

# 2022 | ANNUAL 2023 | REPORT



# STRATEGY

## TRANSFORMING THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC SYSTEM



**As the global economic system continues to perpetuate crises (from climate change to inequality) CESR's 2023-2027 strategy aims to harness the momentum for transformative change through unprecedented collaboration across movements.**



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Recognizing the systemic failures that disproportionately affect marginalized communities, particularly in the Global South, our strategy seeks to advance a radical rights-based agenda that challenges the status quo.

This strategy was shaped through extensive consultations with over 70 partners and allies, who emphasized the need for CESR to scale up its role in bridging movements and issues. The core of our approach is to strengthen cross-movement mobilization by articulating and advancing rights-based reforms that redistribute power and resources more equitably. We aim to weaken the dominance of market-based narratives and instead build support for alternative economic visions that align with feminist, decolonial, and green agendas.

In implementing this strategy, CESR will focus on key areas such as rethinking the role and governance of international financial institutions, ensuring fairer financial flows, and advancing a reparations-based framework to address climate justice. We are committed to producing evidence and tools that decode the injustices of the global economic system and to facilitating synergies between diverse movements to amplify our collective impact.

This strategy builds on CESR's three decades of work to advance economic, social, and cultural rights, while responding to the critical challenges and opportunities of our time. We look forward to working with our partners and allies to achieve transformative change over the next four years.

# PROGRAM



**Our work in 2022–2023 focused on challenging the structural drivers of inequality within the global economic system. Working with social movements and civil society partners, particularly in the Global South, we advanced a rights-based approach centered on dignity, equity, and accountability. Our programs prioritized fiscal justice, sovereign debt, and economic narratives to support fairer and more democratic economic policymaking.**



## 1. Fiscal Justice: An opportunity for a global rights focus

The momentum we have seen in recent years towards fairer global taxation crystallized, in 2022, into promising discussion for policy reforms. As the UN states voted in favor of a new tax convention, the [Principles for Human Rights in Fiscal Policy](#) are being increasingly recognized by policymakers and authorities. Among them, Attiya Waris, the UN Independent Expert on Foreign Debt and Human Rights, who drew on them in her report on a [global fiscal architecture](#), and Soledad García Muñoz, former Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, who [publicly acknowledged](#) their importance as a tool to realize rights.

**“One of the reasons the Principles are so important and timely is because, at last, action is being taken at the international level to allow countries to make choices with respect to the priorities they set for themselves in reforming their taxation systems.”**

*Olivier De Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights*

The Second and Third Weeks for Fiscal Justice and Human Rights congregated over 100 people who gathered, virtually and in person, to discuss how to promote fiscal policies that address the multiple crises Latin America is facing. [2022's events](#) highlighted the triple inequality of care, disabilities, and gender; proposed 10 fiscal alternatives to reactivate the region's economy; and called on Latin American governments to face the aftermath of COVID-19 as an opportunity to scale ambitious and just fiscal policies. [2023 events](#) focused on feminist taxation, the connection between taxation and the right to health (leading to the launch of [a report on fiscal policies and health](#)), and regional tax cooperation in Latin America.

The pandemic and its drivers were further analyzed in [Desigual y Letal](#), our joint report with Amnesty Americas, developed over two years. In it, we look at the root causes of the COVID-19's devastating and disproportionate impact in Latin America, focusing in particular on insufficient and inequitable fiscal policies. The report was launched with a press conference in Santiago, Chile, garnered widespread media coverage (like [CNN](#) and [Al Jazeera](#)), and was presented to key figures in the new Chilean government. We delved deeper into this issue in [a report](#) (in Spanish, written by CESR's Olivia Minatta) in which we analyzed pandemic responses across Latin America through the lens of the Principles for Human Rights in Fiscal Policy, with particular attention to Argentina and Mexico.

In addition, we also launched our joint research piece with Colombian allies [ILEX](#): An Analysis of Fiscal Policy as an Instrument to Achieve Ethnic and Racial Justice in Latin America. In it, we scrutinized the role of fiscal policies in addressing the multiple inequalities that affect Afro populations in the region. The piece fed into discussions on fiscal policy reform with the country's new government, and was featured in outlets such as [Rolling Stone](#), [Forbes](#), and [El Espectador](#).

We kept on exploring how to transform fiscal policy from an Indigenous peoples' rights perspective in a workshop co-organized with Akubadaura, with indigenous leaders from Peru & Colombia.



Watch a video about the workshop [here](#).

Our efforts to strengthen the links between fiscal justice and other causes also continued at CSW66, where our Program Officer Alina Saba [explored the links](#) between progressive taxation, the climate crisis, and a feminist just transition.



You can relive Alina's intervention at "Feminist perspectives: progressive taxation for an equal, green, and feminist transition" [in this link](#).

The links between taxation and rights realization were also explored by the Center for Inclusive Policy: Drawing on the Principles for Human Rights in Fiscal Policy, they launched a paper exploring [how to build inclusive fiscal policies for people with disabilities](#).

Our team also trained lawyers and activists in how to take a rights-based look at budgets with our partners at [ELAC](#), [questioned the OECD global tax reform](#) proposal from a rights perspective, and [called on the then newly elected governments of Chile and Colombia](#) to promote a new fiscal pact for Latin America and the Caribbean.

