



Presentation at Finnish UN Association meeting
12 December 2017, Helsinki, Finland

UNU-WIDER and Proposals for Reform of the UN System



UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSITY
UNU-WIDER

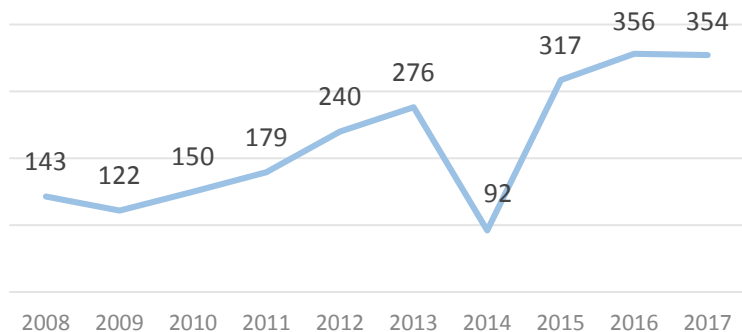
I. Introduction

UNU-WIDER: introductory points

- A UNU institute established in 1985
- A research unit in Helsinki plus programmes in selected countries
- A global network
- Web-site: <https://www.wider.unu.edu/>

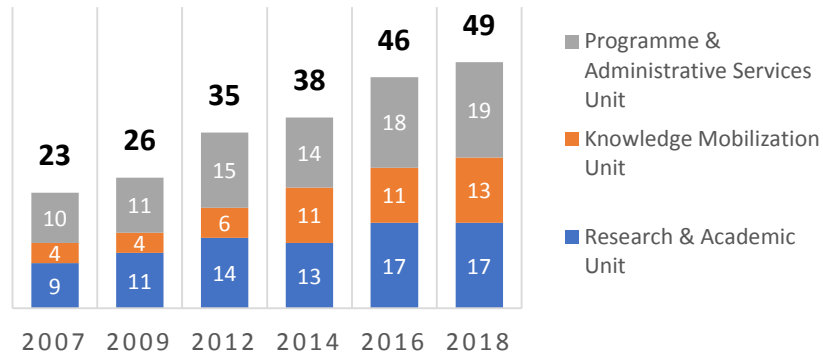
Institute and global network

Chart 1: Number of individually contracted researchers



+ more than 100 LOAs (co-authors) in 2017

Chart 2: Number of full-time UNU-WIDER personnel positions

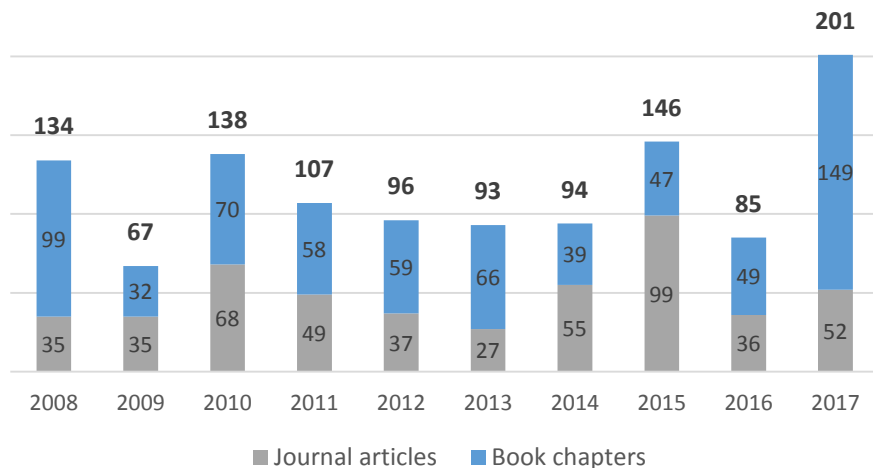


Actively built **60+ partnerships** in 2014-17 with carefully selected institutions and research networks in the Global South and in the North

“UNU-WIDER has met the target for externally contracted researchers who are developing country nationals and has again comfortably exceeded the target for those who are female.”

