Universal Basic Income (UBI) for Reducing Inequalities and Increasing Socio-Economic Inclusion: A Proposal for a New Sustained Policy Perspective

Inez Wijngaarde, Jebamalai Vinanchiarachi, and Jeff Readman

Abstract The consequences of poverty, current technological innovation (the change of the nature of work) for the labour market and overall societal transformation strengthened the interest of governments, intergovernmental policy-making bodies and international experts in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This Declaration states that “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control”. The article alludes to a universal basic income/unconditional basic income (UBI)—a kind of cash welfare programme in which all citizens (or permanent residents) of a country receive a regular, liveable and unconditional amount of money from the government. Governments recommitted themselves to ensuring decent work and social protection for all through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Article 25 has never been implemented globally through appropriate government interventions and redistributive measures. Such measures are and have been pursued on a trial basis as evidenced by country experiences contained in this chapter. This could eventually open the door to a global basic income elsewhere in the world, framed on the specific needs and conditions of countries. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) likewise could explore whether such an unconditional income yields returns in terms of Inclusive Sustainable Industrial Development (ISID) within the framework of possible income and employment effects of UBI triggered by technical assistance and business support services. Such an endeavour would take UBI beyond its monetary threshold and make it a potential source of sustainable livelihoods for social wellbeing and income
creation. In these unprecedented times, citizens in almost every country will face an uphill battle to address their socio-economic basic needs. The insecurity and great uncertainties caused by COVID-19 in 2020 and beyond, especially among the poor and small-scale businesses and subsistence farmers, will compel governments and UN agencies to develop new strategies. UBI, with all its variations, should be accepted as a universal condition and safety net for everyone.

Keywords Universal basic income · Human rights and justice · Poverty alleviation · Socio-economic needs · Development goals · Sustainability

1 Introduction

National priorities underpinned by compelling social obligations are increasingly factored in economic development goals. In less industrialised countries, and in countries recovering from war and natural disaster, large sections of the population face insurmountable challenges that cannot be overcome by traditional policy prescriptions. Policy interventions aiming at ushering in a system that meets basic needs ought to go beyond economic reasoning when social concerns are critical to ensure human justice. Too often we see fragmentary interventions that rely on market-oriented solutions to rekindle socio-economic transformation without empowering the poor in the development process.

Agencies continue to support business development mostly through extensive training programmes. Upgrading skills, while a critical element in business development, is not sufficient to alleviate the challenges faced by the extremely poor. People that cannot meet their subsistence needs cannot be expected to devote resources to riskier ventures such as a business start-up, nor can everyone who received training be expected to become an entrepreneur as the success rate for business start-ups are very low. Moreover, business development training programmes fail to address the complex social and economic problems facing countries dealing with post-conflict reconstruction or in countries with high levels of one-parent or female-headed households. A different mind-set of states is required if we are serious about tackling long-term structural poverty. One alternative path is to provide people with a base income, regardless of any preconceived qualifying criteria or set conditions. A universal basic income (UBI) is a government guarantee that each citizen receives a minimum income. This scheme is also called a citizen’s income, guaranteed minimum income, or basic income.

This chapter provides a strategic overview of UBI with evidence of an emerging policy practice. The objective is to alert donor agencies, financial institutions, banks and development assistance agencies that supporting UBI can complement other developmental interventions. The authors justify the importance of UBI schemes, which can be framed differently, not only to support economic opportunities, but also as a mechanism to widen social inclusion for sustained development. It is a human right for all people to live above a subsistence level and strive to use their
potential for self-realisation. UBI could be a foundation policy programme to which all other interventions can build upon. The issues related to mainstreaming basic income has entered the policy agenda in many countries with networks built up, including in the European Union (EU). The questions to be raised within this context is can UBI contribute to build more resilience in communities undergoing transformation to reduce the worst effects of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion.

2 What Is Universal Basic Income?

At its most fundamental level, basic income or universal basic income is the provision of some level of income to all members of a community, region or country. These regular payments do not require further means testing or work requirements (Van Parijs 2004). UBI would be provided to all participants without (or minimal) conditions (Francese and Prady 2018). This unconditionally differentiates other payment programmes that often target specific population groups to meet social or economic objectives. UBI is informed by values of human rights and individual freedom (Lacey 2017; Van Parijs 2004). This commitment can also be directed to wider poverty alleviation (Lacey 2017; Ravallion 2019). The intention behind the payment is to provide enough monies to cover the basic cost of living and provide financial security.

