

2020 High-level Political Forum

Are we leaving no one behind in eradicating poverty and working towards the 2030 Agenda?

Thursday 9 July, 10:30 – 12:00

Open Discussion section

Paul Ladd, Director, UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)

My name is Paul Ladd and I'm the Director of the UN Research Institute for Social Development.

UNRISD is an autonomous research institute within the UN system that focuses on the social dimensions of contemporary development issues.

In a report that UNRISD is publishing today, available on our website, we've looked at whether individuals and groups have been left behind in the policy interventions to tackle Covid-19. The report is based on a survey of UNRISD's network and draws on information covering 82 countries.

Broadly speaking, only in a minority of countries have there been special efforts to support people who are vulnerable now or who may become vulnerable because of the crisis – because they are living in poverty, have insecure livelihoods or incomes, are older, or from indigenous communities; women and children at risk of violence and abuse at home, people living with disabilities, migrants. Or, indeed, people who are in several of these categories.

Many countries lack universal health and social protection systems that can provide support at times of crisis whenever they occur. Yet it is these universal systems that minimize the risk that adverse situations become amplified and sustained, while providing a route back to economic and social inclusion.

A key concern therefore is that the Covid pandemic is exacerbating existing inequalities, and risks pushing certain groups and communities further behind.

You have already heard from panelists today on their big policy ideas to address inequalities, vulnerabilities, and a general lack of systemic resilience. Here is one more.

I believe that we need a fundamental post-pandemic review of fiscal policy at both national and international levels – an International Commission on Fiscal Policy for the SDGs. This needs to improve

the progressivity of tax systems within countries, including through wealth taxes, thus ensuring that governments have the public resources to address poverty and exclusion in their countries, and strengthen their universal health and social protection systems for the future.

At the international level we need to plug the tax leaks and stop the avoidance and evasion that have led to a trickle-up of wealth to rich individuals and companies, undermining our ability to support those living in poverty or facing vulnerabilities.

Only with a comprehensive review of fiscal policy can we create a new 21st century eco-social compact, invest in societies that are more resilient, and truly leave no one behind.

Thank you.