2016 WSSR: Findings, Calls, Way Forward

Meeting of National Commissions for UNESCO
200th Session of the Executive Board
11 October 2016, UNESCO Paris
Outline of the presentation

- UNESCO and the WSSR Series
- 2016 WSSR
  - Themes and relevance
  - Key messages and findings
  - Calls for action: the way forward
We are a guardian and advocate of and for robust sciences and their impact on our societies

We are mandated with linking social science knowledge to policy and action (UNESCO’s intergovernmental programme on Management of Social Transformations – MOST)

We co-publish and co-fund the World Social Science Reports as sources of (i) solid social science knowledge on a priority theme and (ii) evidence-based messages

We co-shape and deliver the findings and calls to scientists, policymakers and practitioners across the world
2016 WSSR | Report at a glance

- 107 authors from 40 countries
- 74 cutting-edge social science contributions on inequalities
- Scientific advisory committee of leading academics from all, including economics Nobel Prize laureate Joseph Stiglitz
- Research agenda for the next 10 years
- Co-published by UNESCO and the International Social Science Council (ISSC); prepared with the Institute of Development Studies (IDS)
- Open Access en.unesco.org/wssr2016
- #ChallengingInequalities
2016 WSSR | Relevance

“We pledge that no one will be left behind”

Preamble to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

2030 Agenda is premised on reduction of inequalities and inclusive development

SDG 10 and SDG 16 entirely dedicated to this change

SDGs 4, 8, 9, 11 rely on it

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2016 WSSR | Objectives

• To look beyond economic inequality into the interactions between multiple dimensions of inequality

• To document the trends in inequality in all world regions, especially less well-researched and low-income countries in Africa and Asia

• To analyse the consequences of inequalities in different countries and regions, and for different groups of people

• To identify strategies to reduce inequalities

• To provide a multidisciplinary contribution to the study of inequality, with inputs from across the social sciences, as well as from outside academia

• To identify critical knowledge gaps and propose a global research agenda on inequality

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Key messages 1 | Economic and political power are increasingly concentrated in the hands of a small number of people. This can threaten growth, social cohesion and the health of democracies.

Wealth of bottom 50 per cent versus wealth of richest sixty-two people (Source: Oxfam, 2016)

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Key messages 2 | Global economic inequality declined during the first decade of this century, largely due to the reduction of poverty in countries like China and India. This favourable trend could however be reversed if inequality within countries continues to increase.

The evolution of global inequality of living standards from 1988 to 2010 (average of various recent estimates) (Sources: Anand and Segal (2014), Bourguignon (2015), Lakner and Milanovic (2015))

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Key messages 3 | Inequalities within countries are on the rise

Evolution of Gini coefficients, high-income and middle income countries (Source: OECD Income Distribution Database, Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) Database).
Key messages 4 | Inequalities should not be understood and addressed only in relation to income and wealth. They interact across seven key dimensions: economic, political, social, cultural, environmental, spatial and knowledge.

- In many countries, **economic and political resources are concentrated in the hands of a small elite**, threatening the health of democracies and widening social and economic inequalities.

- **Inequality and environmental unsustainability are deeply interlinked.** Tackling one without addressing the other is unlikely to succeed.

- **Inequalities in access to knowledge remain significant, and interact with other dimensions of inequality.** In Nigeria, just 3 per cent of the poorest girls living in rural areas completed lower secondary school in 2013, compared with 17 per cent of the boys. In contrast, 95 per cent of the richest boys in urban areas completed lower secondary school.

- **Enduring forms of inequality are associated with identities, such as race, caste and ethnicity,** which are themselves facets of cultural inequality. Gender pervades all these; in many settings we see women and girls facing persistent disadvantages and discrimination.
Key messages 5 | Current levels of inequality threaten our capacity to address other global priorities.

Interaction of Inequality Goal 10 and the other SDGs (Source: Gaventa, 22)
Key messages 6 | Reducing inequalities is a requirement for human rights and justice, and is essential for success in other global priority areas, such as environmental sustainability, conflict resolution and migrations.

- High and rising inequality can act as an impediment to economic growth.

- Inequalities can limit our ability to respond to crises.

- Inequalities are producing new manifestations related to nutrition and health.

