



The 'Leave No One Behind Conversations' series 2 is an All Together in Dignity (ATD) Ireland project supported by Concern Worldwide. A community workshop series based on inclusive conversations, the project sought to raise awareness among people from all walks of life in Ireland of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda as expressed in its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its Promise, 'To Leave No One Behind'. Specifically, the project sought to involve and empower marginalised groups to actively contribute to this public discourse through valuing their knowledge and lived experience of poverty and social exclusion.

The 17 SDGs, also known as Global Goals, were adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at an historic UN Summit and came into force on 1 January 2016. They are the global community's response to the urgent economic, social and environmental problems facing the world today, from climate change to global poverty and inequality. They set out a bold vision for achieving a more sustainable world by the year 2030. Ireland has a particular interest in the SDGs, as its former Ambassador to the UN, Mr David Donoghue, acted as co-facilitator to the intergovernmental negotiations through which the Goals were agreed. While the SDGs are not legally binding, governments are expected to take ownership and establish national frameworks for their achievement.

All Together in Dignity Ireland began to spread awareness of the Leave No One Behind Promise through our Leave No One Behind Conversations Series 1 campaign which consisted of thought-provoking community workshops.

Progress to date on the Implementation Plan in Ireland and the 2030 Agenda worldwide has in general been quite slow and disappointing. We hope that by further promoting the importance of the SDGs and the Leave No One Behind promise in a second series of community workshops, and by bringing forward the voices of those who have continued to be left most behind within Irish communities, we can shine a light on the importance and relevance of the 2030 Agenda Goals and Promise to those struggling the most. We also hope that the suggestions by the participants of our workshops on who participants felt was most left behind and what we can do to ensure people are not left behind will be reviewed and acted on by Government, policy makers and other actors of influence.



### Methodology



The Leave No one Behind series 2 community workshops took place from January to June 2020 with 6 groups and involving over 100 individuals from all walks of life around the country, many of whom had lived experience of poverty. The subject of these conversations was the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, and in particular the Promise embedded in the SDG's to Leave No One Behind. During the community workshops, each of the 17 SDGs were discussed in depth, and participants rated each SDG in terms of its level of importance to their lives, choosing one (or up to three) Goals that meant the most to them. An important part of these workshops was ensuring that a true reflection of people's thoughts and feelings concerning the Goals was revealed, and how they would practically impact the lives of those people struggling the most.

Three major concepts emerged; **Encouraging, Empowering** and **Engaging**. These three concepts formed the basis for a participative approach. They were important elements at each step of the process; from recruiting participants; having inclusive, honest conversations based on their personal experiences; and recording their understanding, valuing of and willingness to commit to practical action around the SDGs and the Promise. All comments listed in this report are quoted directly from recordings of the participants, with their permission.

The people who participate in the LNOB conversations come from many walks of life. They were engaged, not only through other activities organised by ATD Ireland, but also through other civil society organisations involved in the 2030 Agenda. Reaching out to different services also allowed for a good degree of diversity in those involved in the workshops including people of different genders, ages, nationality, disabilities, etc. and ranging from organisations focusing on adult literacy, addiction rehabilitation, immigration/direct provision, youth matters, etc.

The project met with over 100 individuals from 6 different groups across 3 counties in a total of 12 individual meetings. The groups that participated comprised: the Dublin Adult Learning Centre (DALC), the Cork Life Centre, the Dominican Justice Office, the North West Inner City Training and Development Project (NWICTDP), the Granard Family Resource Centre and ATD Ireland. We wish to express our gratitude to our funders Concern Worldwide as well as to all the participants and groups that took part in the conversations, for all the wisdom, courage and insights shared with us.

#### **SDG 1: No Poverty**





With 27 first preference votes, SDG 1: No Poverty was chosen as the 2nd most important Sustainable Development Goal by the participants in our community workshops. Comments included:

"Everyone should have a place to call home".

"People are afraid if they go into hostels that they are going to be robbed or stabbed or something like that".

"I was working three jobs and I was still sitting on the streets begging people for money because I was sending money home to family and everything. I was looking at people who have money pass by me and ask their husbands - Why is he not going to work?"

"Poverty is a big business"

"They put so many obstacles in front of you so you cannot do anything because somebody making the laws is putting money in their pockets."



"No poverty is a basic human right ... It's completely absurd."

"The other one I picked was good jobs and economy and growth because if you haven't got the right education and the right job, how do you stay out of poverty. Everything is linked together."

