

### Future opportunities and challenges for the Social and Solidarity Economy

#### FOLLOWING THE 2022 INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION ACTION PLAN



ripest



Women in Informal Employment:  
Globalizing and Organizing



We Social Movements

The representatives of several organizations and international institutions met in a webinar on February 23, 2023, to share goals and with the objective of achieving global social justice for all citizens of the world. Indeed, **WSM, INSPIR, WIEGO, RIPESS Intercontinental** and **IYCW**, together with the **ILO**, members of **Civil Society organizations** and more than **150 participants** from all over the world discussed the ins and outs of the Social and Solidarity Economy — SSE —, which was the subject of a **Resolution adopted at the 110th International Labor Conference — ILC — on Decent Work and the Social and Solidarity Economy**.

The webinar began with opening remarks and was moderated by **Santiago Fischer**, advocacy and research coordinator for **We Social Movement** — WSM — and facilitator within the **International INSPIR network**. His introductory remarks focused on how the concept for this webinar emerged from a fruitful partnership between RIPESS, WIEGO, IYCW, WSM, and INSPIR, in conjunction with trade union representatives working as part of the International Labour Organization — ILO —, in Geneva in June 2022 during the ILC, around the General Discussion on Decent work in the SSE. Throughout the ILC, our organizations constantly enriched the general discussion by questioning trade unions, States, and employers about the realities in the field in which social movements of SSE live, and their concrete work, as well as the obstacles and difficulties that these actors face in the development of those economic activities.

#### RIPESS and the challenges of the Social and Solidarity Economy

As an introduction to this webinar, **Judith Hitchman**, past President of the **International Community Supported Agriculture Network Urgenci**<sup>1</sup> and currently one of the three RIPESS Intercontinental Coordinators, took the floor. She explained that from 1997 to the present, RIPESS has progressively built networks and contributed to and interacted with many international institutions at all levels to present the different initiatives of the SSE and to advocate for supportive legislation.

<sup>1</sup> URGENCI is a global grassroots network of all regional and local Solidarity-based Partnerships for Agroecology (LSPAs), the best known of which is Community Supported Agriculture (CSA).

**Judith Hitchman** pointed out the need for an alliance between the grassroots and the governments - especially local governments - to make human rights effective as recalled in the conclusions of the ILC on Decent work and the SSE. She underlined the importance of the SSE that allows people to overcome inequalities. RIPESS fosters SSE through promoting the sharing of information and experience among SSE players, lobbying for legislation that supports SSE, and increasing public awareness of SSE. The organization also highlights the need to form networks and alliances among SSE groups and movements on a local and global scale, in order to increase their combined impact and promote the SSE agenda.

Finally, **Judith Hitchman** sees SSE as a promising alternative to the current economic paradigm that can transform our societies from the current vicious circle to a virtuous circle and one that RIPESS actively promotes and supports worldwide.

#### The work of the ILO on the definition of the Social and Solidarity Economy

The first intervention by **Judith Hitchman** was followed by valuable comments from **Simel Esim**, Project Manager — Senior Technical Expert — at the **International Labour Office's Enterprises Department**. In this position, she heads the ILO's work on cooperatives and the SSE. During her speech, **Simel Esim** highlighted the content of the ILO resolution on Social and Solidarity Economy, and more specifically to the opportunities and possibilities offered to organizations and civil society units to contribute positively to the development of SSE. Indeed, a universal definition of SSE has been included in the ILO resolution. Notably the fact that the definition :

- Identifies the contribution of Social and Solidarity Economy to the achievement of the objectives of sustainable development
- Underlines that Social and Solidarity Economy entities contribute to sustainability and the transition from the informal to the formal economy, and respect values such as equality, equity, transparency, and decent work
- Emphasizes the role of Social and Solidarity in creating decent jobs to provide solutions for community-driven economic development
- Stresses the contribution of Social and Solidarity Economy to the strengthening of communities and local knowledge and to the local economy by putting people first and promoting well-being

Furthermore, **Simel Esim** explained that the strategic plan adopted by the ILO as a follow-up to the International Labour Conference on Decent work and the SSE covers a period of 7 years. It aims to include all SSE actors to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. She also underlined the essential needs for the long-term development of the SSE to take place in the most efficient way :

- Unions and SSE actors need to act in synergy to defend workers' rights
- The establishment of a real legal framework at the international level, but also at the regional or national level.
- The need to create training centers and that this be foreseen in the national adaptation and mitigation policies
- The whole plan must be connected to the local and regional levels

For **Simel Esim** the implementation of sustainable social dialogue and collective bargaining requires the involvement of all parties, including workers, employers, and government representatives. Socially responsible companies that implement SSE practices are more likely to engage in constructive dialogue with workers and their representatives, leading to better collective bargaining agreements. SSE practices are the keys to improving social dialogue and collective bargaining for workers. By promoting transparency, accountability, and engagement with workers and their representatives, the SSE can help strengthen employer-worker partnership and lead to better outcomes for all parties involved.