- Systemic inequality between identity groups may spur conflict.
Key messages 7 | Successful pathways to address inequality combine policies and action in context-specific ways

• **Country experiences**, in terms of what has and has not worked, are to be drawn upon.

• **Rule-changing** in measures and policies is often required.

• **Social and political action** are to boost each other.

• **Coherent, multi-dimensional and integrated portfolios** of action and commitments are called for.

• **Embedded histories and practices** require stronger attention.
Key messages 8 | Collective action by citizens is opening spaces for additional solutions to inequality that can inspire inclusive policy innovation

• New alliances of stakeholders can build broad support for change. The mobilization of doctors, patient groups and political forces around the design of a Patient’s Bill of Rights was a significant contributor to a new Health Insurance Law on universal coverage in Egypt.

• Grass-roots mobilization and political action can often be effective in breaking down deeply connected economic, social and political inequalities.

• In India, Indonesia, Ethiopia and Brazil, local initiatives empower poor and vulnerable adults, especially women, to diversify their income sources and access microcredit. They are instrumental in the development of solidarity and self-help networks among the individuals concerned.

• Public participation can increase the political will to reduce inequality. A high level of public participation in Brazil’s ‘Zero Hunger’ effort was crucial to the country’s turnaround to reduced inequality.
Key messages 9 | There are important inequalities in the knowledge produced about inequalities – by sub-field

Number of social science publications produced worldwide on inequality and social justice per subfield, 1992–2013 (fractional counting)
...and by Region

Number of social science and humanities publications on inequalities and social justice per region 1992-2013

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Key messages 10 | A new social science research agenda is needed to accompany and inform pathways toward greater equality.

**Priority 1:** Increase support for knowledge production about inequality, and processes of social inclusion and exclusion, in those places most affected by them.

**Priority 2:** Improve our ability to assess, measure and compare the dimensions of inequality over time and across the world.

**Priority 3:** Deepen our understanding of diverse experiences of inequality.

**Priority 4:** Deepen our understanding of how multiple inequalities are created, maintained and reproduced.

**Priority 5:** Deepen our understanding of how local and global forms of inequality connect and interact.

**Priority 6:** Promote research on how to move towards greater equality.

**Priority 7:** Support cross-cutting syntheses and theory on inequality and equality.
Major Recommendation 1 | A step change is needed towards a research agenda that is more interdisciplinary, multi-scale, globally inclusive, and conducive to transformative knowledge

• **Beyond one form of inequality:** Stronger understanding of intersecting and multiple forms of inequalities through multi-disciplinary approaches

• **Beyond quantification:** Innovative combinations of, qualitative, participatory studies, and quantitative methods that focus more on why inequalities persist and how they can be overcome

• **Beyond just producing more social science:** Challenge inequalities of knowledge, of access, of construction and co-creation, and of whose knowledge counts.

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Major Recommendation 2 | A step-up is required in the investment in knowledge and its use as a down-payment for feasible and informed change

- **Feasibility and sustainability:** Policies and solutions must be multi-dimensional, multi-layered and cumulative. Such complexities require solid evidence and research.

- **Transparency and informed change:** Solid evidence and research should underpin decisions and enable management of the shift towards more equitable and inclusive societies. The matters of knowledge and its uses go to the heart of transparent and wise change management.
UNESCO’s intergovernmental Management of Social Transformations (MOST) programme is specifically tasked with mobilising social science for inclusive and sustainable social change. Through its pillars of research (MOST Schools, data valorization projects), intergovernmental learning (Ministerial Forums) and knowledge brokering (UNESCO Inclusive Policy Lab, Inclusive Policy Markers and Policy Reviews, Futures Literacy Schools), MOST stands to support the efforts of all in meeting the calls of this Report.
2016 WSSR | Launches and Dissemination

• Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, Stockholm, Sweden, 22 September 2016

• Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Stockholm, Sweden, 22 September 2016

• UNESCO Headquarters, 200th Session of the Executive Board, 17 October, 14.00-15.00, room IV

• General Assembly of ISSC/ICSU, Oslo, Norway, 25 October 2016

• 1st Forum of Ministers of Social Development for Central Africa, Yaounde, Cameroon, 24-26 October,

• UN Headquarters, 55th Session of the Commission for Social Development on “Combating inequalities to end poverty”, first week of February 2017, United Nations, New York
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Thank you

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