





Submission to the report "Roadmap for Eradicating Poverty Beyond Growth" Office of the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights

1. Introduction

The Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) along 70 of its affiliates and partners from 33 countries endorsing this submission, has the pleasure to submit the below inputs for the report "Roadmap for the Eradication of Extreme Poverty Beyond Growth". The present submission is based on the recognition that extreme poverty is a reality that is unnecessary and manmade and therefore can and should be eradicated.

BIEN is the largest, oldest and most wide-reaching global network of researchers, advocates and policymakers engaged with Basic Income as an emerging policy tool with multidimensional developmental impact. Basic Income (BI) is defined as a periodic cash payment unconditionally delivered to all usual residents in a given territory on an individual basis, without means-test or work requirement (BIEN). We have solid and far-reaching evidence indicating that unconditional, individual and universal cash can be transformational for individuals and communities. Based on this evidence we submit inputs for the Roadmap, presenting how a Basic Income can be a simple and flexible socio-economic policy instrument contributing to the goal of ending poverty. This is an innovative proposition in that it places individual and community well-being at the center of policy considerations, with economic growth a vector for prosperity rather than its primary goal. Our submission has a developmental focus and speaks mostly to contexts with a weak social protection system.

We highly value previous reports from the Office of the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty consistently highlighting the relevance of Basic Income for this mandate. We propose below policy actions for different development contexts that we trust can help operationalize the promises of Basic Income schemes for more just societies.

2. Perpetual poverty and the impact of unconditional cash

The principle of Leaving No One Behind remains relevant today as 8.4 per cent of the world population live below the international poverty line, with decreases in global poverty levels still below the desired 2030 targets (A/HRC/56/61). Yet we know the factors perpetuating poverty fundamentally, exclusion from full access to rights and resources that translates into material and social deprivation (Tilly 2017). Poverty is thus structural and systemic, with impacts that are both deleterious and cyclical – poverty's impacts, like ill-health and limited education, also lead to further poverty (A/76/150).

Against this backdrop, global evidence clearly shows that the provision of regular, unconditional and individual cash is an effective tool for addressing poverty and deprivation. This has been showcased through the rich, global evidence base of cash transfer programs (see for example

Bastagli et al. 2016; Give Directly research on cash transfers) and in studies of Basic Income schemes (Davala et al, 2015; Haarmann et al.,, 2009; Haarmann et al.,, 2019; Standing, 2008; Give Directly research on Basic Income; Balakrishnan et al., 2024; De Wispelaere, Farías, 2023). Consistently, across contexts, individuals are found to spend unconditional cash first on meeting their most immediate needs for food and shelter, thereby improving their health; spending on education follows. Once individuals address their basic material security, they invest in income generating assets, thereby improving their livelihoods. For this reason, Basic Income pilots have shown a significant increase in self-account work, thereby breaking the cycle of poverty. Cash's transformational and empowering impact rests on its ability to enhance recipient dignity. Targeted and conditional anti-poverty schemes are widely recognised as stigmatising and abusive (Standing, 2017); by contrast, unconditional cash meets needs for recognition, respect, and autonomy.

3. The potential of Basic Income for the five policy areas of interest

Policy area 1: Access to social protection and services

Universal Basic Income to Leave No One Behind

Against growing insecurities of our societies and as we consider adaptive systems that help us move towards universal social protection, a Basic Income scheme can be an innovative solution for an inclusive social policy (Bashur, 2024). Being unconditional and universally distributed to the person, a Basic Income, by definition, embodies the principle of Leaving No One Behind and can help achieve social protection for all. It can be a means to expand social protection to hard-to-reach individuals, including those in the informal sector. In the same vein, it can also do away with the poverty and precarity traps characterising current means-tested and conditional benefit systems, which discourage people from taking certain jobs because they will be financially penalized. Current social protection systems can thereby inadvertently discourage people from entering the formal labour market, pushing them into the informal market (Standing, 2017). It has also been shown how economic insecurity increases people's stress, making them more cautious and less entrepreneurial, with effects that can travel across social networks (Standing, 2015). Practically speaking, a Basic Income will ensure basic economic security, enabling individuals and households to cope with and withstand shocks, with broader ramifications for the entire community (Standing, 2015).

