

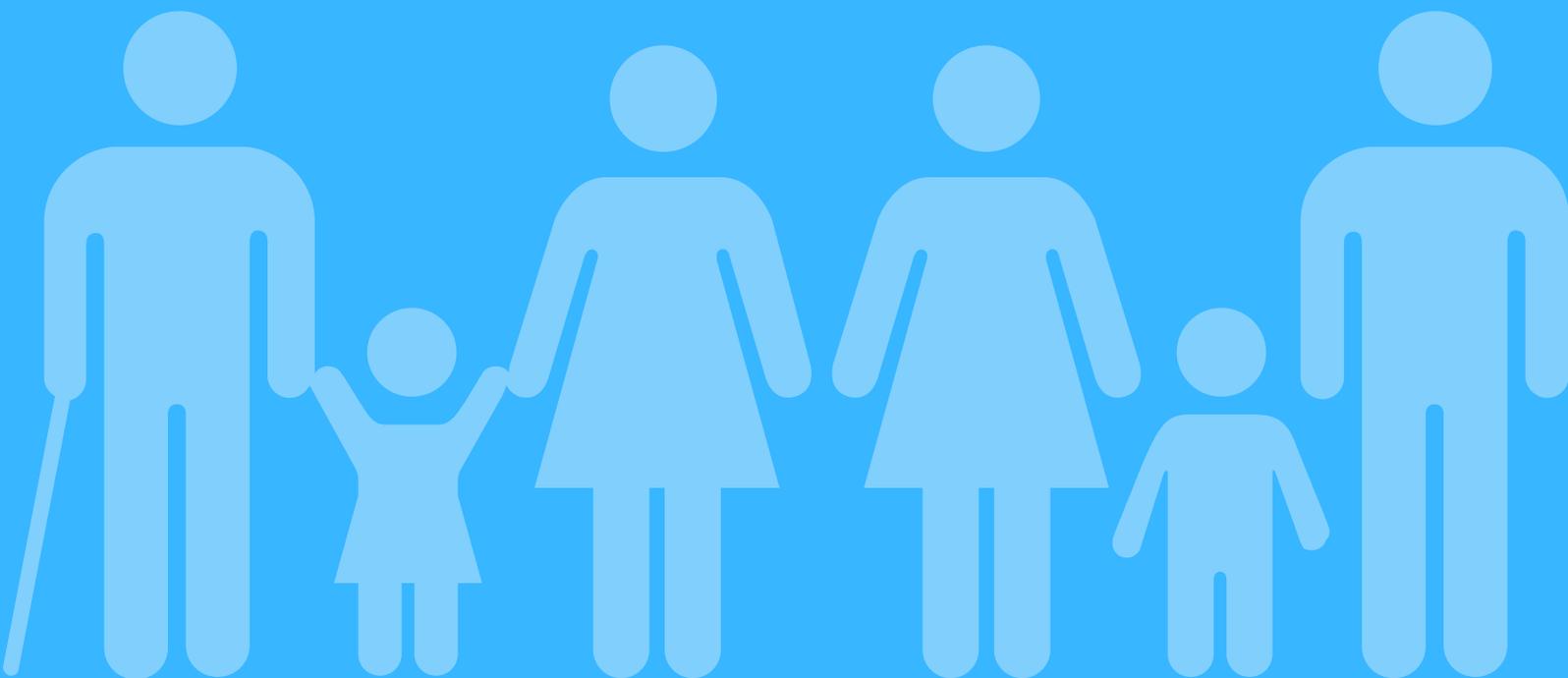


THE GLOBAL GOALS



*Social Justice: the unfinished journey. Global  
Issues - Local solutions*

# TOWARDS A IFS DECLARATION ON SOCIAL JUSTICE (AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS) *A background discussion paper*



During the preparation for IFS conferences, a working party of dedicated individuals from around the world meet regularly to construct a Declaration on behalf of the IFS community. This has become a reflexive process that attempts to capture the essence of the sectors work while acknowledging the vast array of challenges facing both the sector and humanity broadly. Reflexivity is the learning process of examining one's own position within a development framework and challenging one's beliefs by incorporating those of others into a constantly evolving process that challenges all types of orthodoxy, even that which looks to serve the processes purpose<sup>1</sup> Therefore, this Declaration serves to not only state a position relative to concepts of sustainable development and social justice, but as an introspective critique from which we commit to weave strengthening threads throughout the rich tapestry of our global sector.