The universal basic income’s simplicity makes it an attractive alternative to welfare programmes. Traditional welfare programmes target specific disadvantaged groups, often using means testing criteria, in order to provide health, economic and other much needed assistance. These programmes can incur high administrative costs. Targeted income schemes, on the other hand, whereby groups in society such as small-scale farmers and low income families would receive a basic income, could replace bureaucratically administered welfare programmes. However, such targeting, usually justified by funding limitations or meeting a specific need, sets limits that dilute universality and therefore the underpinning human rights values (Van Parijs 2004). From a policy perspective, providing UBI to all citizens of the community (country) can ensure that the programme will be protected from future political interference. UBI should not be viewed only through the lens of economic efficiency.

The introduction of UBI can encourage labour market participation (for example, by removing welfare traps where a beneficiary loses the entitlement at around the same rate as their income increases), reduce poverty and curb government expenditure by removing unnecessary red-tape and administration costs related to multiple benefit programmes (Standing 2019). A review of ten UBI programmes by the University of Glasgow revealed that, although the evaluated UBI programmes differed in scope and time frames, UBI did not impair labour market participation (Gibson et al. 2018). All the reviewed interventions provided regular payments unconditionally.
3 Emerging Good Practices in UBI Programmes: Evidence from Country Experiences

Evidence on the economic benefits from UBI programmes remain inconclusive. However, some pilot projects are on-going and full evaluations have not materialised while other projects ended prematurely before a thorough cost/benefit analysis could be undertaken. Where evaluations have taken place, it is difficult to compare the different results because different UBI approaches and frameworks with a range of objectives were pursued. Some programmes include qualitative or quantitative results, while other programmes have not been reviewed systematically. While costs can be counted, specifically by the monies injected into the system, causal results are difficult to measure, particularly as most results will include latent outcomes. Nonetheless, pertinent policy lessons have emerged from a variety of UBI pilot schemes. The following UBI programmes illuminate several critical issues. ¹

- From 2008 to 2009, a pilot basic income project was implemented in the Namibian villages of Otjievero and Omitara. The project was organised by the Namibian Basic Income Grant Coalition (Bregman 2017; Haarmann and Haarmann 2014). The amount paid out per head was N$100 (approximately US$12). Positive social benefits included reduced child malnutrition and increased school attendance. The community’s income rose significantly above the actual amount from the grants as it allowed citizens to partake in more productive economic activities. Another outcome was that, after the introduction of the pilot, overall crime rates fell by 42%. These conclusions are derived from two internal empirical studies conducted by the Basic Income Grant Coalition (Haarmann and Haarmann 2014).
- Alaska has had a guaranteed income programme since 1982, with much success. The Alaska Permanent Fund pays each resident an average of US$1200 a year out of oil revenues. Almost three-fourths of recipients save it for emergencies.
- Stockton, California introduced a private sector-initiated income support programme in 2018, for its poorest residents. It would provide US$500 a month to 100 local families (randomly selected). However, an adult resident earning above US$46,033 is still be eligible to participate. The objective of the programme is to keep families together, and to keep them away from payday lenders, pawn shops, and gangs (SEED 2019).
- Finland provided from 2017 to 2018 to 2000 unemployed people an amount of €560 per month for 2 years (age group 25 to 58 years—selected nationwide). The monthly stipend continued even if they found work. According to preliminary reviews, recipients indicated that their basic income reduced stress and fear related to financial struggles, increased the feeling of wellbeing and health. The

¹ Kimberly Amadeo provides examples of UBI programmes in the USA, Africa and Asia (Amadeo 2019).
basic income also provided a psychological feeling of security as well an incentive to find a good job or start a business. Some showed more engagement in their communities. The un-conditionality was most relevant for recipients. This experiment was however not extended after the 2 years. A final evaluation was expected to be completed in 2019 (Demos Helsinki 2019).

