# THRIVING IN OUR COMMON HOME

CIDSE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2023-2028







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By CIDSE, Rue Stévin 16
1000 Brussels, Belgium
www.cidse.org
Editor in Chief: Josianne Gauthier
Editors: François Delvaux, Elise Kervyn
and Valentina Pavarotti
Graphic support: Carmen Contreras
and Marie-Paule Ogereau

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# FOREWORD

At the time of writing these words, in the fall months of 2022, we have finished a long process of collective reflection and dreaming which led to the drafting of our strategy for the next few years. As we were thinking about our future, the world was shifting rapidly around us. Even now, we are unsure of how our global context might look in just a few months. This is the uncertainty we are working in.

We were already thrown into a new kind of vulnerability with the global pandemic in 2020 and 2021, which shook many of our beliefs in the western/northern hemisphere, and knew that the next plan must help us heal and rebuild our relationships and strengthen our connection as a network and global family, but the war which began in Ukraine in February 2022 has threatened once again to change the face of Europe. We cannot pretend that this will not affect our work in the years to come, or that it has not already put into doubt some of our assertions. We must face this new and added context of insecurity and uncertainty and reflect on how its lasting impacts will influence our way of working, our messages, our partnerships, and our own capacity to make a visible difference. The threats of the war in Ukraine are to the very issues of justice we work for, food sovereignty, human rights, access to land, gender equality, climate justice, energy transition, the place of civil society, peace, as well as the importance of multilateral institutions and shared values and principles.

And to this we must add the new questions, and how they might affect our membership, allies, and partners and also our access to communities and to civil society organisations. Migration and conflict will affect the social justice within Europe but also have an impact outside of the continent with spill-over effects around the world.

The issues we address being affected, aggravated, moved around, deprioritised, or defunded, how will the economic impact affect our ability to work on our priority areas? What about the people we wish to work with and influence? Will policy makers be so focused on the issue of war, migration, and the search for new sources of fossil fuels, that they will be harder to reach with our messages of integral ecology, international solidarity, and social justice? With the threat to democracy in so many parts of the world, the shrinking space for civil society will make our work of solidarity even more challenging, as these organisations come more and more under threat. We may need to adjust our strategies and approaches to engage differently with those we wish to collaborate with. We will surely need to listen and recognise that the world's attention is absorbed by fear and instability, but never has a systemic approach to justice and protecting our common home been so urgently needed as now. We still firmly believe that peace is only possible if we find a way to love and respect each other and live within planetary boundaries. This strategy will not change because of the world context, but we will remain attentive and prepared to listen, because we may need to change how we carry it forward.



Josianne Gauthier CIDSE Secretary General



Lieve Herijgers CIDSE President, Director of Broederlijk Delen

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# WHERE WE ARE: CIDSE'S STARTING POINT

# INTRODUCTION

The strategic planning process was a participatory one which spanned over 18 months, engaging the network of members in several spaces of collaboration where CIDSE works collectively, outreach to partners and allies in other parts of the world, as well as institutional partners, such as donors. Supported by external guides, the staff also participated actively in this process, which began with an evaluation and assessment of the previous Strategy 2016-2021 and an in-depth reflection that took place at the CIDSE Systemic Change Forum in 2021. All of these sources of knowledge and experience helped to shape our vision of what CIDSE should and can do in the coming years. Conscious of the many challenges that lay ahead in the global context, in the struggle for social justice, and in the civil society sector, CIDSE is also building on the learnings from the previous work we have accomplished together and with our partners, friends, and allies. This plan outlines the path we want to set out on, with our moral compass well-tuned to focus on justice for people and the planet, but in a spirit of learning and questioning, as we acknowledge the many variables that will influence our journey.

### WHO IS CIDSE?

Since our very early days, we have been and continue to be an international family of Catholic social justice organisations. We are a network of 18 members in Europe and North America and an international secretariat in Brussels. Our members' partners work in nearly 120 countries and territories worldwide.

We work with global partners and allies to promote justice, harnessing the power of global solidarity to achieve transformational change for people and the planet. We challenge systemic injustice and its destructive impacts and promote environmentally and socially just alternatives to allow everyone to thrive in our common home.