In September 2021, as the world continues to struggle out of the Covid-19 pandemic, people from settlement houses and neighbourhood centres from around the world will come together, in person and online, to examine the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a conceptual framework to pursue goals of social justice within a post -Covid-19 era at a conference of the International Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres (IFS) in Sydney, Australia.

Social justice as a concept came about in the early nineteenth century during the industrial revolution in Europe and it sought to address growing inequality brought about by the capitalistic exploitation of labour. By the twentieth century the concept of social justice had evolved to include other aspects of social life including gender, race, the environment, and all manifestations of inequality between groups and individual. The 5 main principals of social justice include access to resources, participation, equity, human rights and diversity, IFS members embrace these principals<sup>2</sup>

The concept of sustainable development was 'officially' launched by the UN in the Brundtland Report, more commonly referred to as 'Our Common Future', published in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). The concept however, predates this, and the phrase was most likely coined by economist Barbara Ward in the 70's and sources of 'sustainable thinking' are easily traced to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>3</sup>



1 Phillip Catton and Graham MacDonald, Karl Popper: Critical Appraisals (Taylor & Francis Group, 2014).

2 Corporate Finance Institute, Social Justice a political and philosophical theory that focuses on the concept of fairness in relations between individuals in society, (2021).

3 Erling Holden, Kristin Linnerud, David Banister, Valeria Jana Schwanitz and August Wierling, The Imperatives of Sustainable Development: Needs, Justice, Limits (Taylor & Francis Group, 2017) 10 – 12.





Notwithstanding the origin of the term, 'Our Common Future' is primarily responsible for imbedding the concept 'sustainable development' into common thought and language and the term is now synonymous with concepts of democracy, leaving the very idea of a 'non-sustainable society' as little different from a nondemocratic one.

Concepts of social justice and sustainable development are intrinsically intertwined, with sustainable development being the ideal vehicle to achieve social justice.

In September 2015 at New York during the high-level United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Summit, 193 countries committed to the new development agenda "Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development" (SDGs). The SDGs represent a dramatic expansion of the superseded Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and they are comprised of 17 goals, 169 targets, and 230 indicators.<sup>4</sup> Not only do the goals allow states to measure their impact across 17 integrated and indivisible goals, they provide pathways to social justice through the recognition that an unaddressed measure in one location, affects everyone. We, the members of the International Federation of Settlements, accept and embrace the complexity and interconnectedness of social justice and sustainable development and agree that any deficiency that gives rise to every one of the 17 SDGs requires action, by everyone, everywhere. We strongly adopt the universal approach outlined in the statement of former Prime Minister of New Zealand, Helen Clarke;

"Sustainable development in the 21st century is not something which happens to somebody else, somewhere else. We all have a stake in it – and every country has work to do to progress towards it."<sup>5</sup>

Settlement houses and neighbourhood centres around the globe naturally progress the SDGs and adopt the underpinning framework of social justice that seeks to steer humanity towards equality. We contribute to the positive outcomes of every SDG which is now more important than ever from a social justice perspective, as humanity pays the cost for an unequal world society seeking remission from a global pandemic.

<sup>4</sup> Tomas Hak, Svatava Janouskova and Bedrich Mouldan, 'Sustainable Development Goals: A Need For Relevant Indicators' (2016) 60 *Ecological Indicators* 565-573.

<sup>5</sup> Claire E Brolan and Leanne Smith, *No One Left Behind: Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in Australia*, (June 2020) A Whitlam Institute 'Australia in the World' Research Project.



I F S CONFERENCE SYDNEY 2020



# SOCIAL JUSTICE

THE UNFINISHED JOURNEY

GLOBAL ISSUES - LOCAL SOLUTIONS

**“WE CANNOT CHANGE THE  
SYSTEM, WITHOUT CHANGING  
DRASTICALLY OUR LIVES. BREAK  
THE CHAINS WITHIN YOUR  
MIND.”**

**TOMAS LINDBERG.**



# IFS Member Engagement with the SDGs.



## No Poverty

When many of us struggle to live humanity is diminished. IFS members address poverty by providing a place for people to be, through advocacy to governments to ensure there is an adequate support system for all, offering financial support and counselling in their centres and through participation in shared access programs such as tool and resource library's.



