of a multiethnic society and growing interethnic corporate ties raise serious questions about limiting democratic practices until wealth disparities are bridged. Attempts to hinder the development of enterprises owned by ethnic minorities could well impede economic growth and contribute to ethnically based conflict. Moreover, competition in the market is a necessary prerequisite to facilitate economic growth, suggesting that affirmative action in business may not necessarily be the best policy mechanism to achieve interethnic wealth parity.

However, the enjoyment of full citizenship rights and stability may require some element of resource redistribution in order to narrow social divisions and promote cross-cultural partnerships, uphold universal values and break out of the grip of sectarian or particularistic politics. This is often difficult to attain when economies are not growing or when they are developing slowly, or when excluded groups lack the political organization to enforce changes in public policy. The sense of alienation and marginalization that is often felt, especially by minority groups, may contribute to unresolved grievances and lead to social conflict. It is important, therefore, to examine the redistributive policies and programmes of governments in addressing the problem of inequalities linked to marginalized groups, and the extent of the impact of such policies on different groups.

Throughout much of its history, modern social policy has considered vertical inequality its main focus and driving force. In more recent years, however, other dimensions of inequality have assumed a greater role in shaping the agenda of social policy. The “politics of identity” and ethnic and/or religious conflicts have placed horizontal inequality at centre stage. Two hypotheses have been advanced to explain the impact of communal diversity on social policy. One argument is that ethnic difference undermines the solidarity and altruism at the heart of the ideology of the modern welfare state. The other is that in ethnically diverse and conflict-ridden societies, social policy is a crucial means to bridge horizontal inequality. The implication of this view is that in such societies, social policy should be actively pursued by “targeting” disadvantaged groups through affirmative action. Researchers have been able to marshal evidence to support both arguments. The nature of social policy, however, is contingent on a wide range of issues that have received less attention. They include the structural factors contributing to vertical inequality, the mobilization strategies of political parties, and the political consciousness of the underprivileged about their common class problem, as well as their capacity to transcend communal difference to initiate reforms. Research, to be coordinated with the Social Policy and Development programme, will examine the *policy responses to horizontal inequalities* and the extent to which social policy has bridged gaps—or reinforced disparities.

Gender and Development

Women are today increasingly visible as political actors. Processes of democratization, to which women's movements contributed, have altered the terms under which women engage in political activity. The entry of more women into national legislatures as well as municipal councils and other locally administered bodies has contributed to the deepening of democracy, while providing some valuable openings for them to articulate different policy priorities. This has combined with long-term processes of social change in families and cultural practices to bring more women into the public domain.

In much of the world, however, advances in political and legal rights have not been matched by significant progress in the achievement of greater social justice for women. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s income inequalities rose in all but a few states, while poverty remained a persistent—even a growing—phenomenon in many countries. Policies of economic liberalization and fiscal restraint responsible for the high social costs and for the deepening inequalities have had specific gender effects, with women routinely clustered in the lowest paid and least protected niches of the labour market, while being the ones who provide the bulk of unpaid care even when (as is often the case) they are also in some form of paid work.

Ambitions for gender equality are being constrained not only by the continued dominance of neoliberalism in some important arenas of policy making, but also by the challenges thrown up by recent shifts in geopolitics, and new forms of religious and cultural politics played out at the global, national and subnational levels. Given these political and policy challenges, and building on the Institute's previous work on gender equality, the following thematic areas have been identified for new research. While the work on Gender and Development has been organized as a distinct programme, there are close links with the other programme areas.

A remarkable feature of economic and social change over the past couple of decades has been the increasing participation of women in different forms of paid work. This seems to have happened in tandem with a rising need to care for children, the elderly and the sick, especially in contexts where formal welfare mechanisms and social infrastructure have weakened or remained patchy and inaccessible. For women in particular, this raises an intense conflict between the demands of economic production and those of coping with care (or "social reproduction"). But there is relatively little systematic information (beyond the established welfare states) on the institutional configurations within which care is provided—by the household, community, market and the public sector—through different combinations of paid and unpaid, and formal and informal, provision (the care regime).

Despite significant differences in the roles played by families and households in social protection and provisioning in developed and developing countries (the household being the ultimate safety net in many poorer countries where formal provision is minimal), it is nevertheless intriguing that the provision of unpaid care is so stubbornly feminized everywhere. This is one of the factors contributing to women's disadvantages in the market economy. But it is also important to underline that care is central to human flourishing, as

well as to social and economic development. Nevertheless, it is also an area that remains marginal to the concerns of mainstream policy actors in both the North and South. Only under exceptional circumstances is any explicit policy attention given to women's unpaid care work: in some richer countries where there are concerns about population ageing and the care needs of the elderly; and in some developing countries in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which has placed enormous strain on the resources available to care for sick people.

There are serious policy questions about what to do about care: how, in particular, to reconcile the needs and rights of those who require care with the needs and rights of those who provide care (whether paid or unpaid), and how to foster responsibility for sharing care between men and women. Understanding the *political and social economy of care* would have to begin with a mapping of how care regimes work in different contexts, drawing on household surveys and complementing the available evidence with selected primary research. It would then be possible to examine the factors—both external (global policies and pressures) and internal (domestic politics, nature of the state, economic and social configurations)—that shape care regimes. This should enable the research to pose a set of analytical questions about what social policy would look like from a gender perspective, focusing on the connections and tensions between the requirements of production/accumulation and those of social reproduction. It would also identify policy priorities, in terms of infrastructural and social mechanisms, to address these tensions.

