



Realizing the 2030 Agenda through Social and Solidarity Economy

Position statement of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy¹

The **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** represent a renewed global commitment to not only end poverty and hunger but also achieve universal social protection, reduction of inequalities and environmental sustainability, all requiring fundamental changes in the way our economies function. The 2030 Agenda recognizes that a holistic approach is needed and that business-as-usual is no longer an option. If we are to realize the transformational vision of the 2030 Agenda, it is crucial to look at alternative development strategies and emerging economic models that can be optimized for sustainability and inclusiveness.

The 2030 Agenda notes the key role of a diverse enterprise and civic sector “...ranging from micro-enterprises to cooperatives to multinationals, and that of civil society organizations and philanthropic organizations...” (para 41). It also emphasises the need to achieve “...sustainable development in its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – in a balanced and integrated manner...”(para 2). The **United Nations Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy** (TFSSE) believes that these twin dimensions of a plural economy and a balanced and integrated approach lie at the heart of what is often being called ‘**social and solidarity economy**’ (SSE)².

SSE refers to the production and exchange of goods and services by a broad range of organizations and enterprises that pursue explicit social and/or environmental objectives. They are guided by the principles and practices of cooperation, solidarity, ethics and democratic self-management (UNTSSE 2014). One of the main reasons of the emergence of SSE is that the needs of large groups of people, in developed as well as in developing countries, are neither met effectively by conventional markets nor by the State. SSE is fundamentally about crafting a form of economy that is centred on social protection and equality. Part of a rapidly growing worldwide movement, SSE organizations and enterprises attempt to reassert social control over the economy by prioritizing social objectives above profit maximization, recognizing the role of collective action and active citizenship for both economic and political empowerment of disadvantaged or fragile groups in society, and reintroducing notions of ethics, sharing, equity and democracy in economic activities (Utting 2015).

SSE can play a **crucial role in the realization of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs** by promoting inclusive and sustainable development through concrete social, institutional and technological innovations and practices. The linkages between **SSE and all 17 SDGs**, outlined in detail in the matrix below, draw attention to its potential as an **alternative model of development** that can address the structural underpinnings of exclusionary and unsustainable development.

¹ The draft position statement is based on the Think Piece “Realizing the 2030 Development Agenda through Social and Solidarity Economy”, 2015, by Peter Utting, commissioned by the UNTSSE

² The UNTSSE recognizes that SSE co-exists with other denominations of similar and related concepts. The UNTSSE is aware of initiatives and networks that work on concepts such as as social solidarity economy, social economy, solidarity economy, inclusive economy, social business, social economy entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, inclusive business, circular economy, third sector, fourth sector, people's centred development, etc. The existence of these initiatives and networks provide opportunities for cooperation and enlarging the impact of SSE and the TFSSE activities.

A focus on SSE can be crucial in addressing the **limitations faced during the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**, which the SDGs and its targets are now attempting to correct. The MDGs tended to focus on global and national averages which increases the risk of masking deficits in achievement at the sub-national level and diverting policy attention and resources from marginalized and/or excluded groups. Furthermore, failing to localize national goals, prevented development plans from accurately reflecting local realities, needs and demands and thus precluded local ownership and accountability.

A focus on SSE necessarily redirects attention to local territories and these groups. As most SSE initiatives are rooted in the local economy, SSE can play a major role in supporting inclusive and sustainable local development. In the framework of localizing SDG implementation, SSE has the potential to be part of a broader approach to Local Economic Development (LED) that matches and enables linkages between unmet needs for employment, income, goods and services in ways that are compatible with the sustainable use of resources and local asset building, including those assets and resources associated with the livelihoods of disadvantaged and marginalized groups.

SSE can also help to shed light on what is often a blind spot in strategies to address the structural determinants of inequality and exclusionary and unsustainable development, namely, unequal power relations. SSE focuses attention on active citizenship and participatory democracy, which are essential to the implementation of the goals and for ensuring social inclusion and accountability.

Even though there is a growing constituency of development actors that recognize the contribution of SSE to inclusive and sustainable development, it still remains under the radar of many policy makers and other key stakeholders in the development community. **The UN Task Force strongly believes that SSE should be recognized as an important means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.**

While the effective scaling-up of SSE would contribute significantly to the implementation of all the SDGs, the realization of the overall 2030 Agenda depends crucially on **SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development**, which defines key means of implementation. SSE is particularly relevant for attaining 10 targets related to domestic resource mobilization, innovative financing, capacity building, innovation, policy coherence and monitoring and partnerships.

Myriad forms of social and solidarity finance are also relevant for the target of mobilizing additional financial resources. **Advocacy and policy dialogue** involving SSE organizations is important for ensuring policy coherence and harmonization. **Regional and international SSE networks** play an important role in diffusing knowledge about relevant social, technological, institutional and policy innovations. **Data related to SSE** are important for improving the measurement of progress on sustainable development.

A key means of implementation relates to a variant of public-private or public-civic partnerships that involves state institutions partnering with SSE organizations and enterprises. Such **partnerships** have played a key role in transformational changes in countries and territories around the world.

The General Assembly resolution calls for "*a revitalized Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people*" (Preamble). This involves "*bringing together Governments, civil society, the private sector, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilizing all available resources*" (para 60).

