

Our Development Perspectives

Introduction

Forum Syd strives to promote and defend human rights and democracy through a strong, pluralistic and independent civil society. We operate globally but adapt our work to the local context to promote and produce change.

Forum Syd works together with a wide range of members and partners; such as civil society organisations, private sector and other actors, in order to strengthen civil society and achieve a just and sustainable world.

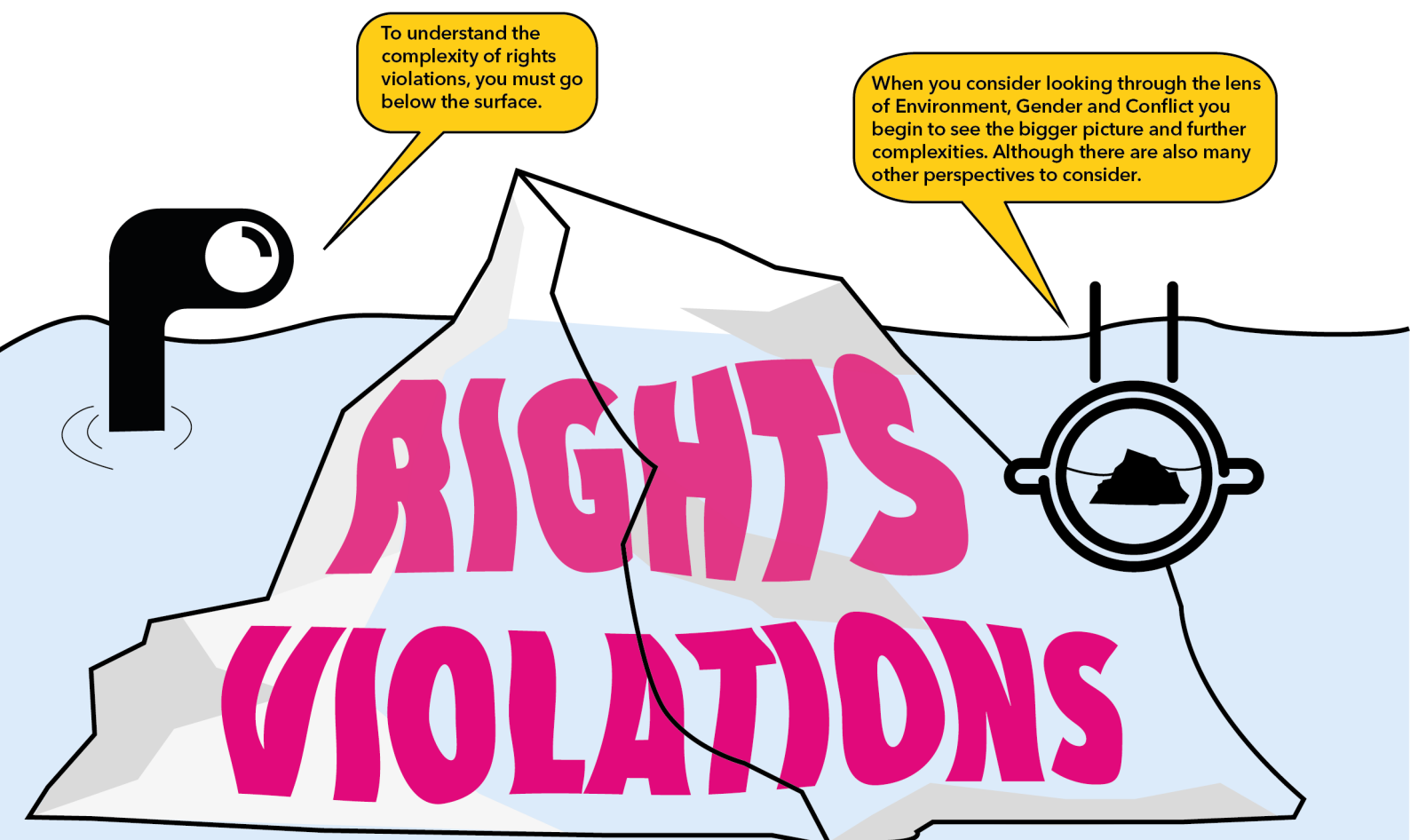
Guided by a rights-based approach and the 2030 Agenda, Forum Syd implements programmes that align with our three development perspectives: gender equality, environment & climate change, conflict & Do-No-Harm.

These perspectives enable us to view all our interventions from multiple angles, to thoroughly understand different contexts and reasonably analyse power relations affecting rights-holders, ensuring that no one is left behind. By analysing our interventions from these three perspectives we can better understand how they interact and relate to each other.

What are development perspectives?

The development perspectives can be easily understood through the analogy of a submarine and an iceberg. In this analogy, rights violations are the iceberg, and the development perspectives are the submarine.

Most of the iceberg lies underwater, without going underwater, only the small tip can be seen. The same happens with rights violations; we usually cannot see the structures that support or allow for rights violations to happen. For the most part, we see the rights violation(s) alone and not its connections or the structural complexities that lie underneath it. To be able to see what is happening under the surface, we need tools, for instance, a submarine with a periscope that allows us to see the part of the iceberg that is hidden. Likewise, to understand the structures that allow for rights violations, we need tools. The development perspectives serve this purpose; in this case, they are the periscope of the submarine, allowing us to see and understand the structural issues that lie beneath.