### Collaboration and solidarity economies as economic alternatives for long-term development

**Toni Moore**, General Secretary of the **Barbados Workers' Union** and speaking on behalf of the **International Trade Union Confederation**<sup>2</sup> — ITUC — spoke about the need for a new model that is based on inclusion and sustainable development. She underlined that both the Labour movement and the SSE are rooted in the principles of the common good and have the will to implement a system that benefits everyone. The main perspective is the quest for inclusion, which must be at the central core of the organizations' work.

In addition, **Toni Moore** stressed the fact that it is impossible to move forward with our action plan if we do not converge on the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>3</sup> and the trade union movement, because to implement the action plan that was established in the conclusions of the ILC on Decent work and the SSE, we must amend them in the SDGs. Indeed, the SDGs focus on how we choose to address issues such as hunger, food supply chains and food security, to ensure inclusiveness, which is linked to the goal of gender equity. Everyone needs to participate, which is also linked to decent work, and that is what unions promote.

**Toni Moore** also addressed the fact that decision-making processes to protect our ecosystems and the protection of forests and workers are fundamental to the SDGs, and as part of the fight against climate change, unions need to consider these aspects that contribute to the environment for society to benefit. She also

<sup>2</sup> The Barbados Workers Union is a trade union confederation in Barbados that was created in 1941. It is a member of the International Trade Union Confederation and the Americas Trade Union Confederation.

emphasized the fact that the International Trade Union movement is interested in the development of workers, and this has to do with the SSE and moving from the informal to the formal economy. The objectives of the SSE are aligned with the objectives of the trade union movement and must be based on collectivism which means a social system in production and exchange are owned by the community.

### UN Taskforce on Social and Solidarity Economy

**Yvon Poirier**, **RIPESS** Special Advisor on Advocacy, spoke about how the Inter-Agency Taskforce on SSE — UNTFSSSE —, comprised of 15 UN agencies and SSE observers has successfully promoted the SSE approach since it was established in 2013. This Task Force seeks to raise the profile of SSE both within and beyond the UN system. He explained that the task force members and observers agreed to work together to :

- Strengthen the recognition of the role of Social and Solidarity Economy enterprises and organizations for sustainable development
- Promote knowledge of Social and Solidarity Economy
- Consolidate Social and Solidarity Economy networks
- Support the development of an enabling institutional and policy environment for Social and Solidarity Economy
- Coordinate international efforts and create and strengthen partnerships

**Yvon Poirier** also highlighted the fact that the UNTFSSSE has promoted a UN Resolution on SSE since 2018. After a first "concept note" in early 2018, a first draft resolution was prepared in early 2019. Because of the pandemic, no countries were available to sponsor the resolution process until April 2022 when France brought together a group of countries, 8 in total, that agreed to formally initiate the process. Thereafter, two meetings were held in New York, the first on July 22, 2022, which included 14 countries, and the second meeting on December 13, 2022, which included 15 countries. Three countries, Chile, Spain and Senegal are the co-facilitators (with the support of France). Other "co-sponsors" agreed contribute to the common discussions in the framework of this resolution: Argentina, Brazil, Belgium, Bulgaria, , Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Italy, Luxembourg, Mongolia, Morocco, and Slovenia. A zero draft of the resolution was established by the group of sponsor countries and consultations were held with all UN countries in March. As of March 17, much progress has been made in the negotiations and consensus has now been reached. The Resolution will be submitted to the UN General Assembly in April.

