



Changing the economy: Human Rights at the center of economic actions

Over the last years the economic system has failed states and entire communities, the objectives of sustainable development set in 2015 seem now impossible to reach, however ; there is a last hope.

The current economic system keeps failing to provide stability and leaves entire countries behind. In recent years due to the Covid-19 crisis followed by the Ukrainian invasion and the growing vulnerability of certain nation states, reaching the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development goals appears to be unimaginable. In order to make it possible we have to understand that “economic growth on its own will not redress structural injustices that underline our failure to archive progress on the SDGs” (Volker Türk _ UN High Commissioner for Human Rights) , to accomplish the objectives developed in Brazil in 2012 and approved by the United Nations in 2015 we must build ‘Human Rights Economies’.

The current situation

Reaching the SDGs in 2030 is now an illusion if States do not start changing their approach to the

economy that keeps failing and is bringing more and more inequalities. We are living an unprecedented moment where “inequalities in certain states are retroceding at levels of the beginning of the XX century, a time before women were allowed to vote and the general acceptance of social protection.” (Antonio Guterres UN Secretary General). Since the invasion of Ukraine the world’s economy keeps crashing leaving people alone in having to face insurmountable issues such as lack of food, inflation and conflicts. Not only individuals and companies are finding themselves under stress, but also the majority of low-income countries and some emerging ones are in or close to debt distress. There needs to be development in order to ameliorate the current conditions, but this has to be sustainable or we will find ourselves in the place that we have started.



A human rights economy

“A Human Rights economy places people and the planet at the heart of economic policies, investments decisions, consumer choices and business models.” (UN Human Rights). It is an economy that aims at not leaving no one behind, at strengthening the connection between people and at enhancing equality. It tried to tackle the roots and structural causes of inequalities, injustice and sustainability by giving priority to investments in social, economic and cultural rights. This is the type of economy that has to be at the center of Sustainable Development and thanks to which the compliance with the SDGs that now seems to be only a mirage can be reality.

The surge

The UN office of Human Rights in 2019 established an initiative to tackle the slow implementation of the SDGs. It does many different things, from providing specialised advice to countries, in fact it has helped develop as much as seven National Development/Sustainable Plans, to maximising the finding and recommendations of the UN human rights mechanisms by transforming them into operational options so that countries can implement them more easily. Moreover, the initiative has backed the development of ten tools with the aim of strengthening the integration and application of ESC rights. An example that helps understanding the incredible impact of The Surge can be made by highlighting the relevance that it had in Serbia

where it helped the government map Roma settlements. Thanks to the mapping the effects of Covid-19 on these settlements could be better understood so the response to their needs was better given resulting in over 70.000 food packages reaching people that would have never been reached without it. Furthermore, it has helped policymakers to make better decisions, it has also prompted the review of the national anti-discrimination plan of 2022–30.

Final note

There is an immediate need for change if we want to be able to reach the SDGs, there is the need to change the way that we have been using to look at development and economic growth. By putting human rights at the center of economic actions we can do that needed change, as the initiative carried out by the UN Office of Human Rights ‘the Surge’ shows, it is possible to mix economic growth with human rights and the results of their fusion will lead us towards a sustainable development.

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