In 2023, international processes to reform the world's taxation system officially kicked off, requiring civil society to work harder than ever to be present in those spaces and



[This short video documentary](#) by Play Tumaco, based on our report with ILEX, connects the stories of women shell collectors with the need for fiscal policies that enable racial justice.

demand rights-based reforms. We did our part through strengthened participation and advocacy in various forums, regionally and internationally.

African governments made significant strides in advocating for a UN Tax Convention (UNTC). Nigeria, on behalf of the African Group, proposed a draft resolution to establish an intergovernmental committee to develop a comprehensive treaty on international tax cooperation by 2025. We [supported this call](#) and worked on [translating what this process would mean](#) for human rights globally, information that we shared with our partners and allies.

To promote other organizations and movements engaging with the UNTC, we [analyzed the inputs](#) from member states and relevant stakeholders to the UN Secretary-General's report on the process and provided daily updates on the negotiations.

Furthermore, During the World Bank/International Monetary Fund Annual Meetings in Marrakesh, Morocco, we convened a cross-regional exchange with partners from the Euro-Mediterranean region and Latin America on their experiences fighting for fiscal justice through a human rights lens.

At the regional level, we [welcomed the first regional Summit](#) for inclusive, equitable, and sustainable taxation in Latin America and the Caribbean, which was held in Cartagena in July 2023, and focused on enhancing regional tax cooperation and ensuring the participation

of civil society in shaping international tax policy (see the recommendations we delivered to participating governments [here](#)). The meeting, which led to the launch of the Latin American and Caribbean Platform on Tax (PT-LACT), was a significant step towards establishing a fairer international tax system to mobilize greater resources for addressing poverty, inequality, and climate change. With our partners in the region we continued to engage with the platform as members of its [Civil Society Advisory Council](#).

We continued our work co-steering the [Initiative for Human Rights in Fiscal Policy](#). The 3rd Week for Fiscal Justice and Human Rights focused on the opportunities presented by the Cartagena Summit. It included discussions on health financing, tax cooperation in Latin America, feminist tax agendas, and sovereign debt.

During 2023, we continued to develop how the [Principles for Human Rights in Fiscal Policy](#) can be applied in practice. Once again, we shared rights-based budget analysis tools with 25 activists from different Latin American countries at [ELAC](#) School for Activists. One publication, co-authored with ACIJ and supported by Oxfam, examined [fiscal rules through a human rights lens](#), broadening the regional debate on these critical issues. We also explored the indirect but significant impacts of monetary policy on human rights. Through a publication in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), the Initiative emphasized the importance of connecting human rights and fiscal policy, particularly in the context of inflation and credit lending.



*Some of the participants at Reclaiming Human Rights in Fiscal Policy: Cross Regional Exchange in Marrakesh, Morocco.*



## 2. Decoding Injustice: Working with activists to uncover and challenge economic inequalities

In May 2022, we launched Decoding Injustice, an innovative approach to research that supports activists to build evidence of rights violations, and advocate for more rights-aligned policies, by organizing innovative methods for collecting, analyzing, and presenting evidence around three steps:

- 1 Interrogate** - Map the problem using OPERA to identify indicators and benchmarks
- 2 Illuminate** - Spotlight the underlying issues by collecting, analyzing & visualizing data
- 3 Inspire** - Take action to hold decision-makers accountable.

We've developed an [online hub](#) to house our Decoding Injustice materials. The first batch of materials on the hub is a series of short notes, organized as "modules", introducing the three steps. These notes essentially consolidate a decade's worth of resources, translating them into accessible, self-guided, learning tools. Combined, they offer a set of self-learning modules for individuals and organizations that can be adapted to each user's needs, priorities, and contexts. To make Decoding Injustice widely accessible, CESR has translated the learning notes from English into both [Spanish](#) and [Arabic](#).

Along with the hub launch, CESR carried out several training workshops on using Decoding Injustice tools with activists and practitioners in Southwest Asia and



*Our Program Officer Mahinour El Badrawi delivered a three-part webinar, based on Decoding Injustice, to a group of young researchers from the SWANA region organized by the Arab Forum for Alternatives.*

Northern Africa (SWANA), Southern Africa, and Latin America. These trainings were held both virtually and in-person and resulted in over 85 activists and practitioners working with and for marginalized groups being trained in deploying Decoding Injustice. In attending these sessions, participants gained new knowledge and skills to document the discriminatory impact of economic policies on people's rights and advocate for more just alternatives.

In 2023, we launched three introductory videos to the different steps of Decoding Injustice, which are also available in English, Spanish, and Arabic. These materials and the entire Hub were used by 28 activists from the Global South in the first-ever Decoding Injustice Learning Lab. The Lab was held in English with simultaneous translation in Spanish and Arabic, ran for four months, and was made up of a series of calls and workshops, with each workshop focusing on a different component of Decoding Injustice. Lab participants came from Latin America; Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA); Southern, East, and West Africa; and Asia Pacific, spanning backgrounds with focuses on issues ranging from gender inclusion, right to housing, indigenous rights, climate justice, labor rights, and racial discrimination.

