

# **Global health justice in an unequal world: The real Grand Challenges**

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# Basic presumptions

1. Reducing health inequalities depends on making available the prerequisites for leading a healthy life

‘It is hard to see how even ideologically driven commentators could think that having sufficient money to live on is irrelevant to health inequalities’ (Marmot, Allen & Goldblatt, 2010)

2. In a context of increasing inequality on multiple scales, a core political task is therefore establishing the legitimacy of ‘rights, regulation and redistribution’ (Labonté & Schrecker, 2009; *cf.* UNCTAD, 2017: 152-164)

# Ayanna Pressley on health inequalities

‘Today, when you board the MBTA’s number 1 bus in Cambridge, it’s less than three miles to Dudley Station in Roxbury, but by the time you’ve made the 30-minute trip, the median household income in the neighbourhoods around you have dropped by nearly \$50,000 a year.<sup>[2]/[3]</sup> As the bus rolls through Back Bay, the average person around you might expect to live until he or she is 92 years old, but when it arrives in Roxbury, the average life expectancy has fallen by as much as 30 years.<sup>[4]</sup> .... These types of disparities exist across the 7<sup>th</sup> District, and they are not naturally occurring; they are the legacy of decades of policies that have hardened systemic racism, increased income inequality, and advantaged the affluent’

Source: <https://ayannapressley.com/issues/equity-agenda/>

# Challenge 1. Global reorganization of production

- ‘[G]lobal supply-chains connecting cheap workers on one side of the world with rich consumers on the other’ (The Economist, 2002) mean that globalisation is ‘a magic galleon that spirits factories away to poor countries’ (Galeano, 2000)





On one estimate, 80% of world trade is organised in global commodity chains or supply chains controlled by transnational corporations (UNCTAD, 2013)

# Challenge 1. Global reorganization of production

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- Distributional conflicts that underpinned the postwar settlement between labour and capital in high-income countries *need no longer be resolved within national borders*, creating new power asymmetries at level of national politics even in formal democracies

## Challenge 2. Rising within-country inequality

- Roughly 70 percent of the world's poorest people no longer live in the world's poorest countries, *but*
- Extreme inequality is increasing, both within many countries and at smaller scales, e.g. within metropolitan areas





This particular image is from Dar es Salaam (Credit: Johnny Miller – Unequal Scenes; <https://www.unequalscenes.com>), but the inequality machine is transforming cities worldwide, as Miller's remarkable aerial images show



## **Challenge 2. Rising within-country inequality: the optimistic view**

‘[I]n the not-too-distant future, most of the world’s poor will live in countries that do have the domestic financial scope to end at least extreme poverty ... This will likely pave the way for addressing poverty reduction as primarily a domestic issue rather than primarily an aid and international issue; and thus a (re)framing of poverty as a matter of national distribution and national social contracts and political settlements between elites, middle classes and the poor’ (Sumner, 2012)

## **Challenge 2. Rising within-country inequality: ‘secession of the successful’**

‘People who have swimming pools don't need state parks. If you buy your books at Borders you don't need libraries. If your kids are in private school, you don't need K-12. The people here, or at least those who vote, don't see the need for government’ (Arizona voter quoted by Silverstein, 2010)



## **Challenge 2. ‘Secession of the successful’ and the ungovernability of ultra-wealth**

‘[M]any countries are already more receptive and accessible to wealth managers, who are acting on behalf of the world’s richest people, than they are to elected representatives from their own governments’ .... [T]he high-net-worth individuals of the world are largely ungoverned, and ungovernable. ....What this is doing to the Westphalian host system is similar in some respects to what e-commerce has done to bricks-and-mortar business, destroying it in a race to the bottom’ (Harrington, 2016)

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# Challenge 3: The normalisation of 'austerity'

- The ideological template established by the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s and 1990s has now been normalised under the rubric of austerity and 'travelled north' (Kentikelenis, 2017), threatening to become a permanent element of the policy terrain, despite abundant evidence of negative human consequences and despite the fact that it does not do what it says on the tin

# Challenge 3: The normalisation of 'austerity'

Results: 'a lost quarter-century in Africa, a lost decade in Latin America, and a transition from communism to the market economy in the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe that was, to say the least, a disappointment' (Stiglitz, 2016)

'In the year 2020, 83 per cent of persons living in developing countries are projected to be impacted by budget cuts, compared to 61 per cent of persons living in high-income countries' (Ortiz, Cummins, Capaldo, & Karunanethy, 2015)



Food banks

Life on the breadline: benefit cuts are making food banks a permanent fixture

Sanctions and delays in payments are a major cause of hunger, **Kayleigh Garthwaite** found during research for her new book



A food bank user who could not afford the energy to heat food up professed himself happy to eat it cold. Photograph: Alamy