The TFSSE is well positioned to play a constructive role in this global partnership, acting not only as a hub for inter-agency coordination but also as a conduit for civil society voices to interface with policy making. The TFSSE also has the possibility to contribute to the knowledge base that SDG implementation requires, by facilitating in-depth research on the scale and impact of SSE and the identification of good practices, conditions and contexts that enable SSE to play a transformational role in the achievement of the SDGs.

The TFSSE was founded in 2013 and is composed of 19 members³ and 7 observers⁴. The task force strives to enhance the recognition of the role of SSE enterprises and organizations in sustainable development; to promote knowledge of SSE and to consolidate SSE networks; to support the establishment of an enabling institutional and policy environment for SSE and to ensure the coordination of international efforts and create and strengthen partnerships. For more information about the TFSSE and relevant UN publications on the topic of SSE visit the website <http://unsse.org/>

SDG	Targets	Rationale
Poverty eradication, equality and good governance		
SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere	1.2; 1.4	SSE emphasises social protection, basic needs provisioning and participatory governance and speaks directly to three of the general goals related to poverty eradication, equality and good governance (SDG 1,10,16). Concretely SSE can contribute to these goals through fair employment generation, enhancing rights to economic resources, facilitating access to social services and assistance, food security and women's economic empowerment, targets that are also linked to the realization of other SDGs.
SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries	10.1; 10.2	
SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels	16.6; 16.7	
Hunger, food and agriculture		
SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security, improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	2.3; 2.4; 2.5	SSE has a pivotal role to play in meeting the goal on hunger, food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture (SDG2). Much of SSE activity focuses on agriculture and food provisioning through the millions of producers organized in cooperatives, urban community agriculture, fair trade and alternative food networks. Many of these organizations adopt or promote agro-ecological practices and use indigenous knowledge.
Social services and assistance		
SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	3.3; 3.7; 3.8; 3.c	SSE organizations are also well represented in the delivery of social services and assistance (SDG 3, 4) such as health care, elderly care, child care and disability support. Education and training is another prominent field for SSE organizations.
SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	4.1; 4.2; 4.4; 4.5; 4.6; 4.7	
Gender equality		
SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	5.4; 5.5; 5.a	SSE is important for attaining objectives associated with care and valuing domestic work. Empowerment of women and girls and gender equality (SDG 5) that derives from active participation in SSE organizations have important spillover effects in terms of women's emancipation and claims making in the domestic and public spheres.
Employment, infrastructure and inclusive growth		
SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	8.3; 8.4; 8.5; 8.9; 8.10	Regarding employment, infrastructure and inclusive growth (SDG 8,9) an increasing number of governments are recognizing the role of SSE in generating employment in the aftermath of the global financial crisis. SSE also contributes to countering the growth of precarious employment and the inability of the traditional formal sector to fulfil its role of absorbing surplus labour from, for example, rural areas. While the role of SSE in relation to infrastructural development is mainly centered on social and energy infrastructure, it can play an important role in the development of economic infrastructure through advocacy. Organizing in cooperatives can facilitate access to finance, machinery, labour and expertise needed for harvesting, marketing, processing and economic diversification.
SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation	9.1; 9.3; 9.4	
Quality of life in human settlements		
SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	11.1; 11.2; 11.3; 11.4; 11.6; 11.a	The quality of life in human settlements (SDG 6, 11) will increase with the active citizenship associated with SSE as it is key to promote participatory governance systems that are essential for community renewal and inclusive development in urban centres and rural villages and towns.
SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	6.1; 6.2; 6.3; 6.b	
Forests, oceans and coastal eco-systems		
SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss	15.1; 15.2; 15.3; 15.5	SSE does not only involve forms of organizations and collective decision making processes conducive to protecting forests, oceans and coastal eco-systems (SDG 14, 15) but it also involves the promotion of sustainable farming and natural resource management.
SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources	14.2; 14.4; 14.b	
Sustainable production and consumption and climate change		
SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all	7.2; 7.a	SSE contributes to the sustainable production and consumption and helps fight climate change (SDG 7,12,13) particularly by addressing the issue of circular economy (notably recycling and reusing), waste reduction and post-harvest losses. SSE is also crucial for transforming consumption patterns and is part of a cultural shift that seeks to counter trends associated with consumerism and overconsumption as well as the trade-off between economic growth and environmental sustainability.
SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	12.2; 12.3; 12.5; 12.6; 12.8	
SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	13.1; 13.3	
Means of implementation		
SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development	17.1; 17.3; 17.6; 17.7; 17.9; 17.14; 17.16; 17.17; 17.18; 17.19	Above all, SSE will help in realizing the transformational vision (SDG 17) of the 2030 Agenda. To the extent that SSE is an important means of transitioning from informal to formal economy, it supports domestic resource mobilization through the tax system. Myriad forms of social and solidarity finance are also relevant for the target of mobilizing additional financial resources. Advocacy and policy dialogue involving SSE organizations is important for ensuring policy coherence. Regional and international SSE networks can play an important role in diffusing knowledge about relevant social, technological, institutional and policy innovations. Data related to SSE is important for improving measuring progress on sustainable development.

³ DESA, ECLAC, ESCWA, FAO, ILO, OECD, TDR, UN Women, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO, UNIDO, UN-NGLS, UNRISD, WFP, WHO

⁴ ICA, MBM, MedESS, RIPESS, EESC, EMES, GSEF