

Activity Report

ONLINE TRAINING FOR MEMBERS

MAINSTREAMING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

ONLINE – 26-27 November 2021

SUMMARY

SOLIDAR Foundation has been stepping up the efforts to **mainstream the SDGs** in its advocacy as well as in the work plan and the overall strategic orientation of the network. [The pandemic has unmistakably reminded it to everyone](#) - political action is urgently needed to shift the paradigm and embrace sustainability as the core principle of new normality. The SDGs are in fact, finally gaining ground at the EU as well as national level as the guiding lights for public investment. However, this happens in a context of weak multilateralism and global coordination, and looking at Europe, this is coupled with the fact that in almost all countries the popularity of the parties advocating against sustainability is on the rise - and it's the right-wing and populist ones.

Our members' work supports the urgently needed transition towards a social, economic and environmentally sustainable future. Nonetheless, it isn't always self-evident for members, especially for the staff operating locally, to acknowledge the profound link of their current activities with the goals expressed in the Agenda 2030. This is why on 26 and 27 November 2020, SOLIDAR Foundation has organised a training for local staffers and volunteers of the membership to

- facilitate the acknowledgement of members of their role for achieving the SDGs and how they are already working on it;
- learn more about the SDGs terminology, logics and main actors;
- raise awareness within the network about the interconnectedness of different levels of actions and governance and how to link them consistently.

The Training was structured along three sessions building upon each other to achieve an understanding of interconnectedness while touching upon different aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Following an introductory session dedicated to raising members' awareness about the connection between their activities and the SDGs, the second part of the programme looked into intersectionality, meaning how all the SDGs are related. Finally, the training focused on partnership-building and the multistakeholder approach as intrinsic and reinforcing elements of the Agenda 2030 and in fact, of any agenda seriously aimed at achieving a Just Transition.

The programme was led by the **certified Gaia Education trainer** [Anna Tornaghi](#), who applied participatory non-formal educational methods, ensuring a continuous stream of exchange of views among the 30+ participants.

The **outcome** of the training was increased members' ability to frame their activities in the Agenda 2030 and therefore gain credibility, visibility and recognition as SDGs stakeholders, leading to a refreshed validation of the actions undertaken and not least to funding opportunities.

RAISING AWARENESS - SESSION 1

The Session is launched by the Board members of SOLIDAR Foundation and the presentation of the trainer, who invites participants to meet in smaller groups and identify with two objects. The exercise boosts participants' creativity and connection, as they come back to plenary presenting their partner's picks and the reasons behind them.

Following the ice-breaking activity, the trainer presents a brief history of sustainability, drawing participants' attention on its intrinsic Western point of view:

1972 UN Stockholm conference on the Human Environment, the first time this topic was discussed at the global level

1987 [Brundtland report: Our common future](#)

1992 First Rio de Janeiro UN-conference on the environment and development

1997 Rio+5 conference in New York, Agenda21 was started

2002 in Johannesburg the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) were introduced, providing a unified common language to talk about sustainability. However, these goals were mainly focussed on a European and American view on countries that needed help; north helping south being the underpinned logics. As a result, the eight goals address mainly extreme poverty and hunger, primary education, basic health, without strategies to reach them.

2012 Rio+20 conference again in Rio, paper: The future we want

2015 New York UN summit: the SDGs were developed by 8 million people discussing for 3 years (NGOs, citizens, governments, etc.) The SDGs concern all countries, not just the global south, and can be applied at all levels, from global to local.

5 Ps that lead to the SDGs: People, Prosperity, Peace, Partnership, Planet.

What do we know about the SDGs?

Participants are encouraged to share what they know and think about the SDGs, goal by goal. The main elements emerging are

- MDGs to SDGs as the transition from a top-down approach (Northern to Southern countries) to a bottom-up one.
- Poverty as a multidimensional reality. Material and immaterial poverty equally matter to achieve a democratic society, but poverty shouldn't be interpreted in absolute terms only as new forms of material poverty emerge (e.g. in-work poverty; poverty stemming from disasters such as climate ones or the pandemic).
- Hunger should also be understood in terms of food security and sustainable agricultural model; education to nutrition as connected to the health of the people and that of the planet. Poisoned soils lead to poisoned bodies