Kayleigh Garthwaite

Wednesday 20 April 2016 07:30 BST



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Martin, 44, came to the food bank I was volunteering in after being sanctioned for being a few minutes late for a work programme appointment after his bus was delayed. It was a particularly cold winter's day and when Martin took his gloves off to drink his tea, his fingers were almost blue. He didn't have any electricity, so had no light or fuel to heat food in his privately rented flat. He was paying a "poverty premium" of 26p a day for his

# HUNGER PAINS

Life inside foodbank Britain  
Kayleigh Garthwaite

Foreword by Jack Monroe  
Afterword by Linda Tirado



# Challenge 3: The normalisation of 'austerity'

Results: 'a lost quarter-century in Africa, a lost decade in Latin America, and a transition from communism to the market economy in the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe that was, to say the least, a disappointment' (Stiglitz, 2016)

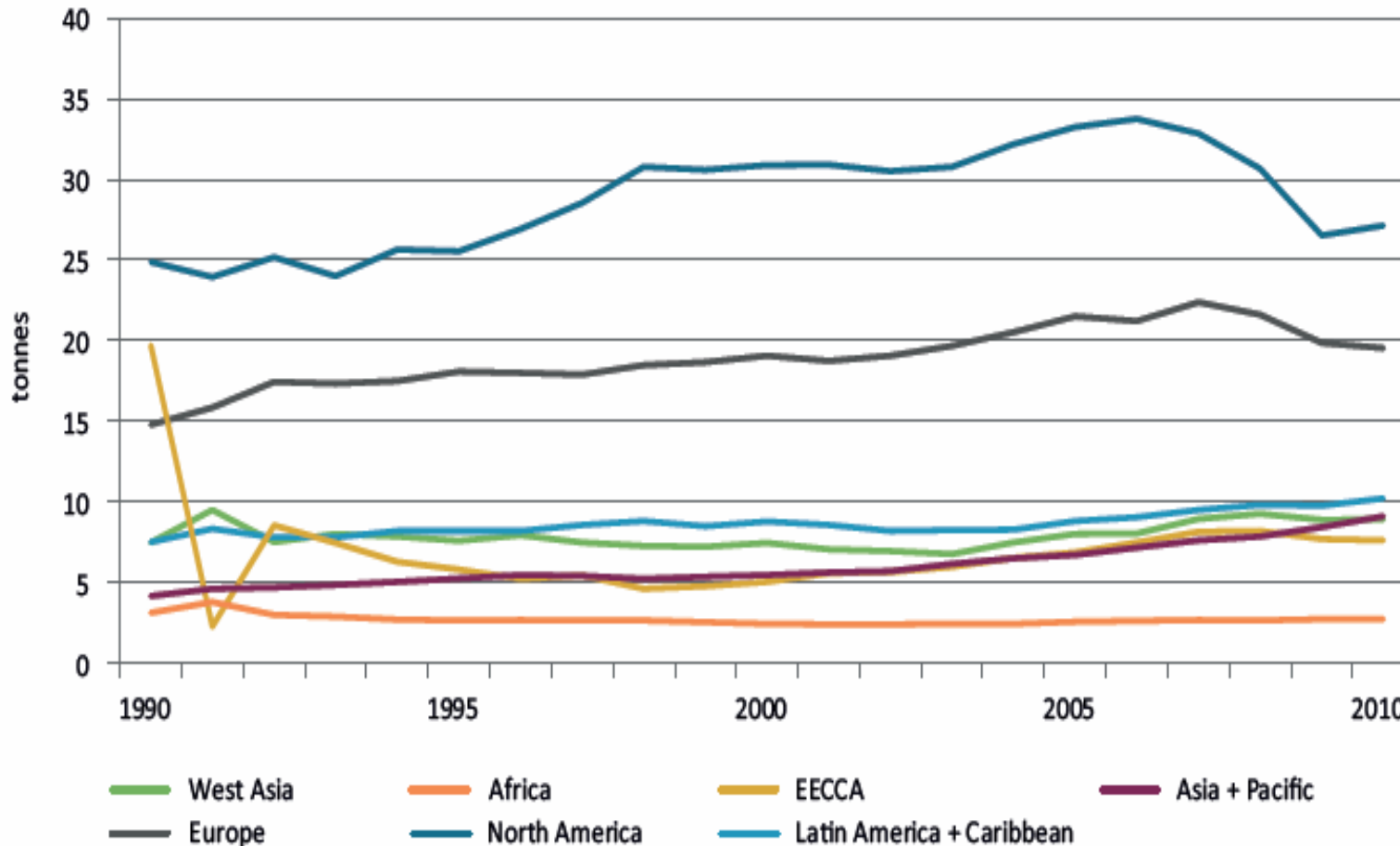
'In the year 2020, 83 per cent of persons living in developing countries are projected to be impacted by budget cuts, compared to 61 per cent of persons living in high-income countries' (Ortiz, Cummins, Capaldo, & Karunanethy, 2015)