Our mission, values and principles are inspired by the Gospel and drawn from Catholic Social Teaching, which continues to evolve and serve as our compass for social justice and solidarity. We are part of a worldwide community of faith, commitment, learning, and action that is open to working with all people and groups of good will.

The CIDSE secretariat is a facilitator and initiator, contributes to leadership in implementing decisions taken by the network and can act on behalf of the network, but CIDSE is the sum of its parts and more, where members inspire each other and form a stronger presence when working together, as well as with allies and partners. This strategy applies to and guides the work of CIDSE as a collective, with different parts of the body bringing an amplified presence to our collective voice and action.

During the consultation phase that led to this strategy, we asked members, stakeholders, partners and funders how we add value to others' efforts for justice. These are a few of the key points that came up.

### CIDSE:

OFFERS A COMMON VOICE
AND AMPLIFIES THE
IMPACT OF CO-ORDINATED
ADVOCACY FROM A CATHOLIC
PERSPECTIVE, ROOTED IN
CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING,
TOWARDS EUROPEAN
AND INTERNATIONAL
INSTITUTIONS.

CONNECTS MEMBERS AND ALLIES WITH INTERNATIONAL DECISION-MAKERS, WITH THE CHURCH AND WITH GRASSROOTS EXPERIENCE (AND VICE VERSA).

PROVIDES SPACE TO REFLECT
TOGETHER ON COMMON ISSUES
AND TO CHALLENGE OURSELVES.

PROVIDES EXPERT
CENTRALISED ANALYSIS
AND COMMUNICATES
COMMON POLICY POSITIONS.

CREATES SPACE FOR MEMBERS
TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER TO
ACHIEVE MORE BY SHARING
RESOURCES, SHARING EVIDENCE
AND LEARNING, OFFERING
PEER SUPPORT TO STAFF OR
ATTRACTING NEW FUNDS.

TAKES A 'SYNODAL',
RELATIONAL AND PARTNERSHIPBASED APPROACH TO
IDENTIFYING SOLUTIONS TO
OUR COMMON PROBLEMS.

### CIDSE'S VALUES

Working together with others, we want to promote justice, harnessing the power of global solidarity to achieve transformational change for people and the planet, in our immediate circles as well as at the global level. All of CIDSE's work is guided by Catholic Social Teaching and Gospel values but the following values stand out particularly:

# DIGNITY

All human beings possess an equal dignity made concrete in human rights. When human rights are violated, so is human dignity. This is why CIDSE works to support those who have been denied their rights and the dignity to define for themselves how they wish to live in the global community. We also take up our own responsibilities and strive to change behaviours and structures in our own countries impacting global human dignity, both as individuals and at the political level.

# OWNERSHIP

CIDSE members together agree on how to translate our common mission into joint strategies and activities. Strategic debates and decisions are inclusive, allowing all members to participate actively and on an equal footing. By sharing the resources and experience of the entire network, we try not only to achieve our common goals but also to add to the individual achievements of our member organisations. As Catholic agencies we seek to practice what we preach.

# SOLIDARITY

We are all linked to each other as human beings. We work together with people and communities who live in poverty, are excluded or oppressed, to stand with them as they act to transform their situation. Why are people poor and marginalised? What unjust structures underpin this? How is this related to culture, business, finance and politics in our own countries? This is why solidarity also changes us and our countries/ societies.

# PARTNERSHIP

We base our cooperation with partners in Africa, Asia, Oceania, Latin America and the Middle East on trust, shared values and common goals. While aware of underlying power issues in some relationships, we aim to establish and maintain equitable relations. Through joint dialogue, analysis, and advocacy, we share responsibility for the impact we can achieve together, and the recognition we gain for doing so.

# SUSTAINABILITY

We are the Earth's stewards, not its owners. We are part of the environment and any harm done to the environment is harm done to humanity. When promoting human development, we have to respect planetary boundaries. We need to preserve and help regenerate the resources on which present and future generations depend. We think the "Global North" and "Global South" have common, but at the same time different, responsibilities in this regard.