Formal democratic institutions and the protection of civil and political rights are the preconditions for virtually any kind of critical engagement with the state by social forces pressing for change. Women's movements are no exception. The connection between political commitments and effective policy implementation defines governance. The difficulties experienced by women in passing gender-equity legislation, and in seeing it implemented, strongly suggest that women have a real interest in seeing the capacity and accountability of the state strengthened. An expansive understanding of governance would embrace political liberalization, participation, human rights and problems of social inequality. Such an agenda would address the problems with state legitimacy, capacity and accountability that social movements and women's movements have struggled with for decades. Governance reforms to make the state more accountable to its citizens have therefore been welcomed in many parts of the world. Critics, however, argue that although governance reforms can and should address issues of government legitimacy and the public participation of socially excluded groups, they have been much more narrowly preoccupied with "sound" management of the economy (along neoliberal lines) and with creating private property rights in order to support economic activity. When governance reforms are so narrowly defined, they are not likely to be sympathetic to gender concerns, and may even undermine prospects for advancement.

Much depends on how the question of governance is interpreted, and both the nature of reforms and their outcomes are likely to vary considerably across countries depending on the political and social forces at play. Electoral systems, political culture and the nature of political parties have crucial implications for women's political representation, as past

research has shown.⁷ Two contemporary areas of governance reform likely to have critical implications for gender equality are decentralization and judicial reform.

Since the 1990s, an important focus of governance reform has been the strengthening of local government by the decentralization of powers, resources and responsibilities to municipal councils and other locally administered bodies. The intention is to improve the quality and efficiency of services, strengthen fiscal management, enhance private sector development and increase local participation in decision-making processes. Lower tiers of government are sometimes seen as more woman-friendly sites than central government (due to lower gender-specific access barriers), but the dangers of elite capture can also be very real at this level. Research on *decentralization and gender equality* must also consider whether the decentralization of responsibilities is accompanied by an adequate redistribution of resources from the central government; where decentralization is mostly a means for the central government to reduce expenditure, the outcome is likely to be growing disparity in the quality of services available to poorer and more affluent communities. The issue of women's representation at this level of government, and the capacity of women representatives to make a real impact on budgetary allocations and locally managed services (local employment-generation schemes, primary schools and clinics, housing and sanitation) matter enormously to women from low-income households.

Judicial systems, whether formal or informal, have long been the object of criticism by women's rights advocates for their failure to respond to women's complaints and for failing even to define some violations of women's rights as criminal offences. Research on *gender dimensions of judicial reforms* will examine the extent to which mainstream "rule of law" reforms are addressing women's concerns about the formal justice system (its inaccessibility, high cost, protracted delays, gender-biased assumptions). At the same time, informal justice institutions are being revived in many parts of the world—as a result of disappointment in the efficacy of formal justice systems, as well as in response to emerging religious and ethnic sentiments and movements. This raises particular concerns and questions about women's rights, especially where informal justice mechanisms are not sufficiently grounded in democratic principles and practices.

The surge in religion-based movements, particularly the revival of Islamic politics, was a marked feature of the late twentieth century political landscape. While there is a tendency in public and media discourses to assume Islamic politics to be homogeneous, subsumed under the label of "fundamentalism", in fact such labels hide a wide diversity of ideas and movements. Scholars have identified three broad political tendencies, which are neither static nor homogeneous. They include conservative Islam, often associated with authoritarian states; more radical and militant variants, typically pursued by students and militant youth; and the more reformist and modernist orientations, which seek to Islamize government and society, but in the context of economic development, social reform and political democratization.

⁷ The most recent UNRISD research on this subject is presented in *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World* (2005).

The rise of Islam-based politics raises important questions about gender equality, including the place of Islam and *shari'a* (the religious law of Islam), which directly impinge on gender relations, marriage and the family, and women's autonomy. Women often serve as symbols of cultural difference (or identity markers), and where this infringes on their rights, tensions have arisen between those who define "culture" or "religion" and those who are expected to comply. Where *shari'a* has attempted to replace modernist and secular legal codes, it has brought forth contestation and resistance from women's rights advocates. One of the forms such resistance has taken is the provision of alternative readings of religious texts in tune with internationally recognized women's rights (dubbed "Islamic feminism"). Such resistance has helped challenge the hegemony of orthodox interpretations of *shari'a*, but it is also important to recognize its limitations: in countries where no guarantees exist for equality, democracy or human rights protection within the political system, there is very little scope for contestation and dialogue.

Research on *religion-based politics and gender equality* would also need to consider the growing attraction of some groups of women to conservative Islamic social movements and political parties, especially those advancing gender-regressive religious interpretations. How is this to be explained when women have otherwise shunned party-political engagement? Do such movements and parties provide a socially acceptable arena in which women can express their concerns? Many such movements and/or parties provide a range of services that women need, and even support their gender-specific rights (against commercial sexual exploitation and domestic violence, for example) in ways that seem more practical and credible than progressive, but unimplemented, secular constitutional provisions. This also raises questions about why, in some contexts at least, modernist and secular parties and movements, especially liberal and secular feminist movements, have not been able to appeal to, or mobilize, women from marginalized social groups to the same extent. How are these secularist movements positioning themselves vis-à-vis those advancing religious interpretations of women's rights? And most importantly, how are Islamic movements and parties evolving as they interact with their own constituencies and political realities, especially as they seek to increase their political influence? What is the impact of these conservative Islamic groups in multiethnic contexts? Does the propagation of an Islamic vision for government and society lead to social unrest?



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