Research output

Chart 1: Number of peer-reviewed publications (2008-2017)



*“UNU-WIDER is an extremely cost-effective provider of research papers.”
 “The increasing impact factor indicates that the Institute has been particularly successful in building capacity and quality, while simultaneously expanding its research output.” (DFID AR16)*

Chart 2: Number of WIDER Working Papers (2008-2017)

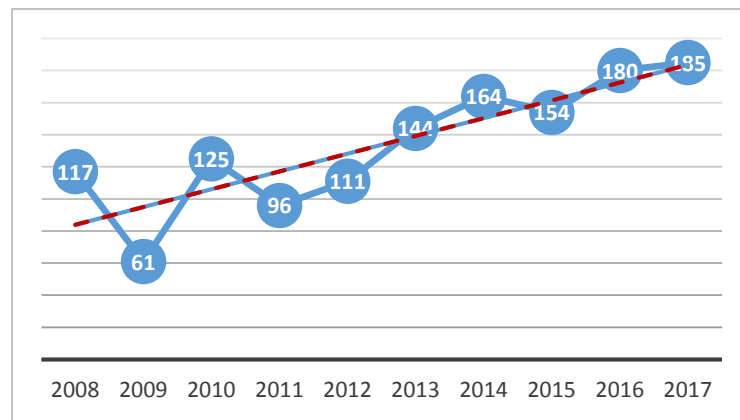
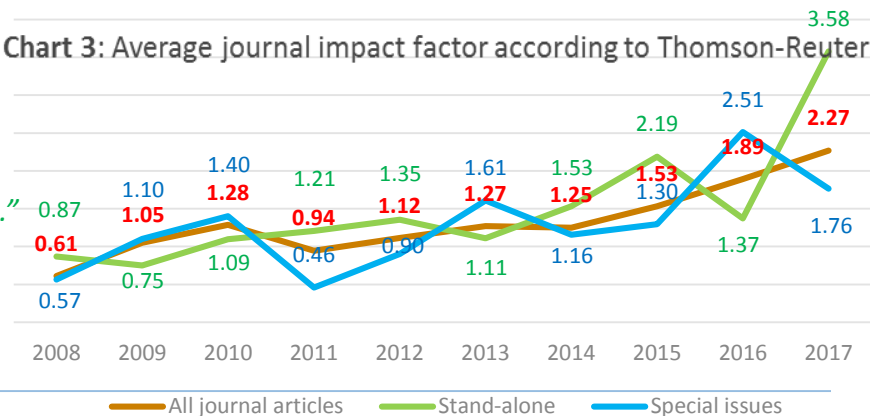


Chart 3: Average journal impact factor according to Thomson-Reuters



Research output (continued)

Chart 1: Share of Working Papers (co-) authored by ...