# SYNODALITY AND DIALOGUE

We walk together, and practice mutual listening in which we all have something to learn on this journey together. This can be challenging, because it means setting aside preconceived ideas and agendas and allowing ourselves to be moved by what we learn from each other. This applies to our relationships within the CIDSE network, but also with allies and partners. It is about recognising the value of every voice. Developing a dialogue with partners and allies around the world is essential to our way of working.

# LIVING SIMPLY

We believe that simplicity is enriching. We do not find meaning in more and more material wealth. The 'good life' implies a more modest lifestyle for people in the "Global North" and in general for wealthy people worldwide.

# INCLUSIVITY/ DIVERSITY

We work to include each and every individual (all people), regardless of their religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age or background. We oppose any form of harassment or discrimination against people based on their diversity.



# WHERE WE WANT TO GO: A NEW STRATEGY FOR UNCERTAIN TIMES

# CIDSE'S VISION STATEMENT

In the next 5 years, having identified the multiple crises that we are facing as a global community, CIDSE will defend and engage in multilateral spaces of governance, upholding and strengthening its human rights-based approach, promoting access and participation by the communities, by excluded voices to the decision-making spaces of power in order to promote sustainable, practical, realistic alternatives to growth and overconsumption that allow us to live on this planet in dignity, in solidarity, and in peace.

We will use our space and collective voice, guided by and in solidarity with the many defenders of social justice around the world, to name and identify the unjust systems, challenge colonial, neoliberal, and patriarchal policies and decisions, and advocate for more just, sustainable, inclusive, participatory and rights-driven political processes around food, climate, energy, land, and corporate power.

We will support strong and credible alternative proposals to the current economic and political model, such as agroecology, a sustainable and just energy transition, fair and sustainable distribution and use of land, post-extractivism, as well as sufficiency and sustainable living options, transformed into concrete policies at the EU and UN levels, as well as reflected in national and regional political processes.

We will address these processes by challenging financial flows, and by lifting up the place of gender equality and women's rights, as well as climate and ecological justice as overarching and cross-cutting priorities throughout all of our actions. CIDSE will bring together the diversity and collective expertise and wisdom of its membership, with the support and guidance of allies and partners around the world through connection, mobilisation, influence, and transformative narratives. We will be driven by hope, our sense of community and interdependence, and our firm belief in the power of people living in peace and in balanced relationships with the gifts of the earth.

Recognising that "change starts with us", we aim to deepen our systemic change approach and our organisational coherence – as member organisations and as a network. We will more specifically challenge ourselves to consider issues of power and decolonisation within our own language, analysis and practice; while also building capacity; and strengthening our network to maximise our impact and collective voice.

### CIDSE'S SYSTEMIC CHANGE APPROACH

Our reading of the world highlights the multiple crises that we are facing. These are not isolated but interconnected and linked by structural systems of injustice and exploitation. Systems that are causing the current environmental, economic and social crisis, as well as a crisis of values. As a network, we have been reflecting and gathering to connect the dots: around the narrative, around the systemic injustices and how interconnected they are. Laudato si' propelled us to connect the social, political and ecological crisis. Fratelli Tutti has reinforced the connection between the way we relate to Creation and the way we relate to each other. We want to contribute to addressing these questions in an interconnected and systemic way.

Systemic change is a very powerful concept for us, strongly rooted in our core values and principles of integral ecology, our interconnectedness and our shared responsibility to care for our common home and for each other. It is both as a lens through which we read the world around us and the injustices we see but also as an integral response which touches on all our areas of work.

### ULTIMATE OUTCOME

CIDSE, its partners and allies, therefore call for a systemic change away from the dominant values and frameworks that structure and influence our current way of life, towards values and frameworks that recognise human dignity, equity, social justice and the respect of nature as the moral and spiritual foundations of our society.

### TWO LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

We firmly believe that societal change will only happen once the paradigm around the growth imperative is dismantled and once power in political and social processes shifts from the hands of the few to people and communities. These are the conditions which need to be met if we truly aim for people to thrive in our common home through social and ecological justice. Hence CIDSE's contribution to this ultimate outcome builds on two key pillars, that taken together can bring the change needed: embracing a post-growth economy and shifting power.