"If there is no poverty, people will have money to go for education and to have their own house and to maintain their own communities around them. But people need money in their hands to do this."

"If no one is poor, then of course, equality will rise because people will not look down on you. If I am poor, then you look down upon me, but if we are equal in terms of money, then we are seen as equal." "The governments keep saying there's no money but there is. They have money, people have the money but it's just not distributed equally."

"I thought I knew what poverty was until I went to India. There I saw real poverty and I mean real. There's nothing like social welfare in India. If you haven't got the money so what - that's it, you just haven't got it. You get nothing done."

"It's the lived experience of poverty too and it's that my version of poverty might be different to yours. To us not being in poverty, it is not having a house, but then building someone something that basically looks like a shed to them might be their home."



With 9 first preference votes SDG 2: No Hunger was voted as the joint 8th most important Goal by the participants of our community workshops. Comments included:

"In Ireland - even if you are poor you can still feed ... at least there are places where they will give you food or the government will help."

"In other countries, if you are not working, or your parents are not rich, you will not be able to feed yourself."

"Some of the poorest mothers may have to make sacrifices because their income is so low they have to prioritise feeding their children properly over themselves."

"No Hunger is not just when the baby is born; it's from the womb. Proper food that we can all afford is important."

"All the food that's getting wasted from everywhere - and when you see the likes of people who have nothing - it's unbelievable."



#### **SDG 3: Health and Wellbeing**



With 36 first preference votes, SDG 3: Health and Wellbeing came out on top as the 1st most important Sustainable Development Goal by the participants of our community workshops. Comments included:

"Health is most important because if we are not healthy, we can't participate or do anything to help anyone else."

"I picked good health because your health is your wealth. If you don't have your health, what have you got? Everything else kind of goes out the window when your health does."

"They are so interconnected. If you're not feeling good mentally you're not going to be as able to take care of your physical health, and vice-versa."

"Mental health in our generation is coming up now a lot. People are only finding out now in their thirties that they had ADHD or things like that because they weren't properly assessed when they were younger."

"I feel a lot of people went to use drugs because of their mental health - even around children and all you know!"



"I need to quit smoking and all, but you need to be taught proper what smoking does to the body - you know what I mean?"

"In Ireland, it's the public versus the private. Everyone has an entitlement to services no matter who they are or where they are, but if someone is waiting for 2 years to be seen on a public waiting list, then the stress of that alone is adding more health issues. Everyone should have equal entitlement to the healthcare they need." "I picked good health as my SDG because there are not many facilities for people like myself really, and for other people like me who live with illnesses, to help teach them how to look after a person that's sick. Like, my partner has a mental health issue that I know nothing about it – I'm only learning as I go along – there's no training or courses to teach you how to look after people with that mental health issue."

"For me where I'm coming from, if you don't have money, there is no such thing as a medical card. There is nothing called free health or anything! It all has to do with your money and it's so bad as opposed to Ireland where if you come to the emergency room, they will attend to you before talking about money."

"There are communities where people are not educated enough; give money to that community so that the people will get educated, their health will be okay and then they can go to work and they can give back. Because if I'm not healthy, I'm not going to give back to communities, I'm not going to be able to study. If I don't have money, I can't buy the fruits and vegetables I need to eat."

#### **SDG 4: Quality Education**



With 24 first preference votes, SDG 4: Quality Education was ranked as the 3rd most important Sustainable Development Goal by the participants of our community workshops. Comments included:

"For me, this is most important, the right to equal education. The SDG says 'quality', but I say 'equal' because quality education you can get, but you will not get it everywhere."

"For me, this is most important, the right to equal education. The SDG says 'quality', but I say 'equal' because quality education you can get, but you will not get it everywhere."

"I think education is very important. I think every single person on this planet should be entitled to an education."

"I picked Education for obvious reasons; we just need that for everybody. Everybody has a right to it regardless of who/where they are or what their circumstances."

"The other one I picked was good jobs and economy and growth because if you haven't got the right education and the right job, how do you stay out of poverty?"

"Education is so important in how it links to learning how to treat people well because there's always bullying going on in the workplace and it's all lack of education because if they are taught to understand, they would not do it to another human being."

"There's not enough education on things which we need to learn about like disability. There is awareness, but that's not education."



"Back home, education is purely based on money. Even though your child may be intelligent, if you are poor, you cannot afford to pay for the school. That means they have deprived that child of being all that they could be in life – just because you are poor. Opportunities die just like that. As long as you have money, that's all that counts. No money, no school! Politicians send their kids abroad to school."