Feedback from the Lab shows that participants greatly valued the peer-to-peer learning that took place, as well as the accessible way that Decoding Injustice was presented. Participants have begun using Decoding Injustice in their work and have found it particularly useful in designing and implementing research plans.

In 2023 we also began using Decoding Injustice to create new resources, primarily the [Decoding Debt Injustice](#) guide. Co-authored with [Debt Justice](#), the guide uses the framework of CESR's Decoding Injustice methodology to interrogate the global system of debt, illuminate the data behind debt injustice, and inspire new ways forward. It provides an important resource for anyone looking to bring a human rights lens to their research on debt, to collaborate with people from other disciplinary backgrounds, and to explore different channels for advancing reforms and action. The guide was widely disseminated online, as well as in international advocacy forums such as the IMF annual meetings and COP28.

In April, CESR held a learning exchange with our partners [L'Observatoire Tunisien de l'Economie \(OTE\)](#) in Tunisia. OTE is an economic justice think-tank, who are looking to

shift their research approach to incorporate a human rights lens and strengthen their engagement with community activists. The learning exchange used Decoding Injustice to help OTE develop internal guidance on taking a rights-based approach. Feedback from OTE shows that the “interrogate” step of DI has been particularly useful when working with their community-based partners.

An additional learning exchange was held with the [Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law, and Development](#) (APWLD) and their regional partners, primarily indigenous women, working on climate justice and women’s rights. The exchange focused on finding synergies between Decoding Injustice and Feminist Participatory Action Research to feed into plans to create a women’s human rights impact assessment tool. The skills learned in this exchange will be incorporated into APWLD members’ community-level research.

In Zambia, CESR shared Decoding Injustice, including the new Decoding Debt Injustice guide, with both UN staff in the country, as well as partners from civil society and social movements. With the UN, CESR worked with the Zambia Country Team to assess the findings of a study undertaken by OHCHR on the rights to food and education. This included looking at Zambia’s debt restructuring efforts and the opportunities and challenges it presents for advancing economic, social, and cultural rights.

We also continued our partnership with [Mining Affected Communities United in Action](#) (MACUA) in South Africa, with whom we are co-designing and piloting popular education tools on human rights — with a particular focus on the right to a healthy environment in the context of climate change and energy transition. CESR has continued to play an advisory role to MACUA staff, helping develop tools and resources for session planning as MACUA works with their community-based partners on incorporating a greater human rights lens into their work on environmental and climate justice in South Africa.

In the Philippines, CESR partnered with [IBON International](#), the [Philippine Peasants Movement \(KMP\)](#), and the [People’s Coalition for Food Sovereignty \(PCFS\)](#) to use Decoding Injustice in the research and advocacy design of a project supporting the peasants movement’s struggle against agrarian reforms being pushed on the

Philippines by the IMF and World Bank (WB). Ahead of the IMF/WB annual meetings, a joint primer was published, entitled Decoding the WBG’s SPLIT Project in the Philippines: Resisting Agrarian Injustice. This Wiki-style resource outlines how the WB SPLIT project violates the Filipino people’s rights, particularly the rights of peasants, in a number of ways, including by adding an increased foreign debt burden. Findings of this research were shared at a global south learning exchange facilitated by CESR at the IMF/WB annual meetings. The primer was used by our Filipino partners in both international and national advocacy.

In Zambia, CESR [co-organized a workshop](#) with the [Women’s Life Wellness Foundation \(WLWF\)](#) to share Decoding Injustice with them and their community-based partners. This workshop looked at how these activists can use the three steps of Decoding Injustice to map the challenges faced by rural women in accessing climate financing through the Constituency Development Fund. Participants at the workshop noted that using Decoding Injustice helped them feel empowered in their work and provided a framing to design further research. CESR is continuing to work with WLWF through 2024 to support them in designing and implementing upcoming research to evaluate how Zambia’s climate adaptation plans advance or impede gender equality given the current debt and fiscal crisis in the country. A second training was held with WLWF and their partners after the workshop to disseminate and discuss the Decoding Debt Injustice guide. This training was attended by a diverse group of actors including students, researchers, INGOs, and a group of poets using poetry as a means to educate the public on economic justice issues. The group was very receptive to the guide and commented on the value of using a rights-based approach to economic alternatives.

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**In total, CESR has trained over 100 activists in Decoding Injustice.**

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*Our program officer, Mahinour ElBadrawi, with the Working Group in Nairobi, Kenya.*

### **3. Global Economic Governance: Advancing debt justice and financial reform as a human rights imperatives**

As civil society has made big progress in taking the international tax agenda a step forward, there is more hope about a similar possibility to transform the world's financial architecture. In 2022, a big part of our work focused on addressing the human rights challenges posed by a broken sovereign debt system, which has shown to be pushing countries towards even harsher crises. In this context, it became even more important to strengthen collective power to keep international institutions accountable, so we also devoted our time to deepening the links between organizations tackling different aspects of how the global economy is normed.