Inspired by our partners on the ground we recognise the need to question the current framing of development and progress, which have led to the destruction of our planet. A post-growth economy that would cease to deplete the earth's natural assets can address the multiple environmental, social, economic, and political crises. Inspired by Pope Francis (*Laudato si'*), we believe that our common responsibility is to preserve creation so that the generations to come may live in peace and harmony with nature. "[...] the time has come to accept decreased growth in some parts of the world, in order to provide resources for other places to experience healthy growth" (LSI.193). This is what 'embracing a post-growth economy' means to us.

### CIDSE'S ULTIMATE OUTCOME

# PEOPLE ARE THRIVING IN OUR COMMON HOME THROUGH SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE.

### TWO LONG-TERM OUTCOMES



# EMBRACING A POST-GROWTH ECONOMY

Society has shifted from a narrow and destructive focus on economic growth to a new social and political understanding of prosperity, development and progress.



### **SHIFTING POWER**

Power in political and social processes has shifted from the hands of the few, such as corporations and private interests, to people and communities in a decolonised, intersectional, and feminist approach.

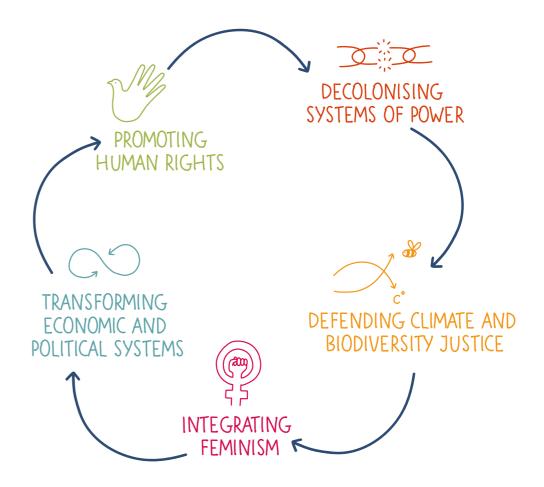
The current system with its high concentration of power and asymmetric power dynamics has allowed the unsustainable and unjust exploitation of people and our common home. It also silences the voices of those most affected by the crises and consequently sidelines powerful initiatives that could serve as alternatives to the status quo. It is locking us in systems which are creating, perpetuating and worsening poverty, inequity and inequalities in general. To combat this trend, we need to actively address the current power imbalances and make space to let those most affected be in the centre of the process of change. Any change we are calling for needs to consider the issue of power as one of the key underlying issues that prevent transformative alternatives and systemic change to become reality. Shifting power is therefore an imperative.

This twin-track approach will lie at the heart of our collective work, though we recognise that it will take a process to progressively integrate those two dimensions into most of our work.

# FIVE CROSS-CUTTING SYSTEMIC LENSES

Though we want to focus our action, we also aim to ensure a continued systemic change at the core of our future work. As the crises we face require an integrated response to achieve real change, we have identified five cross-cutting systemic lenses which will guide us through all our thematic areas of work and objectives. They are the landscape we, as CIDSE, will collectively operate within to implement our strategy. The systemic and cross-cutting lenses will be applied across all our thematic work.

In order to monitor and measure our progress and impact, we have developed objectives both for the cross-cutting lenses as well as for the thematic objectives. These have been translated into long-term (>5 years) and mid-term objectives (5-years) which should guide the work we will carry out within the three thematic areas we have identified in the next section.