"It's really education that they need and to get their dignity back as well. You can put somebody into a home, but then a couple of weeks later, they could be back to square one again. You have to get them an education - do you know what I mean? You have to get them their dignity back!"



#### **SDG 5: Gender Inequality**



With 9 first preference votes, SDG 5: Gender Inequality was voted as the 6th most important Goal by the participants of our community workshops. Comments included:

"I chose gender equality because we all come into the world equal, so we should go through life being equal. Even just coming down the stairs here this morning, we had a group of mothers, and their babies and there would be people in that room that would be very well educated and there would be people in that room that wouldn't be very well educated, yet the babies (regardless of status or gender) were all enjoying each other and interacting, and there was no differences whatsoever. They got down on the floor and they were all at one level."

"I think our children now in secondary school are more perceptive to gender issues, whereas when I was growing up, it was taboo. I find now that my daughter is 40, she was brought up about this very differently, and my grandson even more so."

"If you look when Mary Robinson became the first woman president in this country, no one thought that was going to happen. So that's basically saying, you can be what you want to be."

"Gender inequality should be a thing from the past, it shouldn't exist. There is still a - ways to go, but I think it's improving - definitely more so in some countries than others."

"Yesterday was National Women's Day and it was a reminder that there are many women and girls around the world who are not treated equally and experience violence and poverty and injustice. What we need are international frameworks like the SDGs. We need targeted government policies which support women, and we need strong civil societies. Above all, we need to be able to listen and respect the experiences of women and girls who suffer."

## SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

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With 9 first preference votes, SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation came out as the joint 8th most important Sustainable Development Goal by the participants of our community workshops. Comments included:

"Everybody has a right to clean water."

"It speaks for itself - it's just human dignity."



"When you break everything down to a foundational level, the very basic needs of a person are food, water, safety and security, and if we have those wrong then everything else after it is going to become wrong. It's just inevitable."

"So we know that we are lucky in Ireland that we have water that's clean, that comes straight from the tap, but that's a privilege not everyone has."

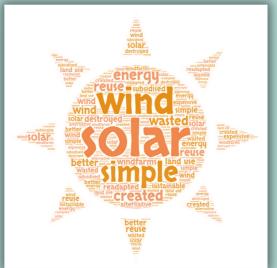
"That's one thing we take for granted isn't it – clean water! A lot of people in developing countries don't have that."

"A lot of us take for granted that we can turn on the tap and take water from there when you think of the bigger picture. For a spell, we were on a boiled water notice and it felt devastating, and there's people that have to walk miles in some parts of the world to get water."

"Half the bloody water is poisonous. The treatments are poisoning it. The water here is terrible. You don't know what's in it, or if it's safe to drink. You could buy a bottle of water in the shop, but who says that's okay?"

### SDG 7: Affordable and Clean





With 4 first preference votes, SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy was voted both the joint 14th and second last most important Goal by the participants of our community workshops. Comments included:

"I guess renewable energy is about not overusing and exploiting our resources, and finding alternatives that aren't as bad for the environment. And not using bad energy like carbon admissions which is a main issue in climate change. Apparently by 2030, we will all have to be using electric cars."

"With electric cars, you have to have your own charger and that's means more electricity. It's a no-win situation. And how are we going to be able to afford them? The electric cars are much more expensive and then the batteries only last a certain number of years."

## SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth



With 7 first preference votes, SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth was the 9th most chosen Sustainable Development Goal by the participants at our community workshops. Comments included:

"The minute I saw that (SDG 8), I thought of the Government minister that was on the television the other day. His spiel on this was, 'It's done, we have full employment, there's more money in people's pockets, etc'. No, there's not! The jobs he's talking about are poor quality ones with low pay. And he was trying to get kudos because he had had a plan for this, and therefore it was done."

"When you dig deep, there are a lot of people in very precarious employment - low paid, zero hour contracts, lack of pension - a whole lot of basic workers' rights which have been stripped away. So it's one thing to have full or high employment, but what's the quality of that work for a lot of people. We are seeing this in a lot of developed countries including Ireland. It's not enough to have just economic growth. We have to be conscious of what sort of growth it is and who benefits from the growth and that's a big issue of discussion. You can't just have growth by itself; it needs to link to decent jobs for everyone. You need to look at what quality of employment that growth is generating!"