- The Netherlands has been exploring the concept of UBI for some years within the context of government assistance to develop more equality. The Dutch city of Utrecht began an experiment in basic income at the beginning of 2017 by providing 250 citizens receiving unemployment assistance with a guaranteed monthly income of €960 per month. Other groups of people will be given more money if they volunteer in a study comparing the effects of different basic income programmes. The experiment is part of a project called “Weten Wat Werkt”, or “Know What Works”, aimed at comparing the possibilities of a universal basic income approach with the Dutch welfare system that is currently in place. Three other Dutch cities have launched similar experiments in basic income, and more are scheduled to participate, should political support be provided (BIEN 2019).

- India launched a pilot UBI programme in 2010 in the State of Madhya Pradesh. An 18-month basic income trial took place in 2010 in this central Indian state, home to 73 million people. The trial provided more than 6000 individuals in eight villages with unconditional cash transfers that ranged from 100 to 300 rupees per month (US$1.5 to US$4.5). UBI in India is restricted and targeted to individuals below the poverty line and linked to family planning. One qualification criterion is that families should not have more than two children. Equivalent to less than a month’s pay at the minimum wage in a city, it is well short of what anyone might need to lead a life of leisure. But it is estimated that the programme could cut absolute poverty from 22% to less than 0.5% in the State.

- Kenya’s southwest region initiated in 2017 a 12-year pilot to benefit 6000 villagers. Local residents receive a US$22 monthly payment on their smart phone. It is expected that this stipend will double most residents’ income. To qualify, a person must remain in the region and their local town (Bregman 2017).

- Poland initiated in 2016 a programme named “500+”, satisfying the conditions of the basic income. The allowance amount was set for 500 PLN monthly (about €120). The “500+” Programme was launched on April 1, 2016. However, it currently includes only the parents or the legal guardians of all the second and subsequent children. The allowance on the first child is dependent on the income of the family (Chancellery of the Prime Minister 2019).

Several countries have researched the possibility of launching some form of UBI. Scotland and New Zealand, particularly, have explored the potential of UBI:

- Scotland is funding research into a programme that pays every citizen for life. Retirees would receive £150 a week. Working adults would get £100 and children under 16 would be paid £50 a week.

- New Zealand’s UBI scheme has attracted growing interest in recent years. The New Zealand Treasury produced a paper on the topic in 2010. In 2016 its Labour Party commissioned the discussion paper and considered a monthly basic income
of NZ$ 211. Among the key debates that mark basic income initiatives are the budgetary consequences and impacts on poverty and labour market participation (Harris and Bierema 2016).

Gibson et al. (2018) suggest that further pilot schemes may not provide more revelations. Pilot and test programmes are limited by definition and ramping up UBI across an entire region or country will require different approaches and face vastly different implementation challenges (Gibson et al. 2018).

3.1 UBI and Social Outcomes

Discussions on UBI tend to focus on the direct economic outcomes such as, are the benefits of UBI, as measured by income or other monetary metrics, greater than the costs? Other concerns focus on the possible indirect or unintended consequences of UBI, particularly if people receiving UBI transfers will be less inclined to participate in the labour market. While economic wellbeing is paramount, many UBI schemes also focus on non-monetary objectives. According to a 2018 scoping review of NHS Health Scotland, in groups where reductions in labour market activity occurred, time seems to have been channelled into other productive activities.

UBI transfers can affect directly or indirectly improvements in health and education levels, lower crime and substance rates and other social objectives. Studies that collected data on criminal behaviour reported reductions (Gibson et al. 2018). The challenges of attributing social effects (as with economic impact) to UBI solely is noted and moderating and mediating factors cannot always be considered, nor can we ignore latency issues. Nonetheless, there remains instances of notable success.

