

## What is the Surge Initiative?

The Surge Initiative was established in 2019 to respond to galloping economic and other inequalities, the slow-paced implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and growing social unrest. It aims to step up OHCHR country- and regional-level engagement to accelerate the realization of economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights, to create conditions to build back better, leave no one behind (LNOB), reduce inequalities, and strengthen the link between human rights and economics. The Surge Team works closely with UN Country Teams (UNCTs), Resident Coordinator's Offices (RCOs), RCO and other economists, state authorities, civil society organizations (CSOs), national human rights institutions (NHRIs), national statistical offices (NSOs), rights-holders and other key stakeholders including, for example, international financial institutions. By bringing together economists, development, and economic, social and cultural rights experts, the Surge Initiative:

- **Provides specialized advice and analysis to operationalize ESC rights**, as relevant to furthering the goals of the 2030 Agenda and curbing economic and other inequalities, including through macroeconomic policies anchored in human rights norms and standards;
- **Seeds change for a human rights economy**, by applying a human rights-based approach to macroeconomics and advising on medium- to long-term human rights economic policies to ensure compliance with Member States' ESC rights obligations, including by undertaking human rights-based budget analysis to expand fiscal space for social spending;
- **Maximises the findings and recommendations of the UN human rights mechanisms** by translating these into strategic operational options to inform country development policies, plans and programmes to advance the realization of ESC rights and implement the 2030 Agenda, leaving no one behind;
- **Contributes to the 2030 Agenda LNOB pledge** by prioritizing engagement that aims to curb economic and other inequalities, including through addressing data and budgetary gaps and analysis; and
- **Engages with the new generation of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and Common Country Analyses** to implement the vision of the UN Secretary General's Call to Action for Human Rights that compels the UN system to seize the generational opportunity to build a more equitable world.

One of the principal avenues for such engagement is through the provision of financial and technical support to in-country and regional OHCHR presences for seeding-change projects. These projects are aimed at supporting system-wide efforts to place human rights at the centre of socio-economic recovery and building-back better.

The Surge Initiative is funded from OHCHR's core budget as well as individual donors including Bahrain, China, Ireland and Switzerland.

Since 2021 and 2022 respectively, OHCHR has entered into unique cooperation agreements with the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and the New School's Institute on Race, Power and Political Economy. These partnerships contribute to the Surge Initiative's efforts at expanding partnerships, outreach and visibility of its work and in particular in pioneering the conceptual and operational underpinnings of a human rights economy.







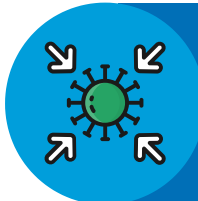

### Contact Us



For more information about the Surge Initiative, visit the website or contact Marcella Favretto of the Sustainable Development Section or Pradeep Wagle of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Section.



## Surge Initiative's Impact

	Since its inception, the Surge Initiative provided financial and technical assistance to 63 seeding-change country projects around the world.	<b>63</b>
	Since its inception until December 2022, the Surge Initiative contributed to 7 National Development Plans/Programmes.	<b>7</b>
	Since its inception until December 2022, the Surge Team supported UN in-country presences with analytical contents and operational advice for 111 CCA and/or UNSDCF processes.	<b>111</b>
	Since its inception until December 2022, the Surge Team held strategic discussions and engagements with 70 RCO Economists and took part in several discussions with national authorities on various aspects of human rights-based budgeting.	<b>70</b>
	Since its inception until December 2022, the Surge Team participated and provided inputs and recommendations to 53 UN Regional Monthly Reviews.	<b>53</b>
	Since its inception until December 2022, the Surge Initiative issued 70 economic blogs for OHCHR colleagues on the work of the Surge Team and economic issues and their impacts on human rights at the global and regional levels.	<b>70</b>
	In 2020, the Surge Initiative provided guidance and advice to OHCHR in-country presences and UNCTs on addressing the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 concerning 38 countries, including through 30 UNCT COVID-19 socio-economic impact assessments (SEIAs) and socio-economic response plans (SERPs).	<b>38</b>
	Since its inception until December 2022, the Surge Initiative has supported the development of 10 tools to strengthen the integration and operationalisation of ESC rights, human rights-based macroeconomic analyses and the interlinkages with the 2030 Agenda.	<b>10</b>