"Everybody should be entitled to a good job in an equal way, so that we can all get over this poverty trap, you know?"



"In Ireland, I know there are some good jobs, but there are some working people who do not have good jobs here. They end up getting maybe cleaner jobs. It's not what they have a passion for. It's not what they want to do, or are even qualified for. A lot of foreigners come here with high degrees, and they end up doing low paid work that don't match their training or careers."

"In this country, so many educated African women like us are carers, although that's not what we are qualified for. You should be able to do the work you want to do. But because there is no other choice, we have to go for care. There are no other jobs for us to do."

"Say you get a couple on the minimum wage - they can do 6, 7 days a week and never be able to buy a house. And I think that's a disgrace, I really do. There has to be some kind of housing programme to give hard working people an opportunity. It's very sad. I don't have kids, but I think it's tragic that there are kids who can't see a future, and we have working men and women who can't expect a pension in the future. I think there's a lot of hopelessness around and then we have the mental health issues that follow on from this."

## SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure



Four first preference votes were given for SDG 9 which was both the joint 14th and joint second-last most important Goal chosen by the participants of our community workshops. Comments included:

"If we don't have the infrastructure to keep people connected, then that's going to be a problem. Infrastructure for me is about access to services and to sustainable areas and communities."

"The internet here is middle-of-the-road and it's quite slow. There's certain parts of Longford where it's very bad and there's others, like where I live, where it's not too bad, but then again, it wouldn't be as quick as what my parents have in Dublin. Some parts of the country have very poor coverage."

"Some people are being denied proper accessibility and as a result, they cannot participate fully in society."



"Accessibility has gone out the window even here in this building. Granted a wheelchair is able to come in here, but a person in a wheelchair, like myself or anyone else, cannot open the doors as they seem to always pull out to you. We need doors that push in."

"Infrastructure in Ireland – I'm impressed! When I look at where I come from - Nigeria - while it's getting better in some parts of the country and there are good roads, there is a great difference compared to Ireland where they are always building new things."

#### **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities**



**SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities was the 10th most popular Sustainable Development Goal amongst the participants at the community workshops, with 10 first preference votes.** Comments included:

"That gap between the world's richest and poorest people – it is so large and unfair, and it just really shouldn't exist at all."

"The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer - the money that we have, takes a long time for us to make, while richer people can make the same amount in just one hour."

"So the government does support people more than in other countries, but there are still extremes here. There are people who are very rich and there are people who are living in extreme poverty in these very wealthy countries, and often that is ignored."

"I was thinking inequalities in terms of opportunity for the masses to work, to have access to basic rights in terms of their work environment. There should be greater opportunity for jobs so that each household can more easily access work. It would make the difference in come levels not too high or too low. It would mean that each household has something on their plates. The gap would not be that massive."

"I picked Reduced Inequalities because in my eyes it covers so many things. I'm fed up with all the racism, homophobic, transphobic - I'm fed up with all that and I want it to stop because it is very wrong and it should have gone years ago. I also feel that if we get that under control, other things will start coming naturally such as SDG10 will be tied to SDG 11. It will get a community going if they are no longer being divided. You can't build a community or a city until you first find a way to get rid of the labels." "We don't have the same chances for a good education. The government has to bring about equal access to quality education for everyone. They should make it totally free for everybody because if you have quality education, then you can achieve many things for yourself."

"I chose reduced inequalities because often when we look at countries like Ireland and America, we think they are rich countries and that people don't go without food or healthcare, but actually in America which is one of the richest countries in the world, people have to pay for healthcare, and if they don't have it they are treated like the people we heard about today in Nigeria."

"These were talking about reinforced stereotypes. As soon as they started talking about the news in Darndale, their minds went to Travellers, some of whom live in Darndale. And then they thought we can insult these Travellers, but if the wrong people had been on that bus, they might have got dragged off and been given a few slaps, but the Travellers would have been the bad ones in the newspapers for attacking such and such. It would never have been mentioned that these people had been saying despicable things because that's what it was. And it was the fact that they were going through the area, but didn't think once. They were so casual about it!"

# SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities





With 4 first preference votes from the participants at our community workshops, SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities ranked 12th out of all the Sustainable Development Goals. Comments included: "In places (where) they build sustainability- the people still live there after 50 years. They put facilities inside and everything. They have gyms, they have schools - everything is inside. And there's no criminality, there's no nothing because people receive an education in the building."