The following examples reveal some important lessons that cannot be ignored when understanding the wider impact UBI can have in communities:

- The Great Smoky Mountains Study programme (North Carolina, USA)—mental health improved in those children that participated the longest in the programme. It was also noted that the relationships between children and their parents improved, children remained in the school system longer and there were lower rates of offending and substance abuse (Costello et al. 2010).
- The Manitoba Basic Annual Income Experiment (Dauphin Manitoba, Canada)—there was a reduction in the overall use of health service for accidents and mental health. This may result from the indirect effects on non-recipients of the reductions in poverty-related stress, alcohol abuse and violence. There is also some evidence that, for youth, decisions to remain in school for another year were influenced by their friends’ choices, which were influenced by the availability of the income supplement (Forget 2013). These effects may have also led to lower crime rates, but no data are available.
- Families participating in the New Jersey Graduated Work Incentive Experiment (NJ, USA), which was a negative income tax programme in the 1970s,
Table 1  Advantages and disadvantages to UBI

| Advantages                                                                 | Disadvantages                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| People in their productive age could afford to wait for a better job or better wages. | UBI is costly to administer.                                                  |
| People will have the freedom to return to schools or further studies to upgrade their skills and knowledge. | UBI does not focus on causes of poverty and could have a neutral or negative impact on poverty alleviation. |
| The “poverty trap” would be removed from traditional welfare programmes. The structural inequality and polarity prevent the poor from investing in long-term goals. | Higher prices would make the basics unaffordable to those at the bottom of the income pyramid. |
| Citizens could have simple, straightforward financial assistance and cash payments that minimises bureaucracy. | Free income may discourage employment and make work seem optional. If people receive a free income, it could remove the incentive to work hard. |
| The government would spend less time and cost to administer the programme than with traditional welfare. | It could be difficult to get legislation passed by politicians because of stiff opposition to so-called “hand-outs” for the unemployed. |
| Payments would help young couples start families in countries with low birth rates. A guaranteed income would give young couples the confidence they need to start a family. | In several countries, citizens and politicians are opposed to handouts to those who do not work. Many oppose welfare and unemployment benefits and UBI would fall under this banner. |
| The payments could help stabilise the economy during recessionary periods. | Inflation could be triggered due to a sudden increase in demand for goods and services. |
| A basic income for poor population groups can contribute to the prevention of emigration and brain drain. | People will spend the extra money on consumption goods and not for productive uses. |

Source: Amadeo (2019), Bregman (2017), Demos Helsinki (2019) and Harris and Bierema (2016)

experienced a 25–30% increase in high school completion for teen age youths (Mallar 1977).

- Crime rates were noted to fall in populations that participated in several UBI schemes. The Seattle/Denver Income Maintenance Experiment (Washington, Colorado, USA) saw a small decrease in reported teen crime (Groeneveld et al. 1979). In the Rural Income Maintenance Experiment in North Carolina, crime rates fell with the group that received the most generous benefits (although it should be noted that there was a small increase for those on less generous plans; Hannan 1978).

3.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of UBI Schemes

While UBI programmes differ in their approach and intended objectives, a pattern of policy practice demonstrated has emerged. The advantages and disadvantages of UBI are presented in Table 1.
4 Addressing Human Integrity and Human Justice

A system that guarantees basic income should not be interpreted as an act of charity. Instead, UBI systems can complement human rights. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) address policies to reduce inequalities and increase inclusiveness. UBI could be a possible answer for countries to be developed. We need a paradigm shift with sharing knowledge and experiences for fresh ideas and inspire new thinking in a time of transformation, which is required by the international community, including the UN and one of its specialised agencies, i.e. UNIDO, to use UBI as a potential source of wealth creation and societal empowerment.

The following questions arise when aligning UBI with policies supporting full socio-economic inclusion.

1. How could UBI assist countries to make their population groups in crisis more resilient and to prepare them for societal and socio-economic changes, including poverty reduction and employability?
2. Who could be considered eligible for UBI, to ensure fairer and equal distribution of societal resources?
3. What could be the overall challenges for governance, societies and financing for a long-term vision when UBI is introduced in a time of transformation, especially motivated by Artificial Intelligence (AI), and the erosion of industrial employment patterns?
4. Considering that by 2030 our societies and quality of life will have to look different, how does UBI, as a public good, fit into policies ensuring that “no one is left behind” with relevance to the UN SDGs set for 2030 and the UNIDO Inclusive Sustainable Industrial Development (ISID) goals? How can we advance poverty eradication and inclusiveness, build productive capacities, and provide more opportunities for men and women across social groups and partnerships with stakeholders involved in innovation for industrialisation and value-added processes?
5. How could we get the beneficiaries of UBI schemes empowered in the development process which is being increasingly triggered by rapidly changing facets of producing, digitalisation, robotics, processing and marketing?