Analysis of unconditional cash transfer programs (Bashur, 2025; Bashur, Mathur (forthcoming); Grisolia et al., 2024) and Basic Income pilots (Davala et al., 2015; Haarmann et al., 2009; Haarmann et al., 2019) demonstrates that cash can reinforce social cohesion and social capital, particularly if it is distributed universally. Furthermore, there is some evidence that unconditional cash can strengthen trust in institutions: it signifies to recipients that they matter and are trusted by responsive authorities, who are perceived in turn as acting in recipient's best interests (Bashur 2023; Drucza, 2006; de Andrade et al., 2021; Kangas et al., 2021). Trust in institutions is also likely to increase under Basic Income conditions as universal and direct distribution of cash support will remove the institutional bottlenecks so conducive to corruption. This potential for strengthened social cohesion can be significant given the established agreement as to social cohesion's importance for more effective development policies (See development scholars such as Easterly, Ritzan and Woolcock, 2006; Foa, 2011; Valenti and Giovannoni, 2013; and international organisations including World Bank, 2018; OECD 2011; Club de Madrid, 2011).

• Policy area 2: Labour policies and the care economy

Basic Income as means to institutionalize and value care work

In one measure, unpaid care work such as childcare, healthcare and cleaning services would, if remunerated at a minimum hourly rate, represent 9 percent of global GDP (A/HRC/56/61). Yet as this is largely unaccounted for in standard measures of economic productivity, "a systemic transfer of hidden subsidies to the rest of the economy [is] unrecognized" (Antonopoulos, 2009, p.2). Since care work is primarily a task assigned to women, this transfer can be understood as an expression of patriarchal inequality (Antonopoulos, 2009). One of the more attractive elements of Basic Income proposals is precisely their potential to support a push back against this inequality, particularly if accompanied by policies such as free childcare and shared parental leave (Zelleke, 2008, Weeks 2011). There are two mechanisms through which it is thought that this will happen. First, given that, in contemporary societies, money signifies social status, it is thought that uncoupling the receipt of money from the receipt of wages will lift the status of (historically unremunerated) reproductive work. Second, un-coupling economic security from paid labour should reduce the costs associated with taking time away from the labour market, such as when focusing on care. If accompanied by policies that incentivise shared parental leave, this should see a more equitable distribution of care work between men and women emerge (Van Parijs, 2001). It could also help the transition towards a care economy through promoting the idea that "all citizens have responsibilities and obligations outside the sphere of paid employment" (Zelleke, 2008, p.7) - the 'universal caretaker' model of citizenship. In addition, it could open space for more and more people to manage their time differently by engaging in work they deem important, such as socially valuable care and volunteer work (Miller et al., 2023). And of course, such a policy can protect single parents and their children from poverty by being provided to care providers and its recipients alike (Zelleke, 2008; Miller et al., 2019).

• Policy area 3: Economic systems transformation

A Basic Income for a more equitable economic redistribution

Evidence from Basic Income pilots has shown that Basic Income supports major steps forward towards the SDGs, with evidence of rapid improvements in at least 7 out of the 17 SDGs (Bashur, 2024). The flexibility of unconditional cash renders this possible: consistently, across contexts where a Basic Income has been tested, beneficiaries first choose to meet their basic needs by spending on food, shelter and education. Once beneficiaries realize they can meet their basic needs over time and thereby gain a minimum level of basic material security, they start investing in income-generating assets, thereby improving their livelihood, driving development gains. Subsequently, as Basic Income is given to all, evidence suggests that it opens pathways for collective community action and joint investments. As a result, Basic Income has been shown to strengthen social cohesion within the communities in which it has been piloted (as shown in pilots in Madhya Pradesh (Davala et al., 2015); informal settlements of Hyderabad (Bashur et al., forthcoming); a village in Namibia (Haarmann et al, 2009, 2019)). Significantly, Basic Income schemes have registered high efficiency levels (Standing, 2017). Multiplier effects of between 1.8 and 2.6 times have been accounted for: as cash changes hands within the community, it generates up to 2.6 times its value, indicating that it can, for one, fund itself, while generating a value added for the local economy (Egger et al., 2022; Bashur, 2023).