"This SDG also has the word, 'communities', and this family resource centre is a good example of that. On Thursday evenings, for example, there is a youth club where about 80 young people come. They hang around and chat, and they play music and do art etc. At least they have one place in the community because if you're fourteen, you're not supposed to be in the pub, so where do you meet if you have nowhere to go? So everything that was mentioned about what is done in this building seems to be all about community."

"It's so important to have a place for teenagers because they are at that vulnerable age where if they meet on the street god knows what devilment they are going to get up too. If they have nowhere to go, it can cause problems."

"The sports bodies and fairs are great,- you have the GAA, for example; it provides positive alternatives."

"There were loads of houses built there, but they were built in the wrong places. They were built without any nearby services. No thought was put it into it at all. It's about how we can plan our living spaces. Ensuring there is a good mix of social and eco- housing."

"You need to build infrastructure so you can start something. You cannot start something from nothing."

"You're not going to build houses when you need land to grow your food. If you need green grass to grow your vegetables and this, that and the other, you're not going to be able to do that if there's a house built there. Or building houses on floor lands! What's sustainable to some people is different to what's sustainable for others depending on your job, lifestyle and where you live etc."

"Take, for example, buildings where there are windows that are years old and the draft is coming through. Older people are not able to cope with the bad weather and the damp."



#### **SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production**



With 5 first preference votes, SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production was the 11th most voted for Sustainable Development Goal by participants at our community workshops. Comments included:

"You have McDonalds and places like that making millions, billions of dollars and you have people who before 20 years old were healthy, they were normal and now they are 200 pounds, 300 pounds. They are now using drugs and everything to suppress that."

"Responsible consumption is about everything you consume, from food to clothes. Buying local is important. People describe us sometimes as a consumerist society - that the market place creates goods for consumers and it's creating that demand for goods and big shopping centers. We need to be conscious and responsible about that because, of course, we all have to consume something, but at what level?"

"There is a leaning now towards going to the charity shops and recycling which helps for all sorts of things. It could also help Life on Land or many of the other SDGs. A main aim should be avoiding waste. Eliminating plastic, for example there's a whole lot of areas where a difference can be made."



"I also picked Responsible Consumption. I watched a film on Netflix about veganism and one thing that fascinated me was about what they do to the land, how they destroy forestry, and it's for feeding all the cattle. You have to have vast amount of fields and all, and that's what they are doing in Brazil. They are clearing forests in the Amazon to grow stuff to feed all the cattle and there."

"So I had to start thinking, what am I doing about that? I thought about it this morning when I took my little coffee cup and made sure I recycled it, and I even went as far as taking an envelope and took the gum strips and the window off it, so I could recycle it. So it's the tiny things really, but if I don't do it, who else is going to do it? If I can walk that walk and talk that talk and do it with passion, maybe I could convince someone else to do it. And if I can convince one or two or three people to do it, then I'll have the roaring effect!"

"I chose Responsible Consumption because I kinda remember listening to some things about companies and what they're doing. I don't remember what company exactly, but it was a shock to find out that cheap clothes are one of the biggest producers of waste. And also, this industry violates a lot of human rights in the sense of sweat workshops, unequal pay, and poor safety and sanitation. So, I feel like achieving this goal could help people who are in less fortunate situations - for them to get paid properly and to work in nicer environments."

#### **SDG 13: Climate Action**



Receiving 18 votes, SDG 13: Climate Action was the 4th most voted for Sustainable Development Goals at the community workshops. Comments included:

"Climate change is about earthquakes and flooding, too much rain and everything about climate in general. We are lucky right now in Ireland - apart from the rain - not to have too many of those things. The government should keep monitoring things like that in accordance with climate changes in the future, and they should help people so that they can help prepare themselves for any negative effects that might be on the way."



"I think its number one because the way things are going at the moment, we can see what's happening through social media; it's not getting hidden or anything like that. And I think they need to get a grip on the situation, I think all the countries in the world - the wealthy countries, the poorer countries - the whole lot! Some countries are tackling the problem now, but other countries are like 50 or 60 years behind and they are always saying, we need to act, but I think it's up to everybody, every country to stand together."

"Climate change is not necessarily fully our fault; it is there because of our ancestors, wars, power, money and everything, but we need to have climate change action now because we have maybe 10 or 12 years at the most to redo everything - like growing more trees is one thing."