... and at this point, we simply have to ask: *cui bono?*

# **Challenge 4. Reconciling legitimate aspirations with biospheric constraints**



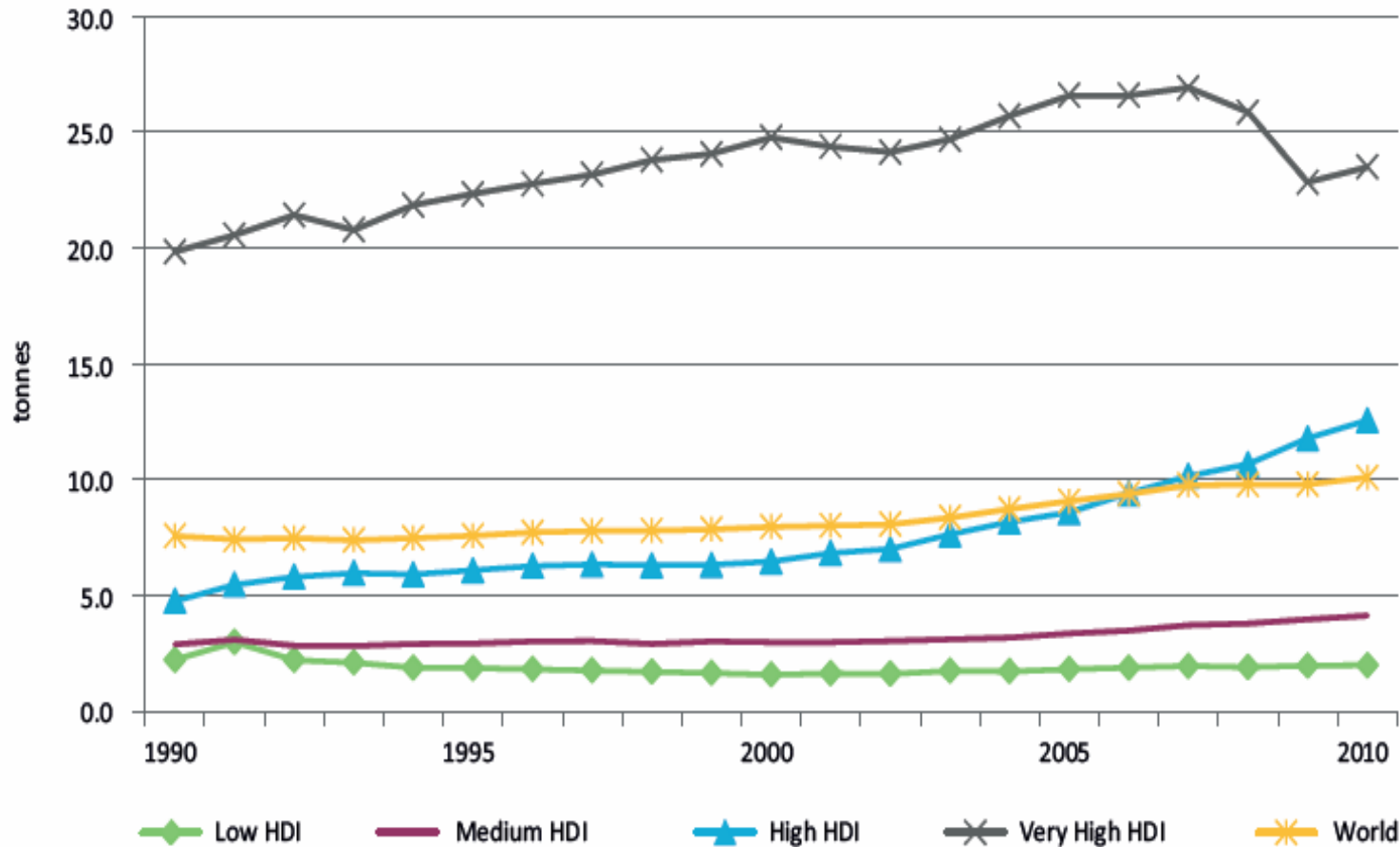
# Challenge 4. Reconciling legitimate aspirations with biospheric constraints



**Per capita material footprint of consumption by global region, 1990-2010**

Source: United Nations Environment Programme, 2016;  
<http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11822/21557>

# Challenge 4. Reconciling legitimate aspirations with biospheric constraints



**Per capita material footprint of consumption by Human Development Index, 1990-2010**

Source: United Nations Environment Programme, 2016;  
<http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11822/21557>

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