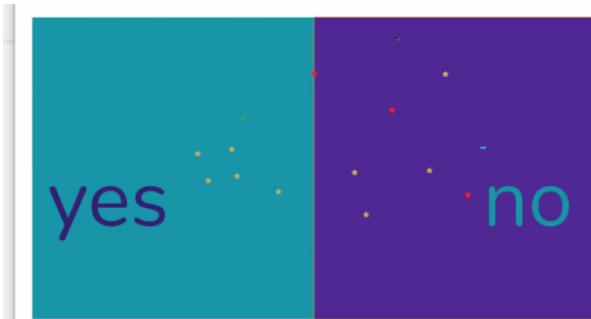
- Well-being is a broader concept than what it is commonly understood, and it results from social, cultural, community-rooted factors that are too often dismissed.
- Education should be understood not only as a goal per se but also as underpinning the achievement of Just Transition as a whole. Education is a means to empower people to achieve anything else and this aspect has to be further stressed
- Gender equality is not only a human right for women and girls to be treated equally but also a defining element for a sustainable future; education is key to achieve it, for all genders to grasp the different aspects of and solutions to gender inequality
- Water is the basis for life and as of today it is being poisoned by an exploitative production and societal model
- Energy means access to energy for all, thus lifting people out of poverty towards decent standards of living, but also addressing energy as a major cause for pollution
- Decent work and economic growth remain controversial goals of the Agenda 2030. Participants stress that it is a contradictory SDG because it implies that it is possible to achieve sustainability without questioning economic growth at all, contrary to what most scientific studies report
- Similarly, industry, innovation and infrastructure are not addressed with a sufficiently transformative vision in participants' view
- Inequalities, to be tackled within as well as between countries; participants see this goal as the closest to the ultimate aim of SOLIDAR network, that is Social Justice
- No sustainability can be achieved if not community-rooted and if excluding cities. It is only with Rio+20 that the discourse on sustainability is understood as connected to an urban transition towards a new model. Goal 11 is also understood by members as the need to think about ourselves as one element of a web of social, political and economic systems
- Responsible consumption and production is critical to achieving the Agenda 2030, however much remains to be addressed to educate people to think in these terms when consuming products
- Climate action, as well as life below water, is a matter that no country takes responsibility for as it implies an international aspect that is often used as an excuse to not engage and take the lead on these matters
- Peace, justice and strong institutions are what SOLIDAR Foundation members daily contribute to as they are included in their overall mission
- Partnerships as a tool that underpin the achievement of sustainable societies

Experiencing SDGs in our realities and connecting our projects

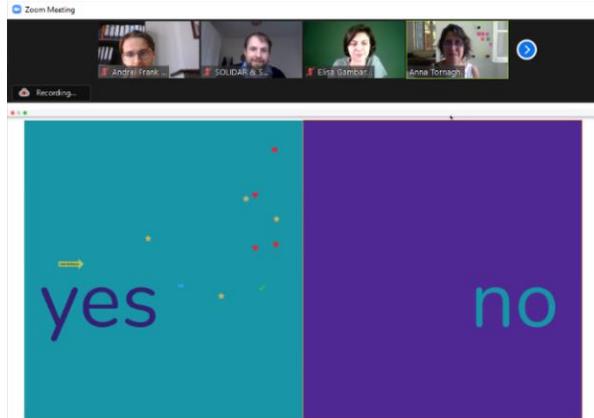
Participants share the projects that they are currently working on, identifying the SDGs that are addressed. The result of the plenary discussion is increased awareness of how, for instance, a project to help the inclusion of people with disabilities to enter and stay in the labour market can also address food waste and create partnerships between the not-for-profit and the business sector, resulting in win-win situations from the social and ecological perspectives.

Nonetheless, identifying synergies leads also to unearthing vacuums in the SDGs. Culture is not included in the Agenda 2030 or addressed as such, but it is thanks to the lens of culture that people bond and

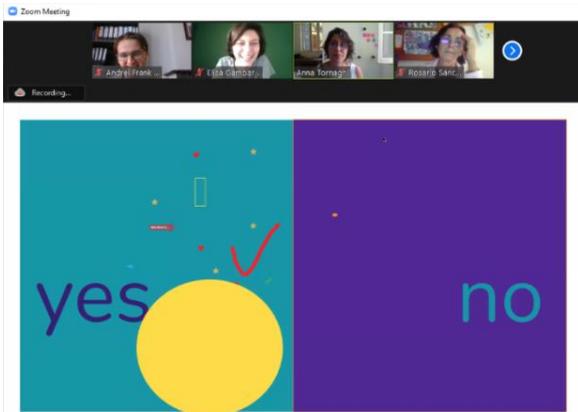
Who is from a big family?



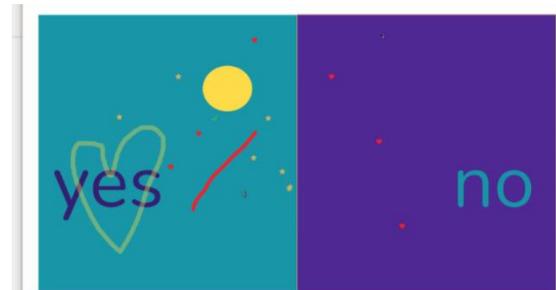
Who likes to take care of others?