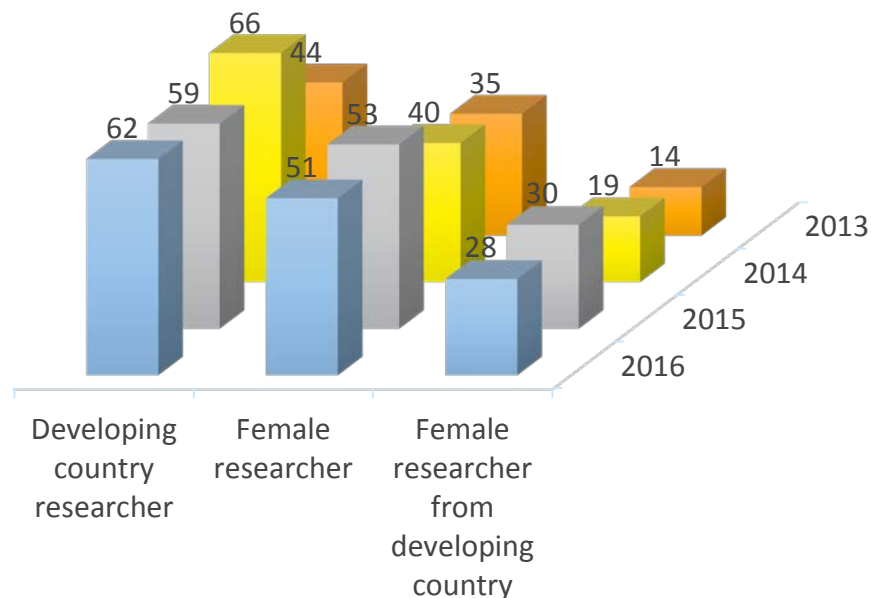
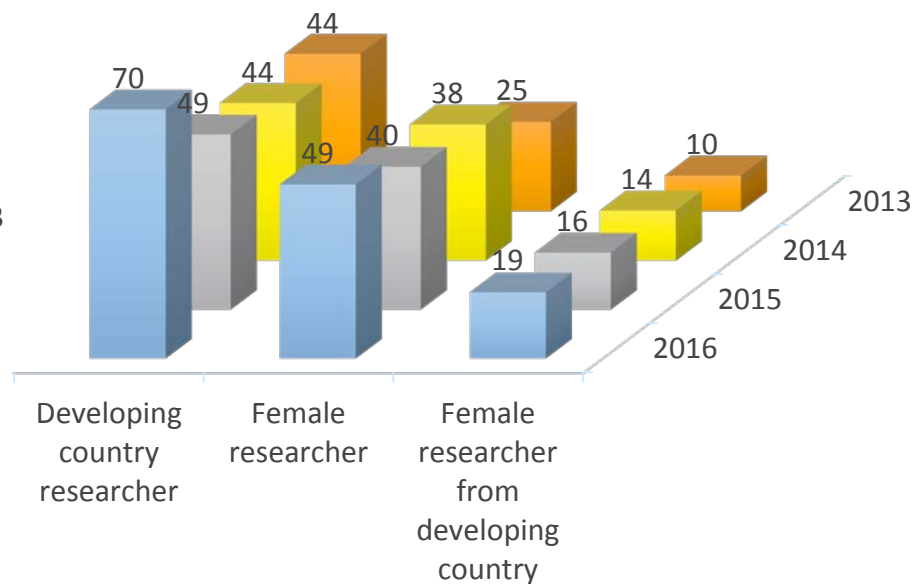


Chart 2: Share of peer-reviewed publications (co-) authored by ...



II. Building the Knowledge Base for Development Policy



UN High-Level Panel report on the post-2015 development agenda

Called for:

- “..A quantum leap forward in economic opportunities and a profound economic transformation to end extreme poverty and improve livelihoods...”

UNU-WIDER's 2014-18 work programme

- 3 challenges: *transformation*, *inclusion*, and *sustainability*
- 3 high-level concerns: *Africa's inclusive growth*, *gender equity*, and *development finance*
- 3 audiences: *decision-makers in developing countries*, their *development partners*, and the *global research community*

Global platform for Development Economics

- An ambitious forward-looking 2014-18 research programme with 20 projects and 48 project components
- Producing independent, high quality, and policy relevant research
- Major in-country engagements (Ghana, Mozambique, Myanmar, South Africa, Tanzania, Viet Nam)
- Knowledge shared through a variety of (new) channels: WEB-SITE ++
- WIDER's social capital today as great if not greater than ever before – giving significant leverage

“The Institute is maintaining a good momentum of delivery.”

“The programme is very good value for money. UNU-WIDER remains one of the lowest cost research providers we work with.” (DFID AR16)

Thematic issues

some examples

- Foreign aid
- Learning to compete and industrial policy
- Taxation and domestic resource mobilization
- Poverty and disadvantaged groups
- Food price policy
- Climate and energy
- Inequality
- Gender
- Datasets and databases

Policy and in-country engagement

some examples

- United Nations system and Members States
- Finland as host country and other donors
- Ghana
- Mozambique
- Myanmar
- Tanzania
- South Africa
- Viet Nam

III. UN Reform Proposals

The SG's reform agenda: 3 larger strands

- First: the reform of the UN Development System, led by the DSG, to make it fit for purpose to better deliver on the Agenda 2030
- Second: a set of interlinked initiatives related to peace and security (centered around a proposal, developed by an Internal Review Team to reorganize the UN Secretariat's peace and security architecture) and also including a mediation initiative, which is meant to strengthen the UN's preventive diplomacy capacity
- Third: management reform (looking at issues related to the UN's budget, HR management, leadership, mobility etc)
- In addition: a few more discrete efforts under way pursued on separate tracks, in particular an initiative to achieve gender parity in the Secretariat