4.1 A Human Rights and Crime Prevention Issue

Although UBI differs in its implementation across countries and regions, a basic justification can be derived from the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women. These were determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. In particular, reference is to be made to the following:
Article 22: Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 25 Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Moreover, recalling the Resolution of the Human Rights Council (22 June 2017, 35th Session) the concept of UBI can be considered within the context of the call to address Extreme Poverty and Human Rights. In particular, we need to recall that, in its Resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, the General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and resolved to end poverty in all its forms and dimensions by 2030, recognising that eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for countries’ sustainable development.

The Council expressed its deep concern that extreme poverty persists in all countries of the world, regardless of their economic, social and cultural situation, and that its extent and manifestations are particularly severe in developing countries. The Council reaffirmed that the existence of widespread extreme poverty inhibits the full and effective enjoyment of human rights and that its immediate alleviation and eventual eradication must remain a high priority for the international community. It stressed that respect for all human rights—civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights—which are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated, is of crucial importance for all policies and programmes to effectively fight extreme poverty at the local and national levels. It has called upon all governments and invited relevant UN agencies and the private sector to continue to give high priority to extreme poverty and human rights, to undertake all efforts towards the achievement of this goal and to cooperate (with the Council’s Special Rapporteur) to supply all necessary information requested by the mandate holder. UBI can be reviewed as a useful tool for states in the formulation and implementation of poverty reduction and eradication policies. Moreover, UBI would give people basic security in an era of chronic economic insecurity and societal transformation. It would improve lives, enhance freedom and security and is a matter of social justice (Standing 2019).

5 Can UBI Support UN Sustainable Development Goals: A Key Precondition for Policy Interventions

Considering that the UN General Assembly adopted in 2015 the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) universally set for each country, there is an obvious link to be made to UBI to build a sustainable basis for inclusiveness. Building on the principle of “leaving no one behind”, the new Agenda emphasises a holistic approach in achieving sustainable
development for all. All forms of poverty linked to all the 17 Goals with its targets set for each one separately would provide societies to develop broad based programmes and projects. However, for this process to take root in society and how to get there, countries will have “to put their money where their mouth is” and to bring its citizens back to the realities of their daily lives! New thinking is required to generate solutions in support of achieving the SDGs. The questions posed by UBI must be urgently addressed with a focus on countries’ related development constraints, which are all intertwined, and which will impact us all. Although we could see many variations of UBI framed by countries, it does have a notion of universality cutting across economies.

Considering that SDG 9 is set as a basis to “build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation for creating a sustainable future”, UNIDO’s Inclusive Sustainable Industrial Development (ISID) is the related strategy and call for implementing SDG 9. These should be focusing on socio-economic inclusion targeting sustainable entrepreneurship development, innovation and digitalisation processes.

Overall, UNIDO’s technical cooperation programmes for sustainable development related to quality infrastructure are linked to Food and Agriculture; Good health and Well-Being; Affordable and Clean Energy; Clean Water and Sanitation; Decent Work and Economic Growth; Responsible Consumption and Production; Life on Land and Water; and Climate Action. A compelling concept such as the UBI to support related policies and (sub-)sectors to be prioritised by member countries can be conducive for societal pressing needs and transformation.

5.1 Policy Space and UNIDO’s Institutional Direction

To promote sustainable transformations, institutional support will be crucial in the following targeted areas:

- Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and trans-border infrastructure to support economic development and human wellbeing, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all.
- Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and, by 2030, significantly raise industry’s share of employment and gross domestic product, in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries.
- Increase the access of small-scale industrial and other enterprises, in particular in developing countries, to financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets.
- By 2030, upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable, with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies.
- Enhance scientific research, upgrade the technological capabilities of industrial sectors in all countries, in particular developing countries, including, by 2030,
encouraging innovation and substantially increasing the number of research and development workers per 1 million people and public and private research and development spending.

- Facilitate sustainable and resilient infrastructure development in developing countries through enhanced financial, technological and technical support to African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states.
- Support domestic technology development, research and innovation in developing countries, including by ensuring a conducive policy environment for, inter alia, industrial diversification and value addition to commodities.
- Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020.