Rights-Based Approach

for the Strengthening of Civil Society

Forum Syd applies a rights-based approach to all programmes and projects. This approach departs from the assumption that change is only sustainable when determined, implemented and owned by rights-holders from communities themselves. Forum Syd adopts this approach to strengthen marginalised people around the world, who organise to claim their rights and advocate for changes that contribute to a just and sustainable world.

Definition

The rights-based approach (RBA) is based on the international human rights framework, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and recognizes the rights of all persons, collective and indigenous rights, irrespective of nationality, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, political ideology or religion. People use human rights as their reference point to challenge unjust power structures and discriminatory norms, empower themselves and have influence over social development and decide over their own lives.

A rights-based approach means actively working with the fulfilment of human rights, active participation, non-discrimination, accountability and transparency. **Active participation** entails that rights-holders, organised under the umbrella of civil society, are the ones leading processes of change. In practice, this requires the

mobilisation of rights-holders to together define the problems they wish to address; the way in which this can best be done; and ensuring that they participate meaningfully in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a given initiative. Working for **non-discrimination** entails challenging unjust power structures and working to ensure that all individuals have full access to their rights. Ensuring access to rights requires identifying where **accountability** lies. Lastly, **transparency** is a key democratic component that is needed in governance and partnerships between rights-holders, civil society organisations, duty bearers and other relevant actors.

When addressing development, Forum Syd believes that adopting a rights-based approach offers new perspectives and solutions, achieving progressive change with people at the core. Forum Syd sees adopting a rights-based approach as transformative; shifting development work from viewing individuals as passive victims or beneficiaries in need, to active agents and rights-holders who are being denied what is fundamentally and legally their rights. In other words, it recognises agency, which is the capacity of individuals to act independently, to make their own free choices and to be active actors in creating the changes they want to see. A right-based approach shifts from addressing the symptoms to tackling the underlying causes and strives to change power relations as the primary means to reduce poverty.

Forum Syd acknowledges that a rights-based approach must reflect the rights-holders it serves and be responsive

Who is a duty bearer?

States have the responsibility to create national conditions that are favourable for the realisation of rights. Examples of traditional duty-bearers are government agencies, police, legal systems and so forth. Because state structures, capacities and influence vary depending on the context, Forum Syd recognises the importance of also collaborating with informal duty bearers, who may hold significant social power and recognition. Every individual, group or institution that has the power to affect the lives of the rights-holder is a 'moral' or informal duty-bearer. Civil society, companies, head of households, village elders, religious leaders and indigenous leaders could all be informal duty-bearers. It is important to acknowledge that the state is not the only entity to be held accountable; power is contextually bound, and each society works differently.

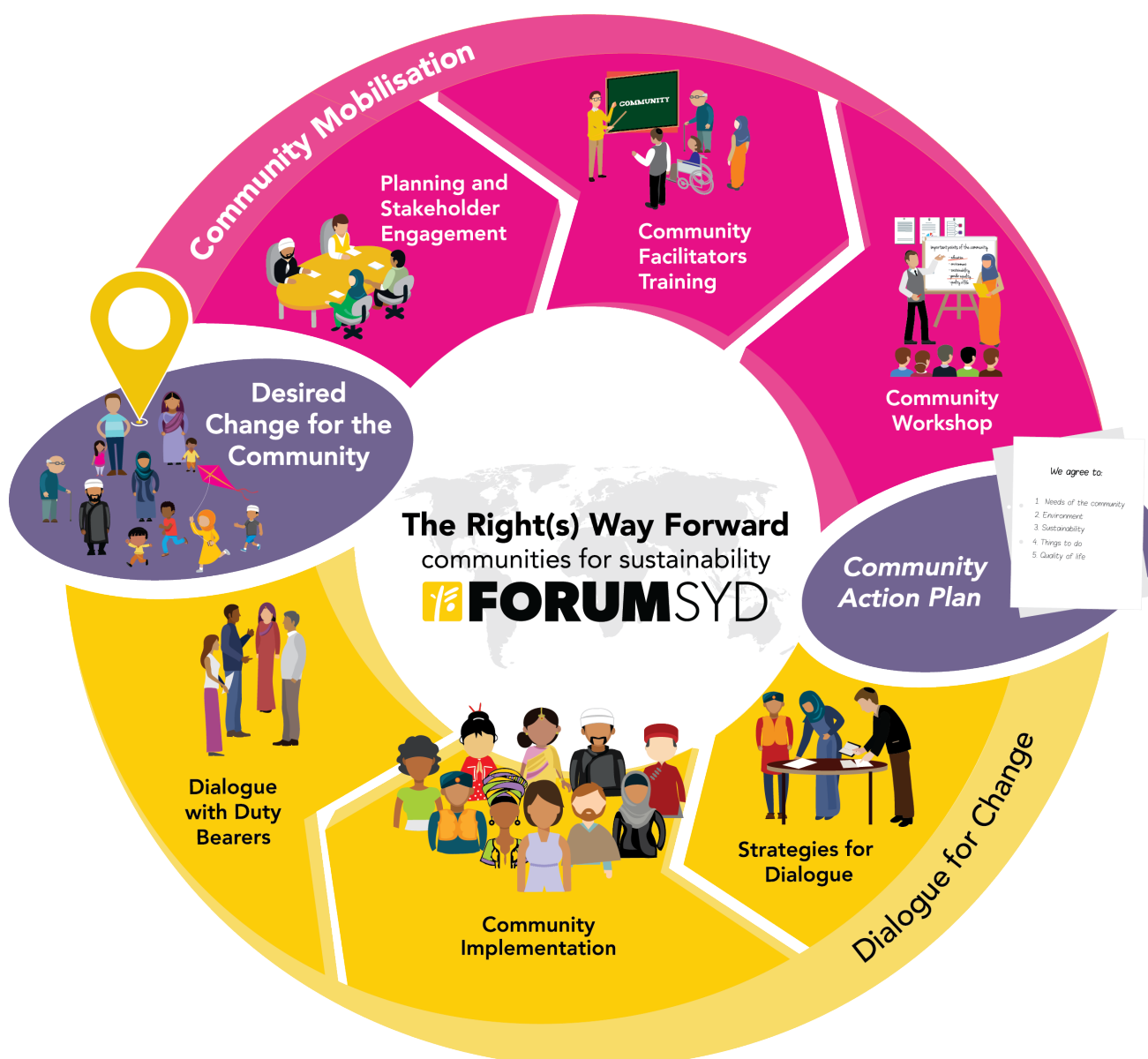
to the dynamic and evolving world in which we live. A rights-based approach relies on and reinforces the importance of transparency, democracy and democratic processes as essential to attain a just and sustainable world. Forum Syd recognises that it is important to bring about greater democracy whereby all people have genuine opportunities to be involved in the decisions that affect their lives. Factors such as education, gender equality, health, safety and economical or income generating opportunities are preconditions for people's access to influence and democratic participation.