"And the thing about climate change is that even though Ireland isn't affected in a severe way, what we are realising is that is is often the people who are the poorest who are most affected by the changes in climate. So a lot of people in Europe, they know about it on an intellectual level, but because they are not affected by it directly, they feel it's not my concern. Even in the places affected by flooding, people's entire house can be affected by it, so it is something that we are waking up to maybe too slowly, but we have to wake up for the people who are most vulnerable."

"Do you not think that climate change affects everyone though? Maybe not yet, but it will eventually."

#### **SDG 14: Life Below Water**





With 6 first preference votes, SDG 14: Life Below Water ranked 10th in our workshops. Comments included: "I chose Life Below Water, so for example, fish resources are being depleted due to overfishing. And in Ireland, this has caused problems for people in fishing communities because you have these big trawlers coming from Spain and from different countries."

"When you go near a river these days, you can't see the bottom of the river. Years ago you'd go to the river and you could see the fish."

"Everyone's just dumping things into the sea - nuclear this, nuclear that and the plastic that's on everything. It won't affect us so much in our time; this is going to be decades or even centuries down the line. We don't even know all the damage that is being caused. So, I think our waters really need to be protected now."

"We are never really sure how polluted the ocean is."

"I think plastic is an issue at school that our children are learning about because my kids will come home and they will talk about how the fish are eating the plastic."

"I know we don't want fish to die, but I'd rather a fish die than a person."

SDG 15: Life On Land

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With 4 first preference votes, SDG 15: Life on Land was the 12th most voted for Sustainable Development Goal at the community workshops by participants. Comments included:

"I picked Life on Land because of all the extinction that's going on. A lot of species are going to be extinct in the next 20, 30 years, you know what I mean?"

"We don't appreciate how much the land contributes to our lives and how it affects every person all over the world. It is so important! Here in Ireland, we need to value more the role of the farmer and how he's the source of so much stuff for us all. So the land is hugely important and I think maybe not all of us value that enough."

"I'm down in the country very often and I love going out to nature and going for walks in the forest or finding a lovely little spot next to the river. I'm at peace when I'm there and I love it, so that's why I picked Life on Land."

"Deforestation is a big issue. In science, we know that trees give us Oxygen and CO2. We need trees in our communities and in our lives."



"Forests are being stripped down to make way for farms, the local ecology is being destroyed and indigenous communities displaced from their homes in the forest because of what was happening."

### SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions



With 14 first preference votes, SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions was voted as the 5th most important Goal by the participants of our community workshops. Comments included:

"Peace is of course the most desirable thing on this earth isn't it? Be it worldwide or be it inner peace. If you have inner peace, it might reflect outwards and you might spread it." "Peace and justice should be for everybody, but it's not for people living in poverty. That'd be a good Goal to reach though - for our future, for our children."

"In Ireland, we are really quite lucky because we don't have at the moment war or stuff like that in our faces, but abroad there's kids being sent to fight wars that they don't want to be in."

"In Ireland, there is justice. If something happens between the rich and the poor, the rich can't just say, 'I will kill you' – nothing like this will happen. They won't get away with that, whereas in Africa if a rich man says he is going to kill me, he will go for it. I have to run for my dear life. But in Ireland there is a justice system."

"We're not gonna achieve the Goals if we're constantly fighting. But most of the things we're fighting over are about inequalities of one sort or another."

"If you have peace and justice, you have a better chance of having health, education and all the other things that are so important."

"With mindfulness at school now, it's getting easier for some kids to learn to reach a balance where everything is flowing naturally. After you have arrived at a certain level of inner tranquility, this is how you go about changing your world in baby steps or massive steps and to correcting injustices."

## SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals





With 3 first preference votes, SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals came out as the 17th and least important Sustainable Development Goal by the participants of our community workshops. Comments included:

"There is a complication in communication between the government and the citizens, so how do you have a partnership? Where's the communication? Where's the link? The (SDG) forums once every two months are too slow!" **In concluding:** 

It was interesting to note that SDG 17 hardly featured in terms of its importance/relevance to the workshop participants. It would seem that, for the individuals from communities across Ireland that we consulted, establishing partnerships for the Goals felt like a distant topic.