The UBI concept can be used in conjunction with the targeted areas to be developed. It can be seen as an enlightened way to develop a basis to address poverty reduction strategies and equal opportunities for women, youth and rural communities in especially developing economies, economies in transition and countries with post-conflict reconstruction programmes. Collective action and universality are essential within the context of the targets set by UNIDO’s ISID.

### 5.2 Going Beyond the Monetary Threshold of UBI

The definitional challenges related to UBI stems from the fact that it seems to hinge entirely on the monetary threshold of absolute minimum income needed to subsist without being deprived of necessities in terms of food, shelter and clothing. When one does not have enough to command basic necessities of life, they live below the poverty line and identify themselves economically a distant citizen of a given country, having less than others in a society underpinned by inequality of income. Income being used as an absolute measure of extreme poverty necessarily creates the need for eradicating non-income poverty, such as health, education and individuals’ basic infrastructure which constitute the preconditions for earning income. Those non-income parameters are factored in the multi-dimensional poverty exercise. Just sufficient in terms of income is not sufficient to make the poor development catalysts. As human needs are subject to change, development imperatives also change. Specific country-context and the basic needs of a given country’s poor entail the UBI definition cannot be generalised to all. The scope and operational modalities differ from country to country as evidenced by the country experiences furnished in this chapter. Rolling out UBI programmes will have to be framed in such a way that it can effectively respond to the specific conditions and challenges of individual countries and regions.

Reflecting on the preconditions in achieving income targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), UNIDO in 2004 estimated the growth to be generated
by non-income indicators, such as basic health, education and infrastructural needs. According to UNIDO research findings, achieving the income poverty goal depends on trade and development, but a part of the required growth needs to stem from the achievement of non-income targets. UNIDO reckons that in Sub-Saharan Africa, where poverty is still widespread, an effective GDP growth impulse of about 1.5% per year would need to be generated apart from growth generated by trade and development. This had to be generated from the achievement of non-income targets. UNIDO research findings lend credence to the fact that meeting universal basic needs are critical for ushering in universal basic income on a sustainable basis.

The challenge is to make the target beneficiaries of UBI development catalysts, empowered in the development process and thereby adding practical meaning to UNIDO’s inclusive sustainable industrial development (ISID). Notwithstanding the fact that UBI is not functioning as microcredit, it is important that the target beneficiaries of UBI graduate from subsistence to commercial and from commercial to active actors of sustainable sources of livelihoods development. The political system should not use UBI as pure charity and welfare with conditions posed to enable the poor to subsist. Instead, we need a shift in mind-sets and “societal” thinking, and UBI will need to be used to strengthen the preconditions for generating income on a sustainable source of livelihoods enhancement, complying with the contours and tenets of famous approach “Aid to end Aid”. In technical cooperation projects, UBI should be destined for a given period along with the provision of technical assistance, support services and incentive systems to rekindle the potential of its beneficiaries to development agents in the sphere of inclusive sustainable industrial development.

There are certainly compelling reasons for the political system to guarantee UBI, as a positive change, without any strings attached to it, and to take the debate to another level. It is equally crucial to think beyond the traditional welfare paradigm. UBI should be used as a buffer for the poor to adjust and advance in an increasingly complex world which is being rapidly exposed to creative destruction triggered by pandemics, and disruptive technologies with an increasing role being played by robotics, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning. These sophisticated technologies may exasperate work redundancy and unemployment. Only persons imbued with enhanced skills and capabilities to use modern technologies and commercialise new knowledge survive. Others will be left behind. The positive intention of UBI is to ensure that no one will be left behind. People should not be bystanders by the ever-increasing technological marvels. Enhancing the relevance of the poor in the new course of prosperity and transition is relevant and inclusive.

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2 With the exception of a few countries, Bangladesh in particular, microfinance failed to create expected results in many countries because of the fact that the NGOs involved in channeling microcredit did not possess the required knowledge and technical expertise to train the recipients of microfinance in acquiring the required skills and capabilities to emerge as micro entrepreneurs, nor did they learn to make optimal use of business support services offered by governments as free public goods.
6 Conclusion

In a time of uncertainty and transformation, UBI has figured prominently on the development policy agenda in many countries. At a macro level, governments and their respective stakeholders, including the private sector, have broadened the discussions to include socio-economic considerations. Mainstreaming UBI can contribute to inclusive development and make societies more resilient to bring about poverty alleviation. Also, in times of pandemics such as COVID-19, different and expansive approaches will be required to stimulate economic growth for all.

“Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime”. Teach him better methods of fishing and you can ensure sustainability of livelihoods for generations. This often-quoted saying has been used by development agencies to support technical training programmes and away from direct hand-outs. This laudable assessment was an important step-change in the arena of poverty alleviation, and while this perspective remains valid, experience from the training arena suggests that more could be done. Training activities are often established with a one-size fits all approach. Even with all the good instruments and intentions, training programmes require resources and planning in advance, which often do not align with the reality on the ground. UBI could provide an important strategic element in developing (training) programmes. It can be viewed as a safety net programme alongside other developmental goals but should have a sustainability focus in line with the SDGs and the ISID. Instead of teaching men and women only “to fish” with better methods, people can decide for themselves the type of activities they would like to pursue. UBI can facilitate people to move beyond day-to-day subsistence, giving them the full responsibility to develop their potential and creativity.

The relevance and effectiveness of UBI will not be realised unless it is included as a complementary component to programmes that support economic growth. As we have indicated, UBI programmes have a long history and good practices have evolved. Many UBI programme leaders have shared their experiences, and these lessons could be used to formulate instrumental and focused interventions. The linkages with the wider international UBI networks such as the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) and Unconditional Basic Income Europe (UBIE) are crucial. The experiences gained from these activities can be linked to wider development programmes in line with the targets set by the UN/SDGs and UNIDO/ISID.

The outcomes from any UBI policy will depend on the particular characteristics of the implemented UBI programme. Most professionals envision an UBI programme that is truly universal. UBI should provide enough income for people to live on, and beyond a subsistence-level. Furthermore, UBI programmes should complement other social programmes that provide good health care, infrastructure and other social benefits. This vision would be truly transformative when good governance is also in place.

It is imperative that we find strategies for poverty alleviation in a sustainable manner. One way is to transform national tax systems and income compensations
programmes to free up funding for UBI to address poverty alleviation. Providing a basic income is to recognise that economic security and freedom is a priority for everyone, especially in difficult times. This is perhaps more an ethical debate on human justice than only an economic issue. UBI is a necessity in all countries irrespective of their level of development and degree of industrialisation. However, being poor without basic income should not be a life-style choice as societies transform. UBI can alleviate the negative effects of economic downturns and technological change, and it can even be a springboard to long-term wellbeing.

The real test of UBI is to implement a programme that even the most vulnerable groups in all countries can bank on. Any country could conceivably implement their own version of UBI. It is a matter of honest support and political will. UBI could have an indelible impact on communities with reduced crime and increased justice by 2030. Inclusive and just societies are preconditions for peace and prosperity. The appealing idea of UBI is that it provides hope for the “hopeless”, eventually serving as a potential source of creating jobs for the “jobless” to reduce poverty, and inequality on a sustainable basis and thereby adding practical meaning to inclusiveness.

This chapter has offered a brief overview of the various UBI schemes launched in the past 30 years. The critics of UBI focus on two arguments, namely: first, the costs of any UBI programmes that moved beyond the pilot stage will be extortionately high. The direct costs and economic benefits of UBI are not obvious given the limited time to assess the pilot programmes, although The Joseph Rowntree Foundation argues that UBI will have a net negative economic benefit (Goulden 2018). The second criticism focuses on the possibility that UBI may encourage opportunistic behaviour to avoid work by giving some members of society ‘free’ money. As we have tried to argue, the objective of improving the wellbeing of the economically-disadvantaged should consider both social and economic outcomes. While the evidence has not been overwhelming, the advantages, specifically those social benefits availed to the less fortunate communities, outweigh the disadvantages. UBI may indeed contribute to some altered behaviour although the evidence from past pilot programmes suggests otherwise. Researchers have found examples of positive—but difficult to measure—social outcomes such as lower crime rates, improved health and greater family unity (Marinescu 2017).