## Country Examples

### Human Rights Budget Analyses in *KENYA*

Financial and technical support of the Surge Initiative provided the Human Rights Team in Kenya with support in the development of two human rights-based analyses of the most recent national budgets, pointing to chronic underinvestment in social sectors, with serious impacts on core ESC rights obligations. At a time of shrinking fiscal space and risks of austerity measures affecting ESC rights and the achievement of the SDGs, the 2022/2023 budget analysis is now serving as the basis for dialogue with national partners on how to implement Universal Periodic Review recommendations to increase budget allocations for ESC rights. Jointly with the RCO and Surge Initiative economists, the Senior Human Rights Adviser in Kenya is collaborating with the Kenyan Parliamentary Caucus on SDGs to reinforce their capacity on human rights-based approaches to budgeting, discussing strategies towards ring-fencing social sector allocations, and is carrying outreach with local authorities, CSOs and rights holders to promote citizen participation.

### A Human Rights Based Approach to Revenue Collection in *JORDAN*

The UN and the Jordan Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), with support from the SHRA and the Surge Initiative, are contributing to discussions to place people at the centre of public finance policies through engagement with various state and non-state stakeholders including through the development of a policy brief on a human rights-based approach to revenue collection. The policy brief - which was launched in March 2023 by the new Resident Coordinator in Jordan and the President of ECOSOC - aims to present recommendations on the following questions: How does the central Government generate revenue, and is it raising enough to cover SDG financing needs, and in pace with its economic growth? Is Jordan investing adequately in the realization of human rights, including to fulfil its obligations of non-discrimination and addressing inequalities? Is it abiding by the human rights guiding principles of transparency, participation and accountability in terms of resource mobilization? This project can serve as a global promising practice for initiating new partnerships (in this case between the SHRA and the RCO economist, and between the Economic and Social Council and the UN through the establishment of an MOU in July 2022 and supporting UNCT joint analysis and advocacy placing human beings and rights at the centre of economic policy.

### Enabling Community Participation in identifying Thematic Priorities in *COLOMBIA*

An OHCHR-led human rights-based budgetary analysis of the implementation of the 2017 Buenaventura Agreements, enabled consultations between various local authorities and community representatives focusing on 28 thematic priorities of the Agreements, including on urban sewage systems, aqueduct infrastructure, calls for baseline studies on health needs, more investment in primary health care, and the implementation of citizen oversight mechanisms.

### LNOB Tool in *SERBIA*

With the financial and technical support of the Surge initiative, the Human Rights team in Serbia supported the authorities, UN, civil society, academia, and representatives of marginalized groups in mapping substandard Roma settlements, analysing the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups and groups at risk, and assessing the impact of COVID-19 on the position and rights of workers. This work, in turn, identified the need for and interest by state authorities for a concrete and practical tool to help policymakers operationalize the LNOB principle when developing national policies and strategies. This led to the development of an LNOB tool, which was officially launched in September 2022. This work has already informed various national critical processes, including the national anti-discrimination action plan, the 2022-30 revised national Roma social inclusion strategy and action plan, and the first ever City of Belgrade Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma 2022-30. This work also resulted in approximately 1,996 people from the most marginalized communities in 19 substandard settlements getting access to safe water and over 70,000 food packages reaching those that would otherwise have been left out of immediate COVID-19 response. Part of this work also served as the basis for the development of the first ever Youth-Led Alternative Report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the first Youth-Led Alternative Report to UPR in Serbia.

“ It is time to grasp fully that economic growth on its own will not redress the structural injustices that underlie our failure to achieve progress on the SDGs. We need to dismantle the architecture of inequalities, and rebuild our economies with an architecture that enhances human rights – and therefore facilitates trust in government; sustainable development; and peace. We need to advance a sound recovery, by building economies that promote people’s rights and well-being. **A human rights economy** seeks to redress root causes and structural barriers to equality, justice, and sustainability, by prioritizing investment in economic, social and cultural rights.”

– Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Statement delivered at the Workshop on promoting and protecting economic, social and cultural rights within the context of addressing inequalities in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic

“ The pandemic is laying bare inequalities in Cambodia - inequalities in income, health, gender, and education. OHCHR in Cambodia has been instrumental in supporting the Resident Coordinator and the UN Country Team addressing these inequalities through their work and advice on economic and social rights. Be it on the right to social security for factory workers, the right to food during the lockdown, the right to adequate housing for communities that face forced evictions, or a leave-no-one-behind training for the UNCT. It has helped the UN Country Team look at the root causes of injustices and advocate for a renewed social contract.”

– Pauline Tamesis, UN Resident Coordinator, Cambodia