A big milestone in this path was launching an innovative cross-regional collaboration on global financial architecture funded by Ford Foundation, with partners International Women's Rights Action Watch-Asia Pacific (IWRAP-AP, Malaysia), the Observatoire Tunisien de l'Economie (OTE, Tunisia), Institute for Economic Justice (IEJ, South Africa) and Centro de Derechos Económicos y Sociales (Ecuador). The collective brings together organizations diverse in their thematic expertise, geographic scope, strategic approaches, and range of partners and allies in a creative and agile way—to forge deeper and more meaningful opportunities for learning and strategizing that can strengthen the ongoing work of each member. We meet in person in Johannesburg, an amazing opportunity to strengthen our shared critique of the status quo and common agenda for transforming it; deepen understanding of each other's work and how it supports the

common agenda; and identify ways of working together that are more mutually reinforcing. For example, we participated in a workshop on the global tax agreement organized by OTE and workshopped ways of applying a human rights frame when analyzing climate financing with IEJ. Through this collective, we share insights about engaging in various advocacy spaces, including the IMF and World Bank Annual meetings, COP27, and various civil society working groups on debt. Along with OTE, CDES, and IWRAW-AP, we sent a submission to the Independent Expert on debt, which uses evidence from across regions to call for rights-aligned global tax reforms and was quoted in the Independent Expert's final report as an example of how governments should use fiscal policy to fulfill the rights of their populations.

Our voice was also heard in a variety of international fora: We highlighted the urgent need for action on debt and tax [UN Women expert group meeting on SDG5](#) (which helped inform the year's [High Level Political Forum](#)), we joined other members of ESCR-Net Economic Policy Working Groups (EPWG) over a three day strategy meeting in which we enjoyed discussions with members on how debt justice would look like under a Rights-Based Economy, and we explored the [links between the cost of living crisis and reduced fiscal space](#) due to sovereign debt at the University of Nottingham. We also co-organized a webinar with our

DAWN allies on the different facets of austerity in South Africa, Barbados and Ghana and what insights and lessons can be drawn from that.

Our efforts for debt justice to be acknowledged as a human rights also involved collective campaigning efforts. We joined the call [to stop the International Monetary Fund's Surcharges](#), took part in the [Global Week of Action for Justice and Debt Cancellation](#), called attention on the impossibility of [addressing the climate crisis without taking a look at debt justice](#), and rejected along with other feminist organizations [the IMF's weak strategy towards mainstreaming gender](#).

The legitimacy of sovereign debt was analyzed by our program officers María Emilia Mamberti and Sakshi Rai [in this piece](#), in which they explore the international implications of a recent research paper on Argentina's situation, and provide 5 practical recommendations to the IMF on to fulfill, and not undermine, the human rights obligations of States.

In 2023, CESR launched [Decoding Debt Injustice](#), a friendly guide to illuminate the human rights impacts of the global debt system. It provides tools for activists and policymakers to understand and challenge debt injustices. The report was cited during COP28, in a call to address the debt crisis and climate crisis by the Special Rapporteur on



[Watch here](#) the recording of our webinar with DAWN.

the Right to Healthy and Sustainable Environment. That same year, the UN Independent Expert on Foreign Debt and Human Rights released a pivotal report on Argentina, highlighting the human rights implications of sovereign debt. Prior to this launch, [CESR sent a submission](#) to the Independent Expert shedding light on how debt burdens impact the realization of economic and social rights.



**DECODING DEBT INJUSTICE**

It's impossible to address the climate crisis without addressing the debt crisis in the global South. Many States are forced to spend more money servicing debt than investing in education, health care or climate action. Debt relief is a prerequisite to equitable climate action!

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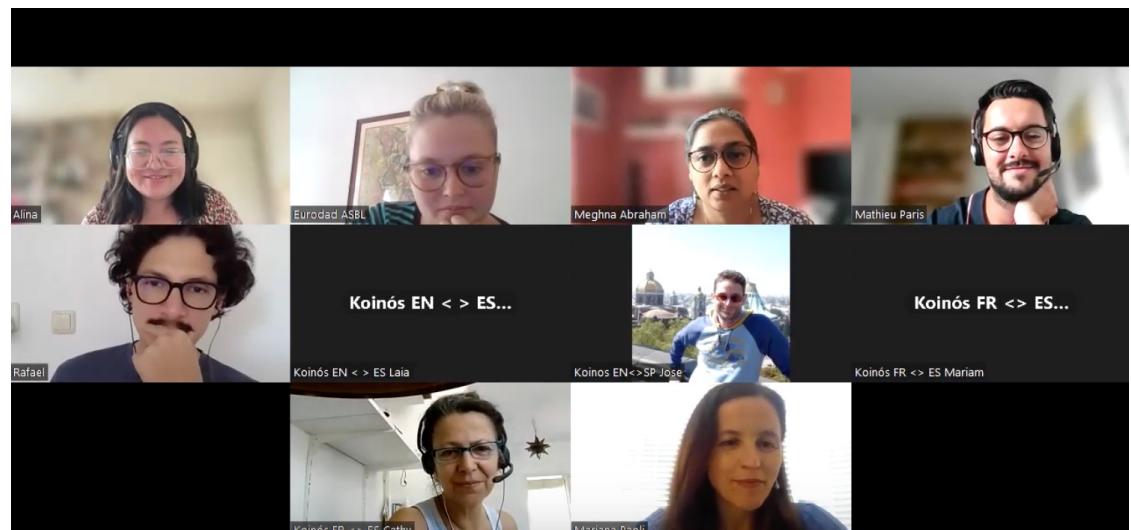
**DECODING DEBT INJUSTICE**

A guide to collecting, analyzing, and presenting data, to shed new light on how the global debt crisis impacts people's rights.

