



About CESR: vision, mission and goals

The **Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR)** was founded in 1993 to address the longstanding neglect of economic and social rights on the international human rights agenda, and the widespread abuse of these rights associated with increased economic globalization. It was born from the conviction that human rights—in particular economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights—should be deployed as a powerful instrument for social and economic justice.

CESR's **vision** is of a world in which everyone enjoys the full range of human rights necessary to live with dignity; where individuals and communities deprived of their economic and social rights have effective access to justice; and where economic and social policymakers are held accountable to their human rights obligations.

In fulfillment of this vision, CESR's **mission** is to hold governments and powerful institutions accountable for human rights abuses arising from unjust economic and social policies. It does so by producing rigorous, interdisciplinary analysis of economic and social rights violations in different contexts, and making strategic use of human rights mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels to challenge these abuses and seek accountability for them.

CESR's strategy has evolved over the last two decades in response to an ever changing environment. Today, the **challenges** the organization seeks to address include:

- the persistent gap between the normative recognition of economic and social rights and their lack of implementation in socioeconomic and development policy and practice;
- the challenges civil society groups face in claiming economic and social rights and the limited capacity of human rights institutions and accountability bodies to enforce these;
- the widening gap between rich and poor in many countries as a result of fiscal austerity measures and other regressive fiscal and economic policies;
- the obstacles preventing States from meeting their commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals, including the weakness of mechanisms to hold States accountable;
- the frequent neglect of economic and social justice issues in situations of political transition;
- bridging the gap between the human rights movements and other actors' work for economic and social justice.

To address these challenges, CESR has set itself three long-term **goals for the period of 2018 - 2019**:

1. To promote human rights as guiding principles of economic and social policy;
2. To make strategic use of the Sustainable Development Goals to advance economic and social rights accountability and combat extreme inequality;
3. To strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations and human rights accountability bodies to monitor and enforce economic and social rights.

CESR is working to advance these goals through **the two complementary program areas** summarized below.

Summary of CESR's program areas: 2018 – 2019

Human Rights in Economic and Social Policy

Fiscal policy is one of the key instruments through which economic and social rights are realized. Taxation is the primary means by which governments generate the resources needed to invest in education, health and other public services essential to ensure people can enjoy their human rights in practice. Equitable tax and spending policies are also crucial for tackling inequalities of all kinds, including gender, racial and economic disparities. CESR has exposed how unjust [tax and budget policies](#) result in chronic human rights deprivations and disparities in many different settings, including contexts of [fiscal austerity](#) in Europe and Latin America, or of mass-scale cross-border tax abuse facilitated by tax havens such as [Switzerland](#). It seeks to challenge such fiscal injustices before national, regional and international human rights bodies, as well as [international financial institutions](#), such as the IMF. CESR fosters collaboration across the human rights, development and tax justice communities in pursuit of progressive fiscal policy alternatives and governance reforms, in fulfillment of the [Lima Declaration on Tax Justice and Human Rights](#) which CESR played a lead role in drafting. It is a member of the Steering Coalition of the Independent Commission on the Reform of Corporate Taxation ([ICRICT](#)), which brings together eminent figures to propose new global rules for corporate taxation.

This program also works to advance human rights through social and development policy, including those implemented in fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. CESR has proposed a comprehensive rights-based agenda to implement Sustainable Development [Goal 10 on reducing inequality](#) within and between countries, with a particular focus on the growing problem of [economic inequality](#). It also advocates for sufficient, equitable and accountable [financing for development](#) in line with human rights standards. In addition, CESR works to promote more robust civil society monitoring of SDG commitments, including through the [Spotlight on Sustainable Development Report](#), a ground-breaking global shadow reporting initiative, and by developing new tools for human rights activists and institutions to engage with the SDGs. CESR also works to address the challenges for development and human rights in situations of [political transition](#), where opportunities for greater legal and institutional protection of economic and social rights are often undermined by regressive and exclusionary economic and fiscal policies, as seen in [Egypt](#) and [Colombia](#).

Rights Claiming and Accountability

CESR works to strengthen the capacity of civil society groups to monitor and claim economic and social rights. It provides strategic support to numerous organizations based on its comprehensive methodology for ESC rights monitoring, known as the [OPERA](#) framework. CESR convenes or contributes actively to a range of forums aimed at sharing innovative methods with a broader community of practice, such as the [Working Group on Monitoring](#) of the International Network on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, where CESR provides expertise on the use of quantitative indicators, budget analysis and data technologies in economic and social rights research and advocacy. CESR's work in this area also aims to assist civil society partners in documenting and claiming economic and social rights, by sharing guidance, skills and tools on human rights monitoring and strategic use of human rights accountability mechanisms, including in situations of restricted civil society space. CESR also works to strengthen the effectiveness of these mechanisms in responding to economic and social rights abuses and holding governments accountable.

At the international level, a key focus is on the UN treaty bodies and [Universal Periodic Review](#), as well as on the role of regional human rights bodies (such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights) to address critical emerging issues such as the impact of fiscal policy on human rights. At the national level, CESR works to enhance the role of [national human rights institutions](#) (NHRIs) in promoting enforcement of economic and social rights, and is engaged in a global capacity-building partnership involving regional NHRIs networks in different world regions.