<sup>3</sup> The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 global goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030

**Chantal Line Charpentier** headed the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in New York at the Office of the Secretary General and is now the current President of the UNTFSE. She reviewed the main points contained in the preamble of the resolution and more specifically on the operative paragraphs that relate the demands such as the need to :

- Develop a legal framework to support SSE and make it visible through the compilation of national statistics
- Develop fiscal and procurement incentives
- Promote SSE in educational curricula
- Build research capacity and initiatives
- Ensure that SSE actors are part of the policy-making process

**Chantal Line Charpentier** also referred to a point mentioned earlier by **Toni Moore** and the fact that they are both part of the **United Nations Economists Network**<sup>4</sup> — UNEN — and the fact that this network is currently working on a new economic paradigm on sustainable development which will integrate SSE and craft policies most relevant to the SDGs. She also talked about the "Beyond GDP" initiative which aims to develop indicators that better integrate environmental and social aspects of progress and will serve as a tool for all countries to improve policy-making to support the well-being of peoples around the world. This initiative will be the subject of the "Summit of the future" in September 2024. She hopes that more countries will support the need for SSE to be included in the UN agenda. She argued that the world must be aware of the need for a new economic paradigm by 2024.

### Exploring the Impact of Social and Solidarity Economy units on Informal Economy Workers

**Dr. Sonia George**, General Secretary of **Self-Employed Women's Association** — SEWA — in Kerala and a member of SEWA's National Council, shared her observations about Social Solidarity Economy. She stressed the importance of establishing a resolution at the UN General Assembly that specifically addresses the SSE, but also supports inclusion. She explained in a relevant manner how the fact that the global tripartite definition of SSE provides a glimmer of hope for employees in the informal sector because it highlights inclusive value-based principles that have the capacity to restructure economies and ensure decent employment and livelihood security for the most vulnerable workers. **Sonia George** also pointed out several important points that are necessary for the successful implementation of SSE :

- The involvement of the public authorities in the debates
- The creation of new forms of social dialogue and new forms of governance
- The establishment of a rigorous legislative framework
- The importance of dialogue with trade unions and other organizations
- The importance of the role of SSE in the Sustainable Development Goals regarding gender equality and equity

<sup>4</sup> The Network is made up of economists from UN system institutions as well as national economists working in Resident Coordinator Offices. It welcomes contributions from professionals working in other relevant United Nations areas.

<sup>5</sup> RENAPESS participates in the reinforcement of its members' capacities for action in the face of the challenges of local development, poverty and

On the importance of the issue of informal workers and this close link with the Social Solidarity Economy, **Federico Parra** shared his knowledge with us. He serves as Latin American coordinator of the waste pickers' program in the Non-Governmental Organization **Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing** - WIEGO.

Like **Sonia Georges**, **Federico Parra** spoke about the informal sector and the importance of its integration into the SSE, because more than 61 % of workers in the world are in informal employment and are organized autonomously in different unions and institutions. He rightly explained that human welfare must be at the center of all forms of activities where there is no place for any form of exploitation and that SSE aims to defend access to vital services such as education and social protection.

**Federico Parra** then addressed the fact that the ILO resolution emphasizes that SSE is a way to achieve social justice and sustainable development. However, to achieve this, the world of work must adapt to the set of principles that can be accessed in the pursuit of social justice, which is inherent to formalization. The contribution of organizations such as ours is necessary, because the collective and political subject is what differentiates SSE organizational forms from other approaches that generate social benefits, but where control is in other hands, and this is also an important issue that must be addressed.

### Actors of Change: Exploring the Synergy between Social and Solidarity Economy and Grassroots Activism

**Madani Koumare** President of the **National support network for the promotion of the social and solidarity economy**<sup>5</sup> — RENAPESS - and Co-administrator at RIPESS Africa, - RAESS - talked about the work of "African Network of Social and Solidarity Economy" - ASSE's - and the focus on SDG n°8 on decent work<sup>6</sup> and more specifically to :

- Support the advocacy of its national members and to lobby for the Social and Solidarity Economy network of each country to be represented in the Economic and Social Council of the country concerned
- Include the approach in the framework of African Unity of the South-South and South-North cooperation strategy
- Strengthen ANSSE's presence at the national, regional, and global levels by participating in meetings, global summits, and thematic forums on issues related to sustainable development, globalization, and its socio-economic consequences.

He also stressed the importance of SSE in contributing to the dignity of agricultural producers and workers in the informal economy. In his view, it is crucial to keep in mind that the economy must be changed so that it depends on our needs and is not a mere service. Therefore, it is important to consider in the short term the concerns of groups in transition to SSE, such as workers in the informal economy, especially in rural areas, migrant and seasonal workers, as well as climate displaced people and others.

the globalization of the economy. It thus contributes to improving access to the basic needs of citizens through basic social facilities and services

<sup>6</sup> The Sustainable Development Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

For **Madani Koumare** there is a double challenge to :

- Accompany these categories by considering their intrinsic characteristics so that the services meet their needs and are accessible to them
- Strengthen their solvency through a contributory system indexed to their ability to pay

All this will require advocacy for public policies and support programs to develop social security and social enterprises that create decent incomes and give actors sustainable autonomy.