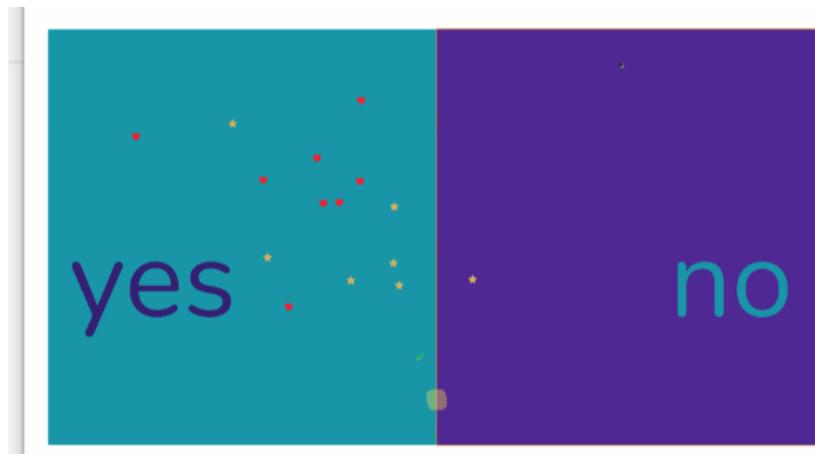
Who sometimes feels lonely while on projects?



Who feels grateful?



Who is looking forward to the next session?



Participants are then divided into small groups to discuss the projects that they are working on and look with participants from a different organisation for the not so self-evident SDGs that they are tackling. The exercise results in a plenary conversation that allows for a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of the Goals supporting the achievement of the Agenda 2030. For instance, a participant working on the EU-funded project **ARISE Roma** in Croatia had considered the activities mainly related to the SDG 10, reduce inequalities. However, the exercise allows them to see that SDG 1 (no poverty), 3 (good health and well-being), 6 (access to water) but also 12 (climate action) and 17 (partnerships) fit the aims of the project. Roma settlements are indeed dehumanising people on different levels, such as by posing simultaneously an issue for health and the environment in terms of lack of waste management and governmental disregard of environmental quality in the settlements, hence water pollution. Participants from another Member Organisation based in Portugal report about another project aimed at social inclusion and namely to support migrant communities to integrate into certain Lisbon neighbourhoods. The EU-funded project provides cultural activities as well as legal aid to those in need. The project not only reflects similar goals like the one discussed before but also addresses SDG 11 (sustainable communities) and indirectly SDG 4 (education).

Another EU-funded project that participants analyse pertains mainly to capacity building for upscaling good practices for civic and democratic participation leading to sustainability, in Italy. In the end, all the goals are concerned and addressed, but 4 (education), 12 (climate action) and 17 (partnerships) are more in focus.

While discussing projects aimed to combat social exclusion, participants agree that no such project should leave out of focus SDG 4 (Education) nor SDG 5 (gender equality) but putting them at the forefront of their work, since the aforementioned cultural character of social exclusion can be overcome only through education and lifelong learning and because women and girls are more exposed to social exclusion.

Culture, education, empowerment and territory are the keywords for another EU-funded implemented in Italy, CEET. It's a 40-months long project aiming at reducing early school leaving for children up to the age of 18 through different activities in and outside school. The idea is to create collaboration between CSOs', cultural institutions, families, schools and any culture-driven body of the involved community. It is a national project crossing Italy from the South to the North and including 46 partners, among which stand schools. The SDGs that have been openly targeted are 4, 10 and 11, but SDG 1 belongs equally to the scope of the project. As discussed earlier during the training indeed, cultural and educational poverty is a kind of poverty. Once again participants agree that quality education is the first step to advance on all other goals; quality education must be accessible to all, indiscriminately of their background.

The session is concluded by a game and the feedback provided by participants who report feeling grateful, boosted, creative, connected, happy, funny...and sleepy!

WHERE DO WE START? - Session 3

The last session is opened by the intervention of our partner **ITUC**, represented by Alain Rodriguez, who developed an expertise in the Trade Union movement with relation to the Agenda 2030 and its advancement. Alain presents the work of ITUC on the SDGs and in particular the campaign #Timefor8, which aims to achieve decent work for all. The presentation can be found [at this link](#).

A Q&A session follows, highlighting the contradictory nature of SDG 8 for the systemic view that should underpin the Agenda 2030. Participants find it problematic that decent work is directly linked to economic growth and consider necessary to re-envision it by decoupling it from growth.

The exchange is followed by a session of small groups asked to focus on the roles and strengths of NGOs and CSOs towards Agenda 2030. Participants go back to plenary bringing to the discussion both tangible and intangible resources of CSOs to advance the Agenda 2030. These comprise culture, relationships and community-building, different abilities developed in non-formal and informal learning settings, value-driven actions and proactivity, common knowledge and informal knowledge. Participants reflect on how often these aspects are not cultivated and recognised enough as resources for their projects. SDG 17 is also about this!

Participants go back to the projects discussed the day before, trying to re-envision them according to this acknowledgement. They find out that sustainability can be better mainstreamed in the design but also the implementation of their projects.