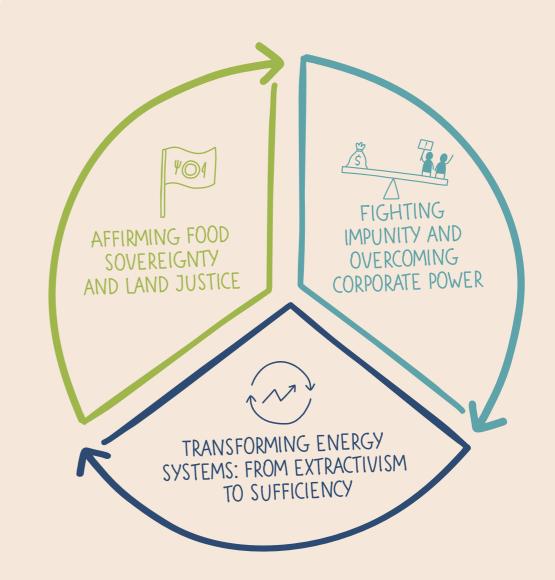


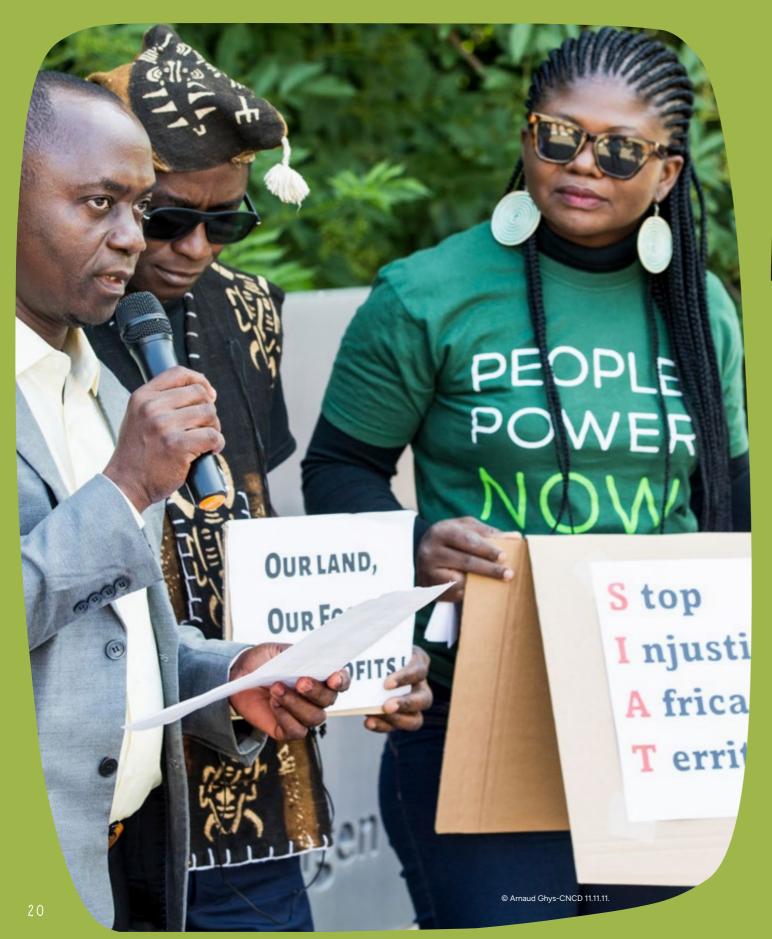
# THREE THEMATIC AREAS AND RELATED OBJECTIVES

While maintaining a systemic approach to our work and recognising the interconnected nature of our joint initiatives, we also aim to focus our collective action in three thematic areas.

In this strategy, CIDSE will focus its resources and energy in areas where we have attained expertise, experience, and knowledge: energy and extractivism, food and land, corporate power and impunity. These thematic areas are where we know we can have greater impact, influence, and leverage.

Throughout the life of the strategy, it will be important to formulate our objectives and expected outcomes both with a view to the cross-cutting lenses and applying them to specific thematic areas of work. We will do this while continuing to frame our action through the three roles that CIDSE has been playing throughout the previous strategy (connecting/mobilising, influencing, and telling stories of change).





# HOW WE WANT TO GET THERE

# ACTING IN THE SPIRIT OF SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Deepening our systemic change approach also requires a stronger and closer look at and transformation of our ways of working and our organisational coherence as a network. CIDSE is committed to play three different and complementary roles in operationalising its strategic framework, while recognising that "change starts with us".

As these elements are key to our systemic change approach, we are introducing them below. They will feed into the operational plan where they will be further developed and will be used as a toolbox as we move forward in implementing this strategy.