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Debt Justice

The New Financing Pact Summit, held in June, brought together global leaders to address critical issues at the intersection of climate, debt, and tax justice. CESR convened a virtual space to [critically reflect on the outcomes of the summit](#), emphasizing the need for comprehensive reforms that align financial systems with human rights and environmental sustainability.



During the IMF and World Bank Annual Meetings in Marrakesh in October, CESR actively pushed for transformative financial reforms. Our advocacy efforts focused on integrating human rights considerations into the financial policies of these influential institutions. We engaged with stakeholders to promote a shift towards more equitable and sustainable financial practices that support human rights and development goals. [Read about our participation and advocacy at the Marrakesh meetings here.](#)



CESR also submitted critical feedback to the World Bank's Evolution Roadmap, advocating for a shift from the traditional cascade approach to one that integrates human rights and climate considerations. Our submission emphasized the importance of reorienting financial policies to support sustainable and inclusive development, ensuring that the World Bank's strategies align with global human rights and climate commitments.

During our [Ford Project Learning Workshop in 2023](#), we highlighted the power of collective learning in transforming global financial architecture. This workshop brought together diverse stakeholders to share insights and strategies for advocating financial reforms that uphold human rights. The discussions focused on the need for a collaborative approach to address the systemic issues within international financial institutions.



## 4. Rights-Based Economy: Consolidating the vision

The vision for a Rights-Based Economy, which we launched in 2020, continued to strengthen and gain traction during 2022 and 2023. Former OHCHR's High Commissioner, Michelle Bachelet, delivered a statement during a CSW66 event, moderated by our Director of Program Kate Donald:

A video recording of Michelle Bachelet speaking. She is wearing a dark blazer and glasses, sitting in front of a blue background. The video interface shows a recording icon and the text 'UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'.

**“Economies that put human rights at the center are the most prosperous. They choose to invest in social spending essential to protect and promote human rights. We need to follow this path”**

*Michelle Bachelet, UN High Comissioner for Human Rights*

To advance in connecting different visions for economic transformation, we announced the five pillars of the [blueprint for a Rights-Based Economy](#), and opened a call to receive inputs and ideas about it from allies around the world on how to build them. These efforts continued in an [essay on the intersections between a rights-based economy and a feminist social contract](#) that was published in a collection for Christian Aid, our presentation at the [Rethinking Economics for Africa festival](#) in Johannesburg, and this blog piece written by our team members Ohene Ampofo-Anti and Alina Saba blog piece for the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) on how a Rights-Based Economy can help us overcome the challenges of our time. Our work on this topic was also cited in UNRISD's [Crises of Inequality flagship report](#).

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## 5. Climate Justice: resourcing for a sustainable future



**When the Water Runs Dry:**  
Human Rights, Climate Change & Deepening  
Water Inequality in Delhi, India  
Harvard Law School International Human Rights Clinic  
Center for Economic and Social Rights

In 2023, CESR significantly expanded its focus on climate justice, recognizing the deep connections between climate change, human rights, and economic inequalities. As part of this effort, we created space for movements to discuss rights-based climate finance, and engaged in global advocacy to link climate justice with other human rights and economic challenges." A highlight of this work was the publication of [When the Water Runs Dry: Human Rights, Climate Change & Deepening Water Inequality in Delhi, India](#). This report, developed in collaboration with Harvard Law School's International Human Rights Clinic, used CESR's OPERA framework to reveal how climate change exacerbates water inequality in Delhi. The findings highlighted the urgent need for government action as climate change threatens to deepen existing disparities, particularly for low-income communities.

In preparation for COP28 in Dubai, CESR played a key role in organizing events that aimed to influence international climate policy. The Road to Dubai Briefing, held online in November 2023, brought together experts and advocates, including CESR's Meghna Abraham, to strategize on how to effectively push governments at COP28 to make meaningful commitments. The briefing emphasized the legal obligations of countries to provide financial compensation for Loss and Damage, challenging the voluntary approaches some governments advocate.

At COP28, CESR co-hosted a side event on "Challenging Green Extractivism and Positing Feminist Alternatives for Resourcing Climate Finance," which explored feminist and systemic approaches to climate finance. This dialogue, featuring voices from the global majority and Indigenous activists, emphasized the need for alternatives to dominant narratives that often prioritize profit over people and the planet. CESR also participated in discussions on the role of Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) in mobilizing the trillions needed for climate mitigation and adaptation, stressing the importance of aligning MDB efforts with broader goals for a just and sustainable transition.

In 2023 CESR also joined the REDFIS, a network of organizations across Latin America to build bridges between the tax and climate justice movements, and share opportunities for joint advocacy.

CESR's involvement in these initiatives, including the Global Day of Action for Climate Justice, reflects our commitment to challenging the status quo and advocating for a Rights-Based Economy that prioritizes human rights and environmental sustainability. Through these efforts, we continue to push for systemic changes that address the root causes of climate injustice and ensure that the rights of those most affected by climate change are upheld.