This mechanism highlights how a simple policy can lift individuals from deprivation. This mechanism stands in contrast to the dominant approach to social security whereby the road to prosperity necessarily straddles an increase in aggregate economic output. In this case, rather than the economic production unit, the starting point is the individual and his or her basic material security. The latter is guaranteed by investing in the person through the provision of a Basic Income. The change in paradigm here requires a shift from an economic system that prioritizes profits to one that prioritizes personal and community well-being, in line with what has been termed the social and solidarity economy (Yi et al., 2023). Importantly, under such a paradigm, there is ample reason to believe that Basic Income recipients will choose more pro-social, less carbon intensive activities, which could help shift social and economic activity in the direction of what is environmentally feasible, desirable, and sustainable and away from 'what is unnecessary or even toxic' (A/HRC/56/61). Here, economic activity and production are a vector for prosperity, rather than its end goal.

• Policy Area 4: Climate, environment and resources

Basic Income is increasingly linked to a range of climate policy outcomes (see for example Memorandum 2024). Indeed, it has relevant application across the Paris Agreement's provisions on mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage, with significant potential to facilitate a just transition, support conservation and biodiversity goals towards climate justice.

There is growing evidence that providing direct, unconditional payments to communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis can aid adaptation and build resilience, while also enhancing conservation and biodiversity efforts, offering an alternative to problematic carbon credit systems (Fletcher & Büscher, 2020). For example, since 2022, the NGO Cool Earth has been providing a Conservation Basic Income to entire communities in Peru. Positive trends are emerging not only around poverty and livelihoods but also environmental protection (Cool Earth, 2024). Often, financial resources prevent these communities from retaining land, halting the advance of energy, logging, mining, and other extractive industries. Basic Income is changing this.

Given its universal, individual and unconditional modalities, BI starts from a position of recognising rights and providing direct support to those who need it most, without the risk of falling through bureaucratic gaps or relying on trickle-down economic principles. It can therefore help us conceptualise a more inclusive just transition, one in which women, youth, rural and indigenous communities, and other marginalised groups, are included. This is in contrast to many mainstream just transition policy initiatives which often prioritise workers in the global north, and are predicated on the promise of 'green growth'. BI instead offers an opportunity to address the increased demand for social security, breaking reliance on extractive growth for personal incomes.

A Basic Income can be a powerful tool to address the political feasibility of energy price reforms. In many cases new levies on fossil fuels have resulted in popular protests, as in Canada, France and Ecuador (<u>The Conversation, 2019</u>; <u>Lawhon & McCreary, 2020</u>). However, energy reforms and innovative policies in California, Iran and Austria, which have included a redistributive element such as cash or tax credits, have generally been better received by the public (<u>World Economic Forum, 2017</u>; <u>European Commission, 2023</u>; <u>PPI California, 2023</u>).

There is evidence that a Basic Income can promote greener consumption, for example in India, where households were more likely to purchase cleaner, safer cooking fuels (<u>UBI Data</u>). And in communities most impacted by climate-induced disasters, basic-income type policies have led the

way in delivering fast and efficient support to help people recover and rebuild, including the 2600 Malawian families who received \$750 from NGO Give Directly in the aftermath of Cyclone Freddy (<u>Give Directly, 2024</u>). Basic Income can therefore be a powerful tool to operationalise commitments under the UNFCCC's newly-established Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), ensuring essential cash resources reach those who need them most.

• Policy Area 5: Trade, finance, debt and global solidarity

The importance of international cooperation as an enabler of more inclusive societies cannot be highlighted enough in this context. Basic Income has been on the radar of many international organisations. In a panel organised in 2021 by the Basic Income Earth Network, UNDP, ILO, UNIDO, UNESCO, UN-ESCWA, UN-ECLAC, the IMF and the World Bank spoke in favour of this tool. UNDP issued a report in response to the global COVID-19 challenges presenting possible funding schemes for a BI in 132 countries. The UN Secretary-General in his 2023 landmark initiative, the New Agenda for Peace, recommends Basic Income as an emerging tool for conflict prevention promoting resilience and social cohesion, whilst also breaking cycles of violence. And BIEN's submission to the 2025 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture (BIEN, 2024), which garnered support from 125 organisations from 46 countries, highlights the applicability of BI as a Peacebuilding tool.

