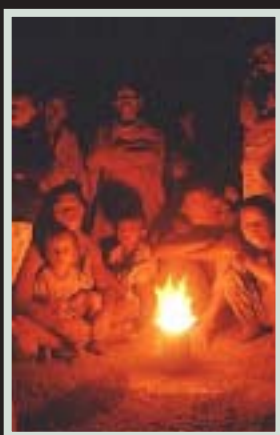




United Nations  
Research Institute for Social Development



# People, Power and the Environment

15 Years of UNRISD Research

A synthesis and annotated bibliography prepared for  
the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development





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Compiled by Catherine Agg and Peter Utting

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**Cover photos: Top:** Dayak blockade, Sarawak, Borneo. Dayak native blockade across a logging road. Penan and Kenyah people on a 24-hour protest against commercial logging by Mitsubishi Daiya Malaysia. Copyright and credit: *Nigel Dickinson / Still Pictures*. **Middle:** A young sorghum seed struggles to grow in the region of Affole in Mauritania where farmers who were once nomads built a dam. Successive droughts and the attractions of settled life have reduced that figure of nomadic herders to about 10 per cent of the population. *Ami Vitale / Panos Pictures*. **Bottom:** Pathrad, India, August 1999. Women attend a rally at Pathrad, a village in the Maheshwar submergence area on the banks of the Narmada river, in protest of the building of 3,200 dams. *Karen Robinson / Panos Pictures*.

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# Acronyms

<b>APDC</b>	Asian and Pacific Development Centre
<b>CDP</b>	Comité de Defensa Popular ( <i>Popular Defence Committee</i> )
<b>CSR</b>	corporate social responsibility
<b>IDRC</b>	International Development Research Centre
<b>IIED</b>	International Institute for Environment and Development
<b>ISO</b>	International Organization for Standardization
<b>IUED</b>	Institut universitaire d'études du développement ( <i>Graduate Institute of Development Studies</i> )
<b>JFM</b>	Joint Forest Management, India
<b>NGLS</b>	Non-Governmental Liaison Service, United Nations
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organization
<b>NUPAUB</b>	Núcleo de Apoio à Pesquisa Sobre Populações Humanas em Areas Umidas Brasileiras ( <i>Support Centre for Research on Human Population and Wetlands in Brazil</i> ), University of São Paulo
<b>TNC</b>	transnational corporation
<b>UCA</b>	Universidad Centroamericana, Managua, Nicaragua
<b>UNA</b>	Universidad Nacional, San José, Costa Rica
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>UNRISD</b>	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
<b>WWF</b>	World Wide Fund for Nature

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<b>CSSM</b>	Civil Society and Social Movements
<b>DGHR</b>	Democracy, Governance and Human Rights
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<b>OC</b>	Overarching Concerns
<b>SPD</b>	Social Policy and Development
<b>TBS</b>	Technology, Business and Society

## Foreword

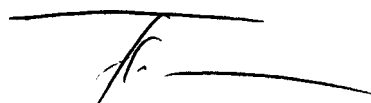
The global inquiry into the state of our planet that has preceded the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development paints a fairly dismal picture. Levels of absolute poverty have not declined and many environmental conditions appear to have worsened since the 1992 Earth Summit. This raises serious questions regarding the policies of governments and international agencies, as well as the social and environmental impacts of business activities. What went wrong?

Part of the problem has to do with poor analysis and weak attempts by powerful actors and organizations to apply new learning and approaches. There is a tendency to emphasize complementarities between economic, social and environmental aspects of development, and to assume that everyone can agree on environmental objectives and benefit from environmental protection. Often ignored are the contradictions inherent in development policies and processes, the trade-offs between environmental protection and human welfare, and the fact that conservation and development interventions produce winners and losers. Mainstream approaches have frequently failed to adequately address the social and political dimensions of environmental change: the impacts of conservation schemes on local livelihoods and cultural rights; the role of different actors and institutions in environmental change; the forms of social mobilization and participation that are necessary to influence policy and resource management practices; patterns of local resistance to top-down interventions; elite resistance to and co-optation of agendas that promote reform; and structural impediments to change.

Issues such as these have been central to UNRISD research in the field of environment and sustainable development. Since the late 1980s, the Institute sponsored 13 projects, involving research in approximately 40 countries, which produced 70 published works. This report summarizes some of the main research findings and briefly describes each of the publications.

What emerges clearly from this body of research is the need to better integrate environmental and livelihood objectives, to address the social and environmental impacts of policies associated with economic growth and liberalization; and to enhance the capacity of low-income groups to influence decision making that impacts their lives.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the authors who have written UNRISD publications on environmental and sustainable development issues, and the many other researchers who were involved in the studies. I would also like to thank the large number of academic institutions, research foundations, grassroots organizations, NGOs, governments, international agencies, and publishers that collaborated with UNRISD in this field of inquiry.



Thandika Mkandawire  
Director, UNRISD

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