For this to happen, **Madani Koumare** believes that these logics imply a partnership framework between the public sectors (central and local government), SSE organizations, professional labor organizations and other international bodies. All of this must be oriented towards SDG 1 on the eradication of poverty in all its forms and everywhere in the world and the need for a decent income, SDG 8 on the promotion of sustained, balanced and sustainable economic growth; and 12 on sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Another speaker from the field shared her observations with us, **Jahnavi Dave**. She is the International Coordinator for **HomeNet International**, a global network of 36 home-based worker groups in 20 countries, representing over 600,000 employees. **Jahnavi Dave** underlined the importance of SSE and the status of homeworkers. Indeed, home-based workers do not organize in trade unions, but they organize as different forms of SSE. She also highlighted some key issues such as :

- The need to organize to increase bargaining power
- The need for statistics, networking with cooperatives and access to professional training
- Move towards creating networks and systems to improve capacity and create a system of equality
- To collaborate and create appropriate policies

**Jahnavi Dave** praised the fact that in India many policies have been implemented at national level. She also explained that investments are necessary to make SSE sustainable. Indeed, SSE organizations often have limited resources and investments can help them to expand their activities, reach more people and have a greater impact on their communities. In addition, SSE initiatives often have the long-term goal of creating sustainable economic and social development. Investment can help them achieve this goal by providing the financial resources to create stable and sustainable businesses.

**José Arévalo Bustos**, an agricultural engineer and activist of the **Chilean Young Christian Workers** — YCW — since 2017, is currently part of the Chilean YCW national team committed to young workers of the world and developing actions in the framework of SSE. He spoke about the actions of the Chilean YCW in the agricultural sector. During his speech he presented the actions that are taking place in Chile regarding the SSE, and he highlighted the fundamental needs of the SSE :

- Access to loans
- Social protection
- Capacity building
- The establishment of training centers
- Legal advice for litigation
- Circular inclusion
- Gender parity

**Fatimata Dabre**, head of credit and collection at **MUFEDE** in Burkina Faso, a savings and credit cooperative founded in 1996 through the determination of a group of 20 women, presented how her cooperative works with women to help them generate income and access social protection and job creation. She presented several demands, including :

- The need for training, technical and professional skills development to enable them to make the transition from the informal to the formal economy.
- Access to and participation in the management of national funds by decentralized financing systems (DFS)
- Full access to participation through funds and the search for less costly resources to better meet financing needs
- The need to ratify the various ILO conventions and such as : Convention n°102 (minimum social security standards); Convention n°189 (domestic workers); Convention n°176 (safety and health in mines); Convention n°155 (health and safety of workers)

### Building a More Equitable and Sustainable Future: Key Takeaways from the Social and Solidarity Economy

The concluding remarks for this webinar were made by **Victor Van Vuuren**, former Inter-Agency Task Force on SSE President and former Director Enterprises Department at the ILO in Geneva and former Director ILO for Southern Africa. He highlighted the urgent needs of the SSE to develop at its best. In particular, the support of governments is a necessity, as they must work on the integration of social terms in public procurement markets, but also on the implementation of accessible financing and good governance which are the cornerstones of the SSE. He also mentioned the fact that public finance must integrate SSE as a priority, via multi-partnerships and calls for projects. The viability of this cause is essential and will continue to motivate all the speakers who have gathered today for this webinar, but also all those who feel close to this field.

In conclusion, this webinar highlighted the importance of SSE as a vehicle for building a more equitable and sustainable society. All speakers highlighted the different aspects of SSE, including its potential to generate **social, economic and environmental benefits**. SSE encompasses a wide range of initiatives, from cooperatives and mutuals to associations and social enterprises, all of which are rooted in their communities and aim to meet social and environmental needs. We encourage participants to continue to explore this topic and to think about how they can support SSE initiatives in their own communities, whether by **becoming a member of a cooperative, supporting social enterprises** or getting

**involved in community projects.** Even small individual actions can have a significant impact in promoting SSE and its values of **solidarity, equity** and **sustainability**. We invite the participants, and all interested people, to become actors of change by supporting SSE in their daily lives and thus contributing to the construction of a more **just, inclusive and sustainable society**.