One way for implementing a Basic Income is embedding this instrument in traditional development, reconstruction, and peacebuilding efforts. A Basic Income can in fact make development programs more cost-effective: as individuals eat better, have better shelter, are healthier, attend school more regularly as shown in Basic Income pilots, investments in education, the health sector and other services will have a greater impact given equal amount of investment.

Other financing mechanisms include a redistributive financing model combined with an element of revenue from energy reforms (i.e. carbon taxes and related levies) as well as distributing proceeds from natural sustainable resource extraction in the form of a Basic Income (Ferguson, 2015; Moss, 2012). The Brazilian town of Marica showcases an innovative pilot for such a set-up (Balakrishnan et al., 2024). Further routes to funding climate finance can be in the form of redirecting subsidies from fossil fuel, fishing, and agriculture, while taxing deforestation, fuel, and frequent flying, or with the issue and proportionate global distribution of Special Drawing Rights.

For example, Equal Right has outlined a 'Cap and Share' policy, with modelling suggesting it could raise upwards of \$5 trillion annually for climate finance, including a modest Basic Income for all citizens of the world of at least \$30 a month (Equal Right, 2023). Under Cap and Share, a carbon charge of \$135 per tonne of CO2 would be applied to all global fossil fuel extraction, which would occur within a 'cap' or limit on the total amount allowed to be extracted. The revenues would be put into a 'Global Commons Fund', which would invest in the green transition and pay out a global BI, with the level of BI increasing in line with the fund's performance.

Under Equal Right's modelling, this fund could also be supplemented with revenues from new international taxation on wealth and financial transactions, which would tackle global inequality and raise up to \$9tn (Equal Right, 2024). Crucially, unlike most similar proposals on wealth and carbon taxes, the introduction of the fund in Equal Right's proposals offers a sustainable financing mechanism designed to maintain a Basic Income beyond the inevitably diminishing revenues from the initial tax base (i.e. carbon extraction or accumulated wealth).

The creation of a local digital currency has also been advanced as a possible funding mechanism in partnership with national governments or for municipalities independently (Bashur, 2022).

4. Conclusion

As set out in the UN Secretary-General's Our Common Agenda, we are at an inflection point in history where humanity faces stark and urgent need for a breakthrough away from perpetual crises and towards a peaceful future for our people and planet. We believe our overall insufficient progress towards the 2030 Agenda calls for innovative thinking and expanding our toolbox.

The broad interest in Basic Income at the highest policy-making levels of the UN and the solid global evidence of this emerging and transformative tool reflect the potential of Basic Income as part of the toolbox to promote a new socio-ecologic order beyond growth. Hence, there is a strong case for developing Basic Income schemes to complement traditional development efforts. The design of Basic Income policies will inevitably be context-specific, answering local priorities for an equitable transition toward more just societies. Starting with a pilot location is advisable to assess what, if any, complementary policies will be needed for the realization of the transformational effect of Basic Income. For this, and in line with the Special Rapporteur's suggestion for an "[a]ppropriate sequencing and coordination of the transition at multiple levels of governance" (A/HRC/56/61, p.18), a sequenced approach to a Basic Income scheme can be advisable in certain settings. The Basic Income Earth Network, harnessing unique international expertise on Basic Income pilots remains available for any consultations and can provide technical support to develop and implement such BI schemes.

Please refer to the matrixes in the annex for policy recommendations in different country contexts.