## KEY CONCEPTS

### TAXES, BUDGETS & HUMAN RIGHTS

Key Concepts is our series that breaks down complex topics for readers keen to unlock the power of human rights to build just and sustainable economies.



#### HERE, WE ANSWER:

- What is fiscal policy, and why do we need to transform it?
- What do we gain from looking at fiscal policy through a human rights lens?
- What do human rights obligations say about the actions needed to ensure fiscal justice?
- How can we hold governments and other powerful actors accountable for actions in this area?

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## KEY CONCEPTS

### SOVEREIGN DEBT & HUMAN RIGHTS

Key Concepts is our series that breaks down complex topics for readers keen to unlock the power of human rights to build just and sustainable economies.



#### HERE, WE ANSWER:

- What is sovereign debt, and why do we need to transform the system governing it?
- What do we gain from looking at debt through a human rights lens?
- What do human rights obligations say about the actions needed in pursuit of debt justice?
- How can we hold governments and other powerful actors accountable for actions in this area?

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## KEY CONCEPTS

### HUMAN RIGHTS & ECONOMIC RECOVERY FROM COVID

Key Concepts is our series that breaks down complex topics for readers keen to unlock the power of human rights to build just and sustainable economies.



#### HERE, WE ANSWER:

- What are the structural injustices COVID-19 has exposed?
- What do we gain from looking at COVID-19 economic recovery efforts through a human rights lens?
- What do human rights obligations say about actions needed to achieve a just recovery?
- How can we hold governments and other powerful actors to account for actions in this area?

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## 6. New approaches: making rights more accessible to everyone

2022 was a notable year in our efforts to bring the power of human rights to all groups fighting for justice. In our Key Concepts series, launched in February, we offer short and friendly primers on key issues about human rights and the economy to activists, organizations, and individuals who might not be familiar with topics such as [fiscal justice](#), [sovereign debt](#), and the [relationship between human rights and economic recovery from COVID-19](#). They are available in Spanish, English, and Arabic, and we will keep expanding the series.

We also explored different ways to reach our audiences. With audio, [on this podcast by Oxford Human Rights Hub at the University of Oxford](#), in which our team members María Emilia Mamberti and Allison Corkery talked about the cost of living crisis and its link to human rights. And also visually: Our [new visual identity](#) (along with a reorganized website), launched in March, represents our commitment to clear and accessible communications. This ensures more people can understand economic issues through a human rights lens, and use that knowledge as a tool to demand transformation. Just in the month after its launch, over 8,000 users accessed our materials, and approximately 70% had a positive experience with our site.

Our work in making rights accessible is also done hand in hand with our local partners. The [Shifting the Narrative](#) project, launched in 2022, is a collaboration between CESR, the Fight Inequality Alliance, the Centre for Social Change at the University of Johannesburg, and a network of over 20 activists. Its objective is to build together new ways of talking about the economy and its links to human rights in South Africa. By developing and testing new ways of framing this issue, we aim to increase public support for progressive economic policies that allow everyone to live with dignity.

In 2023, the Shifting the Narrative project entered a crucial phase where we tested and



*[Shifting the Narrative workshop in Johannesburg.](#)*

refined the new narratives developed with our partners. Through focus groups and a large-scale survey, we engaged key audiences, including working and middle-class communities, to assess how these messages could effectively shift public perceptions and build support for policies like a basic income grant. The results provided valuable insights into the complexities of public opinion on economic issues, particularly the mixed views on the role of the state, while highlighting strong backing for social protection measures.

Building on these findings, we supported local activists in applying the refined messages through targeted campaigns and educational initiatives across South Africa. These efforts not only increased community engagement but also empowered activists to utilize rights-based narratives in their advocacy. By the end of the year, the project had significantly strengthened the capacity of our partners to challenge dominant economic discourses and advocate for a more just and equitable society.

## **Organizational Strengthening**

Between 2022-2023, CESR undertook multiple efforts to strengthen our organizational fabric. Like many other organizations, we have had to adapt to the many ways in which COVID-19 changed the world we work in. Along with responding to external shifts, CESR also faced a number of internal shifts during this time.

A major internal shift took place in March 2022 when our longtime Executive Director, Ignacio Saiz, stepped down from his role. This led to a recruitment process that resulted in a new Executive Director, Meghna Abraham, being appointed in August 2022. As with all organizational

transitions, this change in leadership provided CESR with a time to reflect and build. Key to this was a staff and board retreat held in Istanbul, Turkey in March 2023. This retreat was the first time our team and board had met in person since the onset of the pandemic. It provided space for the team to reaffirm our commitment to CESR's mission and begin laying the groundwork for our 2023-2027 strategy.

Central to our mission is centering equity in justice not only in the work CESR does, but in our organizational practices. In order to ensure that we are walking the talk on these issues, we developed an Embodying Equity and Justice strategy. This strategy is an explicit articulation of CESR's values and how they should be applied in all facets of the organization. This strategy has been particularly useful when developing policies and practices for growing CESR as a virtual and global organization. In order to meet our goal of being a truly global team with close connections to activists carrying out work on the ground, we must ensure that the values of human rights and equality that we fight for externally are reflected internally.