### CIDSE'S THREE ROLES

In all our work, we seek to use our three interrelated roles of connector and mobiliser, influencer and story-teller. Whether we are acting through one or several of these roles, we intend to speak out in a way that is prophetic and inspirational. We will challenge false solutions that are often presented as changes to the system but in reality, end up perpetuating the injustices and supporting a growth imperative and concentration of power without actually questioning the roots of the problem. Instead, we will offer solutions coming from new ways of thinking, and share examples and alternative experiences from communities and peoples around the world. We aim to mobilise our supporters in common campaigns and influencing policy makers at European and UN levels, with a specific focus on supporting the Church in influencing the world and recognising the power of intergenerational action. This influencing work is done in true partnership where space is created and ceded to Southern voices.



# actors and learn from each other, strengthen our sense of community in response to the isolation and indifference created by the crises. We do this through mobilisation and support to movements and civil society alliances, but also in creating spaces for sharing and learning within the CIDSE network.



INFLUENCE

# the decision makers and political actors, as well as our allies to have the courage to act towards concrete transformation, through research, policy analysis, and advocacy at different levels of political power.



both to testify to the alternatives to the current destructive economic model that is hurting the planet and people but also to change the narrative around what is possible and feed a sense of hope and action through real stories of change.

# CHANGE STARTS WITH US

As mentioned in our vision statement, our approach is to recognise that "Change starts with us" and that this implies much more than organisational coherence and measuring our ecological footprint. It involves taking direct action, in the coming years, looking at our own practices as we continue to:

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Make changes in the way we work as organisations and as a network by promoting real partnership, experimenting together, learning from each other and building bridges between communities and ways of living in the "Global North and South" Work in more integrated ways by joining up our partnership work, our public and political work as well as our funding efforts in a common approach, making use of our organisations and network to embark on innovative ways of development work.

Address skewed power dynamics within our own structures and decision-making processes, develop inclusive human resources policies and create a culture that does not emulate toxic patterns but instead pays attention to burnout prevention and reinforce positive behaviors

Evaluate our practices in view of ecological impacts and work towards reducing our carbon footprint.

In the coming years, in the spirit of joint learning, sharing and strategising we will:

Challenge ourselves to consider issues of power and decolonisation within our own language, analysis and practice, while also building capacity, and strengthening our network to maximise our impact and collective voice.

Deepen our work on post-growth by exploring its notions, assumptions and policy implications towards radically different modes of living in relation to our common home.

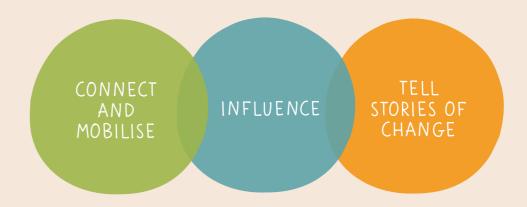
Continue to learn from each other, and develop space and tools for learning and sharing, but also give ourselves concrete objectives and ways of measuring how we share and capture learning and knowledge within the network.

Create/develop a (unique) and flexible method as well as tools to better measure, evaluate and share the impact of our work. This includes questioning the ways in which we define and measure success and how we undertake monitoring and evaluation.