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Annexes

- Table 1: Matrix of policy recommendations for a low-middle income country: example Tuvalu
- Table 2: Matrix of policy recommendations for a low-income country: example Malawi
- Table 3a: Matrix of policy recommendations for post-conflict country: example Syria
- Table 3b: Matrix of policy recommendations for post-conflict country: example Colombia
- List of entities endorsing this submission as of 29.04.2025

Table 1: Matrix of policy recommendations for a low-middle income country: example Tuvalu

Rationale for a BI pilot in Tuvalu: Tuvalu is one of the most climate-vulnerable nations in the world, facing existential loss from sea level rise, increased extreme weather events and water salination. It also faces increasing economic challenges due to loss and damage, overfishing and out-migration, particularly of its young people. It is also one of the world's smallest and least populated countries, with just over 11,000 permanent residents. For these reasons, Tuvalu would be a promissing location to test a national BI programme, particularly one linked to themes of loss and damage from climate change, including migration. Such a policy could also help address economic and migration related issues by providing the BI in a local currency, only spendable within the island nation, amplifying its economic value.

	Level of		Time horizon	
	governance	Short-term (2-3 years)	Medium-term (5 years)	Long-term (10 years)
Policy actions	Local (local government, NGO partners, external experts)	Develop existing 'UBI for Climate Justice' pilot in Tuvalu, with aim of reaching 10% of the population (approx 1000 people)	Utilize learnings from pilot to influence nation-wide BI policy	
	National	Identity the cost, implementation mechanisms and funding sources for a national BI for all Tuvaluans, framed around concept of climate justice	Work in partnership with external donors including philanthropy, bilateral aid agencies and multilateral institutions to establish funding for national BI	Tuvalu is providing a BI to all citizens and is sustainably financed for future generations, for example through the establishment of a national wealth fund
	Regional (South Pacific nations, SIDS, Japan, Australia, New Zealand)	Explore the potential of scaling a BI for climate justice to other SIDS in the region, and how high income countries in region could support its sustainability	Tuvalu is established as regional leader on use of unconditional cash for a range of climate outcomes and disperse ideas throughout the region	A regional BI for climate justice has been adopted in at least 5 South Pacific SIDS
	Global (UN agencies)	International donors agree to dedicate a portion of their climate finance obligations to unconditional cash transfers and the optimal delivery mechanisms for this are identified, such as through the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), the Adaptation fund or other approaches under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement	BI for climate justice is recognized as a legitimate and impactful modality to achieve climate justice and related climate policy outcomes in international arenas such as COP and related international agreements	

Table 2: Matrix of policy recommendations for a low-income country: example Malawi

Rationale for a BI pilot in Malawi: Malawi has substantial experience with unconditional cash transfers, having launched the world's first Basic Income for loss and damage with the Scottish government and NGO Give Directly following Cyclone Freddy. Earlier in 2025, the government established a 'Cap and Share taskforce' with several government ministries, INGO and CSO partners. This taskforce will report back in mid-2025 with the intention of demonstrating how a national BI could be delivered in Malawi through a charge on fossil fuel extraction in the Global North, and what the social and economic impacts of this policy would be. High levels of poverty and relatively low cost of living mean that a Basic Income in Malawi would also be more financially feasible and high-impact than in higher-income countries.

		Time horizon		
	Level of governance	Short-term (2-3 years)	Medium-term (5 years)	Long-term (10 years)
Policy actions	Local (local government, NGOs, Cap and Share taskforce members	Explore pilot ideas based on findings of Malawi government's cap and share taskforce (due to publish in June 2025), which includes impact modelling of a national BI	Use learning from pilot to scale up and develop additional programmes	
	National (particularly ministries forming cap and share taskforce)	Develop infrastructure necessary to distribute payments	Introduce a national BI	
	Regional (AU, COMESA, EAC)	Explore how a BI could be introduced across the southern African region		
	Global (bilateral aid agencies, ADB, UN agenies)	Provide funding for BI pilots	Provide start up costs for BI financing mechanism	

Table 3a: Matrix of policy recommendations for post-conflict country: example Syria

Rationale for a BI pilot in Syria: Syria is an exemplary case of a post-conflict setting where the social fabric has been fragmented and the economy artificially frozen due to years of conflict. The new administration in combination with gradual lifting of international sanctions renders Syria an interesting setting to test BI's potential for social cohesion and its economic multiplier effects for more effective post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