What came across quite clearly throughout our conversations was a huge disconnect between ordinary people at the bottom and officials at the top who are meant to be leading the implementation and development of the SDGs in Ireland. This divide is resulting in a increasing sense of disillusion in people, like or participants, when it comes to the prospect of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals ever being fully achieved, especially by the 2030 target. It is no surprise, therefore, that participants were not optimistic when it came to establishing a global partnership across all Goals, and decided to focus instead on SDGs like ' No Poverty' and ' Health and Wellbeing' that were more important and relatable to their daily lived experiences. **We asked the community workshop participants:** 

#### Who is most left behind?

Those experiencing homelessness and living within the limitations of homeless accommodation were mentioned by several people:

"I thing of all the families that are stuck in hotel rooms - mothers with their kids and fathers with their kids - and the homeless on the street. Like, when I come in to my clinic every day, there's people with sleeping bags on cardboards, and it just breaks my heart!"

"So for me people in homeless accommodation are being left behind because they are not getting the attention they need. There are a lot of people in hostels who are not getting treatment or access to the services that they need."

"I agree with everything being said that the homeless are left behind the most. Definitely, there's not enough help for them out there. And it is getting worse and it won't get any better. The government doesn't care about housing these people, that's why they are left there. No matter what you're trying to do, like, you can go around with food and clothes for them, but you can't give them a home. You're just leaving them there and there's nothing you can do. It's a horrible situation for them."

#### Children and the elderly were also discussed:



'Kids are getting left behind, I think. There's not enough money being put into the North Inner City and the kids are growing up around drugs and gangs constantly. You walk down there and you see empty tablet trays, syringes. All the parks are closed off because that's where people go to use and sell. So, there's nothing for them to do and then they end up going into using, or selling."

"I think about isolation and being older – it's much more of a struggle for these people. I think elderly people are not heard and they are just basically forgotten about. They really are."

#### Others spoke about how no one group is necessarily the most left behind:

"There are different stages of discrimination, but I don't think any group should have the monopoly over being discriminated against, you know. It doesn't matter who you are, you shouldn't have the monopoly over who gets discriminated against."

#### Another person said that who is being left behind in their community stems from more systemic factors, such as lack of mental health support:

"I think in my area at the moment, it comes down to education and mental health. I think it's important to understand that people (with mental health problems) are getting left behind and the government is just washing their hands. I listened to a few of these people and they were just looking for help, and the reason why they can't all get help is that if they are taking drugs, they won't be treated. But in the first place, their mental health might be the reason why they are on the drug, so it's a catch 22, you know that way. Doctors won't recognise people if they're on drugs, and they won't treat them for mental health problems, and I think that's wrong, big time, you know. So I think that in areas like that with alcohol, drugs and things coming up - that links to the homeless on the streets."

#### We also asked the participants:

# What can we do to leave no-one behind?

Participants spoke about how there needs to be **more help and support for families and single people that are homeless**.

They mentioned the need for safer hostels with better assistance e.g key workers as well as more food, clothes, book and hygiene product runs for the homeless. They also mentioned the need for free access to services for the homeless e.g gyms and showers. They spoke

about the upmost importance of designing actions around supporting the



homeless with more dignity, independence and self esteem and in listening to their voices and giving them a platform to share their experiences with the pubic.

Others spoke about the need for more preventative measures for young people and those living in poverty, isolation, or at risk of experiencing mental health/addiction

**difficulties.** They mentioned having more options for kids such as youth groups, community centres and homework clubs as well as more detox and after care centres for those struggling with addiction. They spoke about the importance in having better and more affordable mental/physical health care, awareness raising and de- stigmatisation programmes, both in schools and in general. Participants also spoke about the importance of improving access to facilities, social activities and childcare for families in hostels (playgrounds, games etc) and migrants by creating more chances for them to socialise and learn english. More platforms for equal opportunities for ex - prisoners and people with experiences of poverty to have a voice, was also discussed as was better support and more trusting relationships from social workers.

Participants also mentioned **the importance of more environmental-based community actions.** They discussed more education around recycling and having more outreach to pick up rubbish as a way to engage with the local community tidy town clean up. They spoke about creating an education initiative partnership with Dublin City Council around this. The creation of more community garden projects were also mentioned as was the need to plant more flowers and trees on on the streets in marginalised areas in order to increase positivity and community pride.



According to one participant: "If you don't get the basics right, the rest of these (Goals) are way too aspirational - they have no real meaning to the people who are actually living in this. No poverty, quality education, good health and clean water/sanitation are key, simply because they're the building blocks, and if you don't have that foundation, then sustainable cities and communities or good jobs and economic growth – they are meaningless. They are unreachable and they are not accessible."