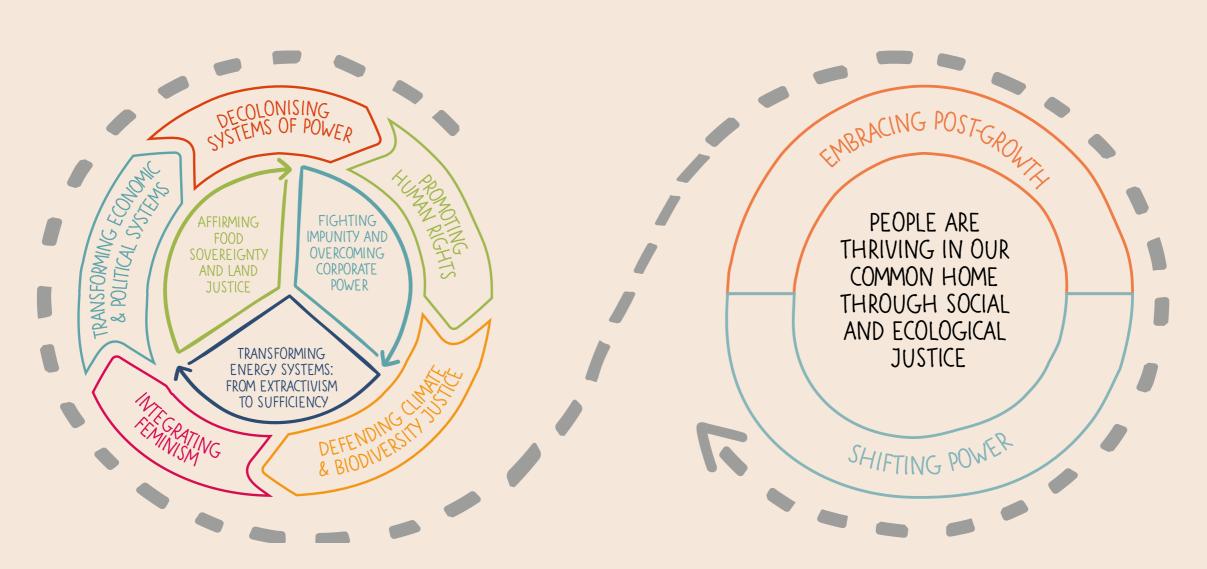
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# VISUAL SUMMARY

CIDSE'S THEORY OF CHANGE 2023-2028

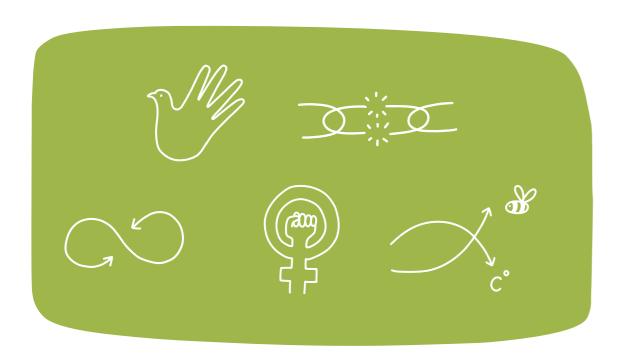


# CHANGE STARTS WITH US!



# FIVE CROSS-CUTTING SYSTEMIC LENSES FOR 2023-2028

As mentioned above, CIDSE aims to reach five cross-cutting systemic lenses in addition to our thematic objectives. Those lenses can be seen as CIDSE's ways of working, to deepen systemic change within this strategic plan and be more intentional about all of our objectives and measuring progress. They should guide us as we further develop our thematic objectives and offer a systemic change lens to all our collective work. Some are quite ambitious and will involve continuous learning, but this is also part of the intention of this new strategy, to push ourselves out of our comfort zones and seek transformation in external processes as well as within our own practices and approaches.





# DEVELOPING CIDSE'S THEMATIC OBJECTIVES IN THREE AREAS OF FOCUS

While the thematic areas are set by this strategic framework, their respective long-term and mid-term objectives are here given as examples of how they could be further developed in coherence with the five cross-cutting lenses developed above: Promoting human rights, Integrating feminism, Transforming economic and political systems, Defending climate and biodiversity justice, Decolonising systems of power.

The bulk of this work will be done during the next and final phase of the strategic planning process (i.e. in the operational plan) in close relationship between CIDSE secretariat staff and member organisations, based on expertise in the working groups. Nonetheless, in this section we already want to show what this could look like by providing a few concrete examples and offering some guidance and direction to the work we want to accomplish together. The three thematic areas will be at the core of CIDSE's collective work and visible action during the implementation of this strategic plan.