	Time horizon			
	Level of governance	Short-term (2-3 years): BI as part of reconstruction	Medium-term (5 years): BI as part of reconstruction	Long-term (10 years): adoption as national policy
	Local	-Develop /finetune national registry of individuals for the identification of Basic Income intended beneficiaries - Financial literacy programs to facilitate Basic Income electronic transfer.		
Policy actions	National	- Assessing status of industrial base and growth prospects of local supply to meet the increase in local demand generated by the BI. - Seek technical support for capacity building of national production capacity. This can be sought from UN technical agency such as UNIDO (see unpublished design of a Basic Income pilot in Northern Iraq for IDP and refugee communities conducted by Bashur for UNIDO)	-Assessment of socio-economic impact of Basic Income and costs of its withdrawal. - Gradual take up of funding from national resources.	Full adoption of BI as a national policy. Funding options will be context specific and can include: the redistribution of national resource proceeds in the form of a Basic Income as a transparent way of managing a national resource (Iraq example); rationalizing and reallocating fuel subsidies; a local/digital currency, including by support from the diaspora;)
	Regional (Gulf Cooperation Council countries, Turkey, Iran) and Global (United Nations, bilateral aid agencies, EU, Russia)	- Country-wide Basic Income scheme distributed as a 'Peace Dividend' so that every citizen 'benefits from peace'. - Funded by international aid complementing and enhancing effectiveness of traditional development and peacebuilding efforts	Incremental decrease of BI funding from reconstruction, development and peacebuilding efforts towards national adoption.	

For references see work by Diana Bashur cited in this submission.

Table 3b: Matrix of policy recommendations for post-conflict country: example Colombia

Rationale for a BI pilot in Colombia: Despite the country's 2016 peace agreement, significant parts of Colombia, particularly rural areas, continue to be impacted by violent conflict. The country also suffers from high levels of poverty and inequality exacerbated by vulnerabilities to climate change, which have directly contributed to the conflict. Colombia is therefore a first-rate example of a place where the nexus of economic context and conflict drivers are clear, offering significant opportunities to test Basic Income as a tool for conflict transformation. In this context, Equal Right is currently working with a coalition of local and national NGOs, indigenous and women's groups, and members of congress to develop this concept and implement a pilot in the Putamayo department of Colombia. As a promising pilot setup for the relevance of BI for post-conflict contexts, this coalition welcomes the expansion of its partnership structure to include UN partners.

	Level of	Time horizon			
	governance	Short-term (2-3 years)	Medium-term (5 years)	Long-term (10 years)	
	Local (local government, NGO and community partners, external experts)	Based on recommendations from the upcoming 'Basic Income for peace with nature' trial proposal being developed by Equal Right, deliver a pilot project testing the efficacy of BI as a peacebuilding intervention, with adequate power to generate significant evidence and designed with scalability in mind	Utilize learnings from pilot to influence local policy making and achieve financial sustainability of payments beyond pilot stage		
Policy actions	National	Carry out scoping work to identify key challenges in scaling pilot to national or subnational level, including registration & implementation modalities, targeting strategies, integration with existing policy frameworks and financing sources	Establish a national BI pilot for post- conflict regions (such as PDET regions) based on learnings from pilot	Deliver a 'Peace Dividend' BI to all citizens	
	Regional (LATAM/Mercosur countries)	Consider role of BI for peace in spillover conflicts (ie Venezuelan border or narco trafficking)	Explore how inter- regional collaboration could facilitate a multi- country BI for peace	Implement a BI for peace in areas most affected by conflict in the region	
	Global (UN, multilateral and bilateral agencies, donor nations with relevant peacebuilding expertise)	Provide funding for pilot project through combination of development and peacebuilding funding streams	Utilising learnings from pilot, integrate BI for peace approach into relevant international programming	BI peace is recognized as a valid approach in post-conflict peacebuilding	

<u>List of BIEN partner entities endorsing this submission as of 29.04.2025</u>

Number of endorsing entities	70
Number of country locations	33
Number of Endorsements from Multilateral Organisations	8
Continents	Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, Central America, South America, Australia

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