But no policy will receive support unless attention is given to costs and management of possible negative consequences. Concerns raised by UBI critics can be mitigated by policymakers during the implementation phase. Robert Jameson suggests that UBI could be deployed either through an incremental approach or a radical (D-Day) approach (Jameson 2019). The incremental approach would envision UBI gradually take the place of existing welfare schemes. Incrementalism has the advantage of not upsetting the status-quo while ensuring that policy learning takes place in real time. The radical approach and other unexpected developments, on the other hand, will upend the existing social welfare system. Contingencies and possible outcomes will have to be considered before the launch of the UBI programmes. However, this will mean that UBI will become the central social welfare policy, for
good or bad. Regardless of the approach, implementation is the next step in the evolution of UBI.

In these unprecedented times, citizens in almost every country will face an uphill battle to address their socio-economic basic needs. The insecurity and great uncertainties caused by COVID-19, especially among the poor and small-scale businesses and subsistence farmers, will compel governments and UN agencies to develop new strategies. UBI, with all its variations, should be accepted as a universal condition and safety net for everyone. The need is there; what is required is the will.

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**Inez Wijngaarde** Drs. (Suriname/Austria) is an entrepreneurship development and management specialist, with 25 years international professional experience in programme and policy development with United Nations agencies, including ILO, UNODC and UNIDO. After several field postings in Asia and the Pacific, she managed at UNIDO HQ in Vienna, Austria, EU/multilateral development cooperation projects in developing economies to empower women, youth, migrants and other population groups in severe disadvantage positions, e.g. internally displaced persons and refugees in agri-businesses and technical training. She is currently an international consultant with academia and UNIDO, the UN specialized agency that promotes inclusive industrial development (ISID) for poverty reduction, inclusive globalization and environmental sustainability. She has forged professional networks with agencies such as the UNCTAD Creative Industries Programme, the European Union, the European Forum Alpbach and Slow Food International. She has received awards from the International Professional Women’s Network (USA) and co-authored several articles related to unleashing human potential through sustainable entrepreneurship and fair migration policies for job creation; demand oriented industrial training; and creative industries of unemployed youth. E-mail: wijngaarde.inez@gmail.com.

**Jebamalai Vinanchiarachi** Dr. (India) is a sustainable development expert, with over 30 years of professional experience in the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Vienna, Austria, where he served in various capacities. He eventually retired as the Principal Adviser to the Director General of UNIDO. He has to his credit several degrees and awards with distinctions. As an economist, he has authored several journal articles, books and reports, highlighting the changing patterns of sustainable development, with a focus on economic efficiency, ecological compliance and social inclusion. Recent books include *Myths and Realities of East Asian Model of Development, India’s Time, Rethinking Development Realities, Intervene to Industrialise*, and *The Poverty of Economic Thinking*. A book on his personal life, penned by him, is entitled *In Joy and Sorrow*. Forthcoming books co-authored by him include *Positioning Africa in the Context of the New Industrial Revolution*, and *Myths and Realities of Indian Economy*. Using his outstanding performance with professional excellence, he is working as the Principal Adviser to the Knowledge Management Associates, Vienna, Austria. E-mail: vinanchiarachi@yahoo.com.

**Jeff Readman** Dr., (Canada/United Kingdom) as an economist, political science specialist researcher, and senior lecturer, he has over 20 years of outstanding professional experience specializing in technology and innovation management, digital transformation, value chain development, small and medium enterprises start-ups, business education services and applied industry research. He has worked in EU/UN international development projects supporting business skills development and innovation. He managed the MBA Innovation Programme for the University of Brighton (2011–2018). He led research projects globally as project leader with substantive training,
coaching and workshop facilitation know-how. Research interests, apart from the theme Universal Basic Income (UBI), include machine learning programmes changing innovation landscapes and management practices; exploring changing boundaries of firms and outcomes arising from outsourcing & SMEs upgrading/global value chains; vocational training and policy interventions to develop SME capabilities in less industrialised countries. Publications include: Readman, J., Bessant, J., Neely, A. & Twigg, D. 2018. Positioning UK research and technology organizations as outward-facing technology-bases. Legacy standards and innovation: the Kyrgyz construction materials value chain. Conference Exploring Technology Upgrading in Emerging and Transition Economies: “Shifting Wealth I” to “Shifting Wealth II.” Readman, J. (2017). E-mail: jeff.Readman@btinternet.com.