With all the external and internal shifts in the last few years, CESR has had a number of opportunities to take stock of who we are as an organization and how we have grown. This growth was highlighted during CESR's 30th anniversary in 2023. This milestone achievement allowed us to profile the work CESR has done over the past 30 years. From being the first organization founded to focus solely on economic and social rights, to being the first organization to highlight the human rights impacts of the 2008 financial crisis, CESR has long been at the vanguard of the human rights movement. We continue to do so by exposing the impacts of unjust economic systems on human rights and working with partners around the world to propose solutions and build movements for change. We look forward to continuing this work in the many years ahead.

**2022 - ED transition**

**2022 - EEJ strategy implementation**

**2022 - Expanding our global team and improving our operational systems as we continue to scale globally**

**2023 - Team and Board retreat**

**2023 - 30th anniversary**

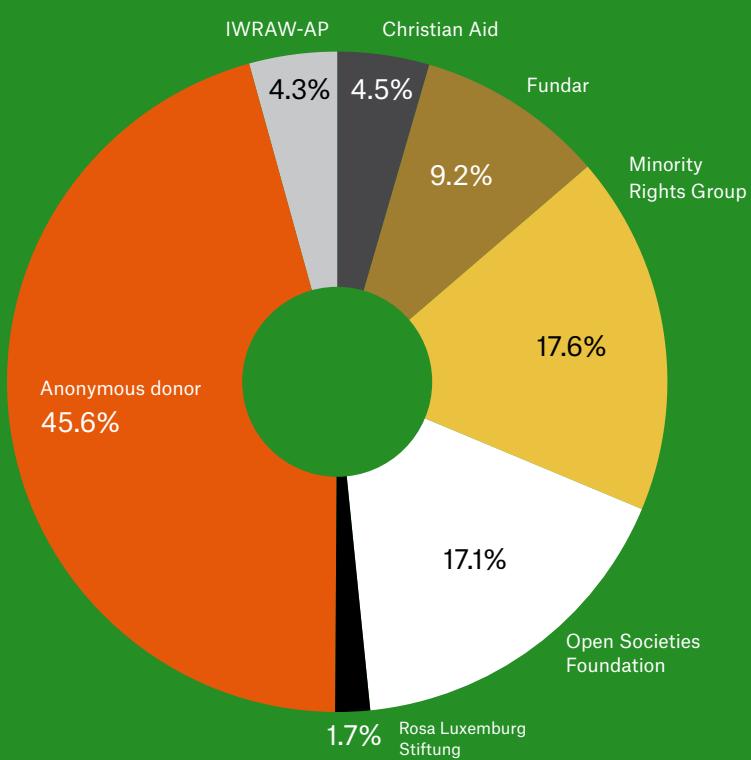
**2023 - Maria joins the team**

# SECTION 4

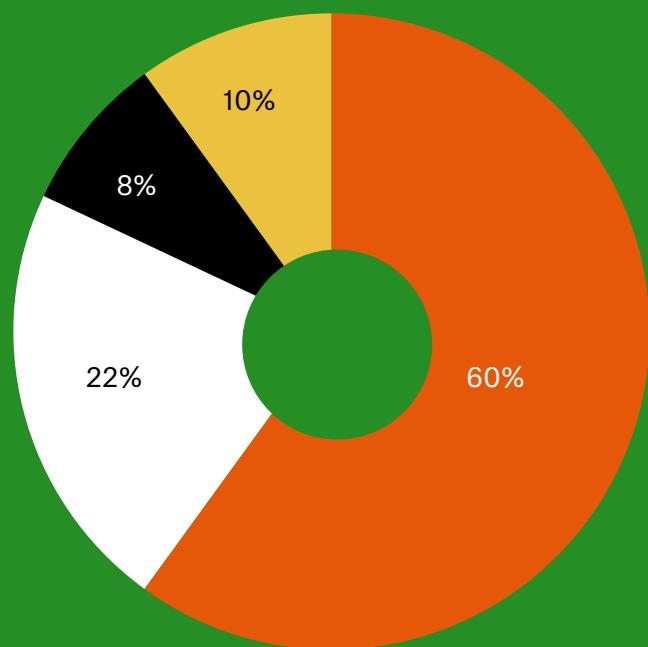
# FINANCES

## 2022 Financial Snapshot

**INCOME: 876,963**



**EXPENSE: \$1,425,398**



● Anonymous donor

● IWRAW-AP

● Christian Aid

● Fundar

● Minority Rights Group

● Open Societies Foundation

● Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung

● Program

● Development

● Operations

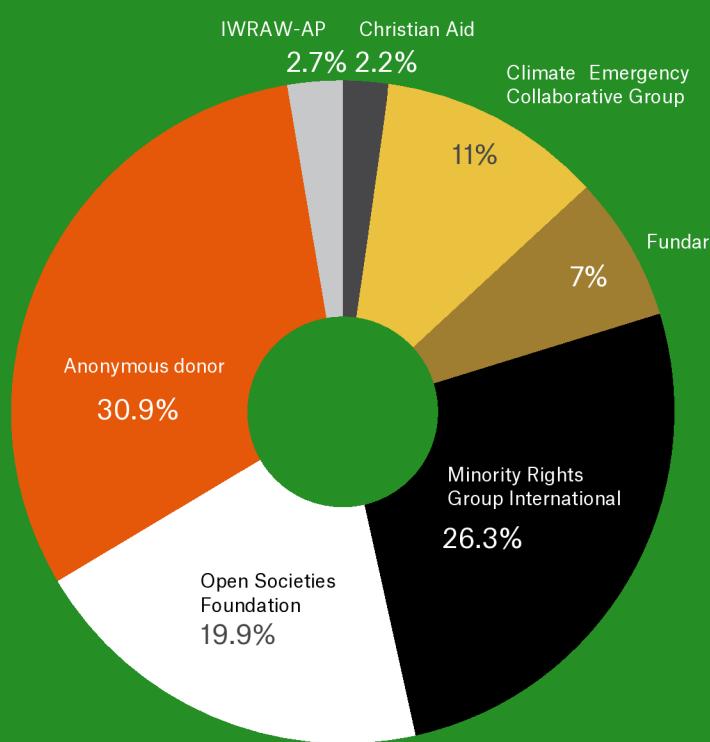
● Communications

# SECTION 4

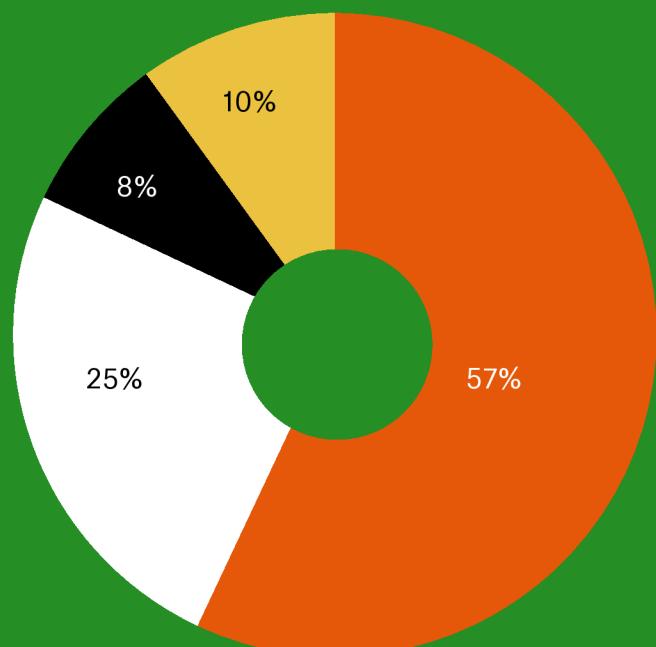
# FINANCES

## 2023 Financial Snapshot

**INCOME: \$1,132,029**



**EXPENSE: \$1,440,955**



- Anonymous donor
- IWRAW-AP
- Christian Aid
- Fundar

- Climate Emergency Collaborative Group
- Open Societies Foundation
- Minority Rights Group International