# SNAPSHOT SUMMARY OF CIDSE THEMATIC AREAS AND CROSS-CUTTING LENSES

				E 77		
TRANSFORMING ENERGY SYSTEMS: FROM EXTRACTIVISM TO SUFFICIENCY		404	AFFIRMING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND LAND JUSTICE	FIGHTING IMPUNITY AND OVERCOMING CORPORATE POWER		
Global energy systems are transformed from extractivism to socially-just renewable energy systems and sufficiency.		Long-term objective:	The transformation of food and land systems brings about food sovereignty.	Long-term objective:	The power of private and public actors to act with impunity is curtailed to prote people and the planet.	
••••••	••••••••••••	•••••••	••••••	••••••		
FIVE CROSS-CUTTIN	NG SYSTEMIC LENSES					
	Long-term ob	jective:	Medium-term objectives:			
DECOLONISIN SYSTEMS OF	0.01 (= 0.	sion-making systems n people's sovereignty and n.	<ul> <li>Communities and civil society organisations (CSOs) from the "Global South" are supported in their struggl for justice and dignity; have increased access and participation in political spaces and are in a better position to operationalise their actions independently from CSOs from the "Global North";</li> <li>CSOs in the "Global North" are developing their actions in co-shaping with CSOs in the "Global South".</li> </ul>			
		d international bodies are pushed ct and fulfil human rights.	<ul> <li>Governments and international bodies are pushed to commit to a human-rights approach in their different polic (economic, political, climate, etc.); legal and political structures causing human rights violations are challenged;</li> <li>Human rights violations, shrinking of civic space and incoherence in the application of International Law are denounced;</li> <li>Human rights and environmental defenders in their struggle for justice are supported.</li> </ul>			
			on Biological Diversity) are promoted <ul><li>Climate and biodiversity false solution</li></ul>	e implementation of climate and biodiversity targets (mainly the Paris agreement and the Convention Biological Diversity) are promoted; mate and biodiversity false solutions leading to ecocide and human rights violations are challenged, ille financialisation of natural resources is denounced.		
INTEGRATING 名为 FEMINISM	of power and opp	Patriarchal and other discriminatory structures of power and oppression are dismantled to allow an enabling environment for gender justice.		<ul> <li>Situations of injustice are analysed, exposed and tackled through a gender and feminist lens;</li> <li>Systems of power and oppression as well as decision-making spaces that uphold and reproduce existing gender inequalities are challenged;</li> <li>Gender transformative and feminist work is promoted and showcased, and feminist leadership is supported and built;</li> <li>A feminist agenda for a socially and ecologically just planet is pushed forward.</li> </ul>		
TRANSFORMII FCONOMIC AI	NG to ecocide and h	olitical systems leading uman rights violations	<ul> <li>Voices challenging social and political and political system are supported;</li> <li>Concrete, just, sustainable and transform visibility as well as political and finance.</li> <li>The appropriation of resources and finance.</li> </ul>	iormative alternatives in economic a cial support;	and political systems have gained	

"Global South" is denounced;

towards the people;

are discredited in favor of concrete, just,

sustainable and transformative alternatives.

• Funding modalities are challenged to respond to the needs of impacted communities.

• Real multilateralism in decision-making processes is promoted in order to rebalance power from corporations

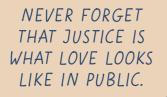
ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SYSTEMS

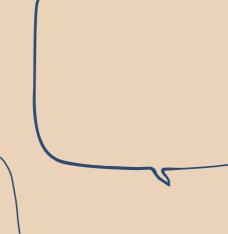
INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES.
ADD YOUR OWN!

WHEN WE IDENTIFY
WHERE OUR PRIVILEGE
INTERSECTS WITH SOMEBODY
ELSE'S OPPRESSION, WE'LL
FIND OUR OPPORTUNITIES
TO MAKE REAL CHANGE.



IJEOMA OLUO





CORNEL WEST





### CIDSE members



Austria



Belgium



Belgium



Canada



**England and Wales** 



France



Germany



Ireland



Italy





the Netherlands



the Netherlands



Portugal



Scotland



Slovakia



Spain



Switzerland



USA

CIDSE is an international family of Catholic social justice organisations. We work with global partners and allies to promote justice, harnessing the power of global solidarity to achieve transformational change for people and the planet. We challenge systemic injustice and its destructive impacts through connecting, mobilising, influencing and telling stories of change. We promote environmentally and socially just alternatives to allow everyone to thrive in our common home.

### Contact: