



Report of the Chair and Vice Chair of Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) to the 2021 General Assembly in Glasgow Scotland

Dear friends,

It has been a dynamic year for BIEN, in a year where many of us had to stay at home. We have missed our physical gatherings where we could meet, discuss, laugh, and hug each other. The BIEN family, known for its advocacy for unconditional love and freedom of choice for every individual on Earth, could only meet online, like so many people around the globe. Despite the restrictions on our freedom of movement and social interaction, we think we have taken important steps towards the future.

BIEN's internal elections for its Executive Committee (EC) took place in the month of August 2020 and the new EC held its first meeting in the month of October 2020. This report is a summary of BIEN's activities initiated by the new Executive Committee. We hope you will enjoy reading it.

1. Team building

With a new Chair and Vice-Chair and new members joining the EC in September 2020, teambuilding had our attention. BIEN is run by passionate volunteers with complementary qualities and cultural backgrounds. During the initial meeting it was necessary to develop a common vision in which everyone participated.

BIEN EC is gender-balanced, ambitious, but has limited resources. Fundraising and activation of (more) BIEN-members are key to keep up with the international developments and function as an umbrella-organization on a Worldwide level.

2. Strategic Direction:

Building on the illustrious tradition and its best practices, the new team identified the following priorities in terms of strategic direction of BIEN:



1. To have a global face with all continents represented in our membership, affiliates, and of course on the Executive Committee. Increasing our membership and affiliations particularly in the continents where we have fewer members and affiliates.
2. To have our footprint in various domains where Basic Income is being discussed.
3. To achieve the above by developing strategic partnerships with globally reputed research and other institutions that are invested in the education and research of Basic Income.
4. To have a much stronger outreach by developing material in important world languages
5. To engage with student community from all over the world

3. BIEN Central Secretariat

Given the increasing volume of activities of BIEN we felt it was necessary to have a full-time paid coordinator who can oversee all the activities and follow up with the EC members anchoring various initiatives. Steps are being taken to find the resources.

4. Research Initiatives: Repository

The EC agreed to form 'thematic research groups' and to let them create and update relevant research pages. The first group (on Experiments) is currently under formation. The pages on histories of Basic Income and BIEN were updated by the original author. The working group for 'Clarification of BI definition', which was formed by 2019 GA decision, has continued to work, and is contributing to the 2021 annual congress.

5. New Partnerships

The United Nations Development Programme

BIEN and UNDP signed a Memorandum of Understanding in May 2021. This MoU was a result of a letter sent to the Secretary General of the UN and the Administrator of UNDP in May 2020. The letter was an initiative of 96 Basic Income organizations from all over the World in reaction to the global economic crisis triggered by the lockdown policies



implemented in almost every country. BIEN and UNDP have identified the following activities in which cooperation may be pursued, with each Party operating subject to its respective mandates, governing regulations, rules, policies, and procedures:

- i) Sharing of expertise and experience on unconditional cash transfer programmes, particularly in relation to Basic Income, defined as *a periodic cash payment unconditionally delivered to all on an individual basis, without means-test or work requirement.*
- ii) Where appropriate, formalize a technical service agreement to draw on BIEN's expertise, which would spell out BIEN's resource commitment, in support of country related initiatives
- iii) Researching which countries might most benefit from Basic Income schemes and which might be demonstrating readiness and best placed to implement them, including supporting countries on a demand basis
- iv) Dissemination of research results by issuing technical reports and policy-briefs.
- v) Conducting seminars and webinars to share research results and best practices in implementing Basic income schemes.
- vi) Commissioning pilot studies to evaluate the impact of Basic Incomes interventions in different national and local contexts.

For the first time in history, UNDP will host a round table on Basic Income at BIEN's annual congress in Glasgow this year.

In addition to UNDP we are now in the process of signing a similar Memorandum of Understanding with two research organisations: Jain Family Institute from the USA, and Freiburg Research Institute for Basic Income Studies (FRIBIS).



6. Exploring new domains -

Municipal Leaders' Collective (BIRAL)

Globally, in several countries local municipal leaders have been experimenting with the idea of Basic Income, under a wide variety of labels. Not all of them may fit BIEN's definition of Basic Income. However, as BIEN we felt it necessary to enter this space and open conversations across continents by initially bringing together the researchers who are studying these initiatives, and later the municipal leaders themselves. We are calling this initiative Basic Income Research and Action Lab (BIRAL) which is a kind of a Collective of researchers from Brazil, USA, South Korea, Germany and so on. BIRAL has had its first Seminar in the month of May 2021. It is proposed that BIRAL Seminars will be bimonthly. BIEN is also collaborating with two other research entities in conducting this collective activity – Jain Family Institute from the USA, and Freiburg Research Institute for Basic Income Studies (FRIBIS).

Basic Income and Blockchain Conversations

Blockchain technology is maturing and opens doors to new ways of distribution of Basic Income to individual people. More and more Basic Income blockchain projects are popping up. While it is heartening to see that in the last 10 years discussion about Basic Income has exploded exponentially, and people have started building Basic Income schemes from the bottom up, the downside is that the definition of Basic Income gets diluted and people define Universal Basic Income as per their political inclination, comprehension, and convenience. This calls for an important role for BIEN to uphold the philosophical and the political underpinnings of the idea of Basic Income and what kind of society it seeks to build. Our presence is particularly necessary where the term is most likely to be distorted and domesticated by people whose vision is not based on the notions of freedom, justice, and care. As an educational charity, BIEN's EC is exploring how we can foster the discussion, engage in research, and inform the public about what is happening in the Blockchain space with regards to Universal Basic Income. In this transformative space, BIEN can act as a guardian of the concept of Basic Income. During the coming year you will see an increase in contributions around this topic on our website and social media platforms.



7. Fundraising

We are very ambitious, but our financial resources are extremely limited. Pushing EC members to take on more work than they can handle would be counterproductive and not fair. While EC members can provide leadership to activities, they should also be able to get professional help that could be partly paid and partly voluntary. To reach our strategic goal of becoming the pre-eminent Basic Income community and the 'Go-To' destination for advice and consultation on Basic Income we need to be professional in all our work. To be that costs money and we need to do fundraising to that extent.

8. BIEN Regional Hubs

We feel the need to create regional hubs in different continents. Being an educational and research charity, our role is to initiate conversations about Basic Income in every country. To do this we need to develop strategic partnerships, reach out to more people and agencies to work locally. While Basic Income is a global idea, the actual nuts and bolts are discussed in the local country context. As a first step we have decided to have three regional hubs in the Global South - Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

BIEN Asia

BIEN Africa

BIEN Latin America

9. BIEN Internship Program

A new initiative this year has been an Interns Project. Four interns from China have been working with BIEN online, translating articles from English to Chinese, summarising Chinese documents in English, and undertaking a variety of other projects that will benefit the debate about Basic Income in China, the global debate, and themselves. The project started with a five day online introductory course on Basic Income that was also attended by three students from the Freiburg Institute for Basic Income Studies and one of BIEN's new volunteers. The first BIEN Internship Program was led by Dr. Malcolm Torry.



10. Moving Digital

Digital Congresses and General Assembly meetings: Because of the pandemic the 2020 annual congress was cancelled, and again because of the pandemic the 2021 congress is being held online, organized by Strathclyde University in Glasgow and by the Citizen's Basic Income Network Scotland. Because there was no congress in 2020, elections for EC posts and votes on a variety of issues were taken by post. In December 2020 an online meeting of BIEN members was held to vote on an amendment to the constitution that allows General Assembly meetings to be held online. That provision is being employed this year to enable an online General Assembly to take place at the end of the online congress.

11. BIEN Website

BIEN's website now receives half a lakh¹ of visitors a month, and the monthly bulletin has a readership of well over 14,000, reflecting the growing interest in Basic Income. BIEN has therefore had to upgrade its website hosting package, an increase in cost with a very good feeling; and it will soon have to discuss its email package.

Translation Project

When people search for information about Basic Income, they will come across BIEN's website. As an EARTH network, we must make the most important information accessible for people from all over the globe. Therefore, we put effort in finding people to translate in different languages. The translation project is currently focusing on Chinese, Japanese, Hindi, French, and Spanish. We aim for more languages in the future.

¹ A Lakh is a unit in the Indian numbering system, equal to 100,000



12. BIEN's 35th anniversary

In October 2021 BIEN will complete 35 years of existence. The EC would like to make use of this opportunity to connect with the founders of BIEN to converse with them about the past, present and future of BIEN and its role in the world.

Unconditionally,

Sarath Davala and Hilde Latour
Chair and Vice-Chair
July 15, 2021