## Zero Hunger

Humanity produces more food than it needs yet, absurdly, 690 million people go to bed on an empty stomach every night.<sup>6</sup> 1.3 billion tonnes of produce each year ends up in the rubbish. IFS members exemplify social justice through food security and are hubs for the reallocation of food resources, develop and produce their own food resources and facilitate shared contributions from their community.

6 United Nations World Food Programme – Saving Lives Changing Lives (2020)



## Good Health and Well-being

Covid-19 upended the lives of billions of people around the world and spread human suffering. IFS members, where appropriate, provided community assistance and support to alleviate loneliness while promoting good mental health before and during, the pandemic. They also have always provided physical activities and are a referral centre to health services.



## Quality Education

More than half of all children and adolescents worldwide are not meeting minimum reading and numeracy standards.<sup>7</sup> This figure will be much worse post Covid-19 and those who did not have access to remote learning will be more disadvantaged than ever. Quality education reduces poverty, improves health, increases economic prosperity, and changes attitudes to empower women. IFS members provide language classes, literacy and numeracy for children and adults, study groups, pre-accredited learning pathways, accredited learning, tutoring and more, to support quality education in more than 4,000 communities around the world.

7 Sustainable Development Goals – 4 Quality Education.





## Gender Equality

Woman and girls represent half of humanity and thus half of its potential, however, gender inequality persists everywhere and is possibly the biggest barrier to social justice in the world. The limited gains made before Covid-19 look to be undone during the pandemic with women playing a disproportional role as frontline workers and carers at home while suffering an increase in domestic violence.<sup>8</sup> IFS members will always strive for true equality and actively encourage placing women and girls at the centre of the post covid-19 economic recovery which will fundamentally drive better and more sustainable development for all, seek to progress social justice and enable the inclusive recovery of the whole world.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations, Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women, April 2020.



## Clean Water and Sanitation

Lack of clean water and sanitation are a remarkably under reported threat to humanity and 3 in 10 people in the world lack access to safe drinking water and water scarcity affects more than 40% of the world's population with the figure increasing every year.<sup>9</sup> 3 billion people lack basic handwashing facilities at home. IFS members played a vital role in communities adapting to increased sanitation processes to combat the spread of Covid-19. They remain localised leaders in post Covid-19 health and safety processes and are committed to extending good sanitation processes to protect against future pandemic events.

<sup>9</sup> Sustainable Development Goals, 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation.



## Affordable and Clean Energy

Unsustainable energy generation and use accounts for about 60 per cent of total greenhouse gas emissions and is the primary contributor to climate change, making it everyone's responsibility to address. IFS members are committed to sourcing energy responsibly and using energy sustainably, with some members currently participating in micro-grid projects.<sup>10</sup> These projects seek to develop exportable small-scale sustainable energy sources and make them available to all communities, everywhere. These projects progress social justice by nesting power generation and storage within local communities, literally putting power in the people's hands.

<sup>10</sup> Heyfield Community Resource Centre:  
<https://www.heyfieldcommunity.org.au/mytown-microgrid>



## Decent Work and Economic Growth

The Covid-19 pandemic brought about a historic recession with worldwide record unemployment creating a human disaster that affects the poorest and women the most.<sup>11</sup> IFS members are uniquely placed to take advantage of existing activities and processes to transform into social enterprises to assist in developing a fairer and more inclusive post pandemic normal. Localising inclusive work and production stimulates local economies, reduces travel and the associated negative impacts on climate change and reduces operating costs. IFS members actively seek to dismantle structural exclusion and discrimination in employment through social justice.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations, A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. April 2020.



## Industry Innovation and Infrastructure

Information and communication technology has been vital throughout the Covid-19 crisis and access to the internet and communication devices has been the difference for many people between social inclusion and abject isolation.<sup>12</sup>

IFS members advance social justice through training and access to infrastructure for those who otherwise may not have had access to communication devices and the internet. IFS members transitioned classes, education, and events to the online environment around the world to reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation for their community members. We are aware of stories from members around the globe of previously non-tech savvy community members making an assisted adaptation to previously unlearned communication devices and methods, and we proudly progress SDG 9 into the most challenging of spaces.

<sup>12</sup> UN News, *COVID-19 makes universal digital access and cooperation essential: UN tech agency*. May 2020.