Common objectives

- Details remain a work in progress, but a few common objectives across the different reform strands:
 - Greater **coherence** across the peace-development-humanitarian divide; across departments; across funding mechanisms (in NY everyone is busy breaking down silos)
 - **Devolution of greater authority** to the field
 - Greater **speed and flexibility** on issues from recruitment to deployment of people and assets.
 - Enhance **accountability** of senior managers

UNDS reform: 5 key elements

- First: “Creation of empowered and impartial RCs leading new generation of UNCTs”
- Second: revamp the UN’s regional approach
- Third: improve accountability to MS
- Fourth: Funding Compact
- Fifth: Partnerships

Issues

- Several of the reform proposals will require more money – “the North” unlikely to cough up new resources
- Separation of RC system alone USD 200 million; upgrading the RECs not free either
- Case for funding compact is strong but compact will require donors to relinquish control over what funds are spent on (trend in recent years goes in the other direction)
- UN hopes to generate savings by rationalization UNCT presence and concentrating of UN assets and funding in fragile LICs, but push-back from developing countries (and also agencies)
- “The South” worried the UNDS proposals undermine national ownership and sovereignty:
 - Fear that reforms will lead to politicization of RC function by having them report to DSG instead of head of UNDP (indeed, African group called for reporting line of RC to host government!)
 - Underlying all this: efforts to strengthen preventive role of RCs. Hugely controversial.

Peace and security reform: five elements

- Rearrangement of two departments: Instead of DPA and DPKO, there will be Dep of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Dep of Peace Operations
- Creation of a single political/operational structure with ASGs at regional level reporting up to the two USGs for each department
- Creation of a Standing Principals' Group bringing together key leaders under SG
- Emphasis on several priority areas, like analysis, planning, partnerships and communications
- Changing “how we work”

Issues

- Assumed to be cost neutral
- Key challenge from long history of UN reform: since 1960 a tendency to create new bodies, split up departments into multiple entities, continue to proliferate
- SG running against that grain, trying to consolidate, but even in this effort, there may be new loci of power, including the creation of a new CT structure
- Where will real decision making power be?
- How will peace and security architecture interact with UNDS?

Management reform: two key contracts

- SG identified shortcomings in the way the UN is run:
 - Slow delivery, fragmented structures, micro-management by the governing bodies, inadequate resourcing for key mandates, and a lack of accountability and transparency
- Management reform agenda is meant to address these through two contracts:
 - (1) between the SG and senior managers in which greater authority is delegated in return for greater accountability
 - (2) between the SG and Member States in which the SG has greater autonomy, but builds greater trust and transparency

Issues

- Management reforms clearly have budgetary implications, so the General Assembly needs to approve many of them
- Giving field missions an envelope of money will be especially difficult for some member states, as they see the budget as a key way to control the direction of missions
- At a time of financial scrutiny and downsizing, will member states be ready to relinquish control over budgets?
- Notion of two contracts is one built on growing trust levels, but some of those trust levels may be needed for the reform initiative to pass the GA
- Changes meant to generate a cultural shift, but they also require a cultural shift to work (chicken and egg problem, especially when there are deeply ingrained habits of HQ managing field budgets, and top down hierarchies that are not interested in 360 accountability)

Concluding remarks

- A lot of good ideas and ambitions!!
- But structural hurdles that have frustrated previous efforts remain in place (a risk of overpromising); and the geopolitical situation has become less conducive (East-West divide in Security Council, US government)
- No sense of “crisis”, like in 2003, that drove Kofi Annan’s reform effort (instead, the UN suffering more from slow erosion of credibility)
- Some reforms will cost money, but there is not more money, there is less
- From “doing more with less” to “do less with less” will require hard choices
- A lot of the effort geared towards internal institutional reform
 - Which comes at huge transaction costs, absorbing lots of energy, and in the past, institutional fixes have often disappointed
 - Once institutional reforms are done, policy discussions around WHAT the SG will do with the re-engineered institutional structure will come back to the forefront

Impact and opportunities

- Big impact, if....
- Finland
 - Priority countries
 - Prevention and mediation
- WIDER
 - Analytical pillars better focused
 - Better defined entry points at HQ, regional and country level



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