There was a clear consensus throughout the LNOB series 2 community workshops that the implementation of SDG 1 No Poverty, SDG 3 good Health and Wellbeing and SDG 4 Quality Education were instrumental in providing an important foundational level of support to people before the other more global SDG's can be built upon e.g. SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure and SDG 17 Partnership for the Goals.

What also came across strongly was a massive disconnect between the institutions and governmental officials at the top



(who were making the rules) and the people at the bottom who were feeling the effects of these problems the most. The imbalance of this power dynamic has created a lack of trust in, and conviction about, the overall SDG implementation process and the belief that these Goals will ever be met, never-mind by the target year of 2030. It is obvious that those experiencing homelessness and suffering from poverty and its detrimental effects in all its forms - e.g. poor health and improper access to education - continue to be isolated and left behind despite the widely - acclaimed ' Leave No One Behind' Promise.

If anything, with the impact of the Covid pandemic, the national and global inequality between the world's richest and poorest has only grown more apparent since these community workshops took place. Due to Covid, the absolute number of people living in extreme poverty rose for the first time since 1997. Dooley (2021), shows for example, how economic contraction and job layoffs due to lockdown measures in many countries caused poverty to rise by almost 100 million in 2020 alone to 745 million without off-setting measures.

In reference to the Irish government and institutions of power, one participant explained how: "You people know nothing -, the reality of what 90 percent of the world is living through is utterly meaningless to the people at the top. No disrespect to them, but it's the people at the ground that the Goals and Promise has meaning for. People won't have meaning until they have a safe space to sleep, safe drinking water, food on the table, and a job to get up and go to in the morning – to give their lives meaning and to give them a sense of pride and self-esteem. That's where you start, because if you have pride in yourself and where you live and your family, then that pride expands out into your community and the world. But if you are literally fighting everyday of your life to just stay alive, who cares about sustainable energy?"

Although it was not an immediate priority for the majority of the participants, the importance of addressing climate change and its obvious worsening effects on land and sea, as well as well as its impact on the world's poorest people most harshly first, was not forgotten or ignored by our participants. Neither were the pressing issues of achieving peace and justice on a local, national and international scale, and bridging the gap of global inequalities around race, gender and socioeconomic status.

One person described how in his opinion: "I picked 'No Poverty', 'Gender Equality' and 'Peace and Justice'. They're three huge SDG's and I felt they're very connected kind of politically. I think this is why these 3 would be so hard to attain because they're so staked in politics. And they will be part of the political games, so I think these would be the biggest. I don't think poverty will ever be fully eradicated. I don't think that's gonna happen ...

And gender equality - I can't see that being across the globe either - again political games and people's perceptions. As for peace and justice? Well, we all know that war makes money so, you know, I would love to think that's gonna happen but realistically, I don't think we're ever gonna see a planet earth where war is all over."

Another participant told us: "I picked 'No Poverty', 'Good Health' and 'Climate Action' because I think that these are the primary and most pivotal SDGs for the continuation of our life. And if our lives are at risk from these big threats, what's the point in everything else? The way things are going, it doesn't look like everyone is going to survive this; it's looking like people are already dying."

It became clear from the conversations held in our Leave No One Behind Series 2 community workshops that many people are feeling increasingly hopeless within the confines of the current neoliberal capitalist system and, understandably, are being led to believe that any vague promises being made by those in power to improve their situations are likely to prove false. While the SDGs and the Leave No One Behind Promise of Agenda 2030 may offer us a roadmap for much-needed change for the future, they also show us where we are continuing to fail and let down those left most behind.

As someone expressed *"It goes to show the difference in lives. What they have over us. They have everything, but we have nothing. Nothing!"* It is our collective civil duty to work together to break this inequality and to keep those who live in poverty at the forefront of the decisions we make as individuals, as a society and, in particular, as members of governing bodies. As the renowned artist, Frida Kahlo once said:

"There is so much wealth and so much misery at the same time, that it seems incredible that people can endure such class difference, and accept such a form of hunger while on the other



hand, the millionaires throw away millions on stupidities."

We must call on governments across the world and those in positions of power in Ireland to act quicker and with more strength and empathy to address the importance of the implementation of the SDGs and the Leave No One Promise in relation to all peoples and especially those most marginalized by poverty, exclusion and injustice. We must not forget,

as one participant said: **"Some people are barely surviving,** *it's a fight*" and how for many millions of people living in persistent poverty across the globe, their full and timely implementation may literally mean the difference between life and death.













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