- Program
- Operations
- Development
- Communications

## Team in 2022

Allison Corkery  
Kate Donald  
Saswati Sarkar

### COMMUNICATIONS

Auska Ovando

### DEVELOPMENT

Rebecca Berger

### PROGRAM

Mahinour ElBadrawi  
María Emilia Mamberti  
Ohene Ampofo-Anti  
Olivia Minatta  
Alina Saba  
Sakshi Rai

### FELLOWS

Yael Wiesel  
Rachael O'Byrne  
Manny Zhang  
Matthew Forgette  
Mica Miragliotta

### LEADERSHIP

Meghna Abraham

## Team in 2023

Allison Corkery  
Maria Ron Balsera  
Saswati Sarkar

### COMMUNICATIONS

Auska Ovando

### DEVELOPMENT

Rebecca Berger

### OPERATIONS

Pamela Choga  
  
**PROGRAM**  
Mahinour ElBadrawi  
María Emilia Mamberti  
Ohene Ampofo-Anti  
Alina Saba  
Rafael Barrio de Mendoza

### FELLOWS

Pulkit Palak  
Matthew Forgette

### INTERNS

Mikhal Kidane

## Board

Imad Sabi | **Chair**  
Senior Program Coordinator, Oxfam IBIS-  
Education Out Loud

Karin Lissakers | **Vice-Chair**  
Former President, Revenue Watch Institute

John T Green | **Treasurer and Secretary**  
Former Professor of Professional Practice/  
Nonprofit Management, The New School

Lilian Gonçalves-Ho-Kang-You  
Former State Councillor for the Council of State,  
Netherlands

Roshni Goswami  
Feminist, Human Rights Activist and Researcher

Miloon Kothari  
Independent Expert on Human Rights and  
Social Policy, Senior Advisor, MIT Displacement  
Research Action Network (DRAN)

Joe Oloka-Onyango  
Professor of Law, Human Rights & Peace Centre  
(HURIPEC), School of Law,  
Makerere University

Rosa Pavanelli  
General Secretary, Public Services International  
(PSI)

Crystal Simeoni  
Director, Nawi - Afrifem Macroeconomics  
Collective

Carla García-Zendejas  
Director People, Land & Resources, Center for  
International Environmental Law (CIEL)



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SOCIAL RIGHTS**