## Reduced Inequality

Inequalities based on income, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, class, ethnicity, religion, and opportunity persist around the world. Covid-19 has impacted those already discriminated against disproportionately and the UN has called for solidarity noting that Covid-19 was essentially a human crisis and that we all need to protect the most vulnerable.<sup>13</sup> IFS members exist in part to address inequality in all its forms and social justice has at its core the concept that no one gets left behind. Every day, in thousands of locations around the world, community members who may otherwise be held out from access or participation are welcomed into their local settlement house and neighbourhood centre.

<sup>13</sup> United Nations, *A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19*, April 2020, 2.



## Sustainable Cities and Communities

Half of humanity live in cities today and 5 billion are expected to live in them by 2030.<sup>14</sup> Cities take up about 3% of the usable land on the planet but use 80% of the world's energy. IFS members are in cities around the world supporting local communities to pursue social justice through access, advocacy, disaster management and social connectedness. They also develop place-based resilience in connection with local populations, strengthening local communities to endure pandemics and natural disasters alike.

<sup>14</sup> United Nations, *UN-Habitat COVID-19 Response Plan*, April 2020.



## Responsible Consumption and Production

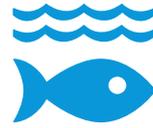
About a third of all food produced in the world each year ends up rotting as garbage. Irresponsible consumption and production contributes to most of the other goals negatively, such as clean energy, life on land, life under water and zero hunger. IFS members have always contributed to responsible consumption and production and they promote opportunity shops for the recycling of clothing and items within communities. They also collect items for shared use, such as in tool libraries, making items available to those who otherwise may not have access, and upcycling unwanted items, while saving perfectly good items from becoming waste.



## Climate Action

2019 was the second warmest year on record and the end of the warmest decade (2010 – 2019) ever recorded. The climate change debate is over, and action is needed everywhere and needed now. The Covid-19 pandemic has provided a unique and unanticipated interruption to the production of greenhouse gasses, but the window of opportunity to shift to a more sustainable economy is slim indeed.<sup>15</sup> IFS members support climate action through the localisation of work and community, through sustainable and inclusive growth, by developing resilient communities and by endeavouring to create low waste communities around the world.

<sup>15</sup> UN News, *First Person: COVID-19 is not a silver lining for the climate, says UN Environment chief*, April 2020.



## Life Below Water

More than 3 billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods and between 50 and 80 percent of the earth's oxygen is generated from the world's oceans, making the sustainability of our oceans vital to human survival. Covid-19 brought about reduced mobility and demand on resources which allowed the world's oceans the smallest of breaks from the pressures of over-fishing, water pollution and coastal degradation. IFS members support local coastal region rejuvenation projects and participate in local projects to sustain coastal fauna and flora around the world. They also embrace systemic and social changes understanding that small changes adopted broadly have a significant impact, such as stopping the use of 'single use' plastic bags.



## Life on Land

Nature is critical to survival on this planet and human activity has altered almost 75% of the earth's surface, forcing wildlife and nature into ever contracting corners of the world.<sup>16</sup> Deforestation and desertification threaten the stability and wellbeing of the 1.6 billion people who depend on forests for their livelihoods. IFS members support life on land, and many develop sustainable community gardens, vegetable plots and are involved in the rejuvenation of degraded land and waterways. They are also involved in permaculture projects that aim to provide sustainable food to communities while reducing the impact on the environment using 'whole systems thinking' that relies on observed natural ecosystem processes.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations, *Sustainable Development Goals 15 – Life on Land*, 2020.





## Peace Justice and Strong Institutions

Conflicts and the mass displacement of people pose a great threat to sustainable development and is in direct opposition to concepts of social justice and human rights. IFS members seek to make human rights and social justice the valued norms of human society and they work tirelessly towards inclusion and to offset the deprivations and disadvantage brought about by war and displacement. Many IFS members around the world partner with settlement services to offer refugees and asylum seekers entry into a local society. We also offer local language classes and support services as well as linkages to diaspora communities, translation services and government assistance where available.



## Partnerships for the Goals

For the goals to have any chance at success, organisations and governments must partner to address the world's vast inequality, disadvantage, degradation and waste to bring about access to resources, participation in decision making, equity for all, human rights and diversity while acknowledging that the ecosystem we exist within must be respected and protected. The IFS promote Partnerships for the Goals and seeks to link members to work together to advance the goals and to address the myriad challenges facing humanity and society. Social justice is an unfinished journey, but the SDGs provide the ideal framework for it to continue and for the development of local solutions to global issues.





# LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

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