How we work with the Rights-based approach

Forum Syd works with a rights-based approach and focuses on active popular participation, to strengthen democratic processes and eradicate discrimination. A rights-based approach used throughout programme and project cycles – from planning to implementation

and evaluation – helps identify power structures and stakeholders. This approach addresses the barriers and root causes preventing the fulfilment of rights. Forum Syd adopts the Right(s) Way Forward as our methodology for operationalising the rights-based approach in our interventions.

Forum Syd promotes lasting change by working with a rights-based approach in its four roles as Advocate, Capacity Developer, Development Actor and Grant Administrator. Participation of target groups, local partners, Swedish civil society organisations, private sector and duty-bearers is promoted from the perspective of the rights-holder. Forum Syd, its partner organisations and members work on all levels of society to bring about change. By adopting a rights-based approach, Forum Syd can be close to where the change takes place and carry out more effective and relevant interventions which foster stronger and empowered communities.



Gender Equality

Definition

Gender equality is defined as equal access to rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all genders. Gender is a social construction that reflects societal and cultural interpretations of biological sexes. This social construction is shaped by norms that dictate how people should be and behave given their perceived gender. The norms reproduce gender biases and systematic exclusion of people based on their gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation.

Gender equality is a human rights and power issue. Achieving gender equality is a matter of just and equitable distribution of influence and resources within society. It is a pre-condition for sustainable development from a rights-based approach. For gender equality to be achieved, all people, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation, should be able to control and exercise the power to shape their own lives and contribute to society. For this reason, Forum Syd uses a rights-based approach to challenge and transform patriarchal structures of unjust power relations that are based on gender.

Forum Syd considers **gender equity** as essential for achieving gender equality. Equity refers to a fair and just distribution of resources given the needs and starting points of different people. An equity approach acknowledges that historic discrimination has resulted in different socio-economic conditions for different identities and groups, which must be considered to achieve equal access to opportunities. In order to attain gender equality through an equity approach, special measures often need to be taken to redistribute resources or power to help individuals and groups to overcome systematic disadvantages and constraints.

Forum Syd works for a society in which all people are free and able to decide for themselves over their sexual orientation and gender identity without persecution or violation of their human rights. When peoples' sexual orientation and gender identity are subject to exclusion and subordination it has far-reaching consequences for the division of roles, resources and opportunities

in society. To achieve gender equality, it is essential to address the root causes of inequality by recognising the multiple identities, privileges and oppressions that individuals face. Forum Syd uses an intersectional perspective in its gender equality approach.

How we work with Gender Equality

Forum Syd and its partners work to strengthen all peoples' ability to organise themselves to ensure the full enjoyment of their human rights. Forum Syd applies a gender equality approach in its programmes. This means that the programmes aim to:

- Increase the participation and representation of rights holders in democratic processes, decisions and accountability mechanisms (e.g. election participation) regardless of gender.
- Change and improve attitudes, behaviours, customs, traditions, norms, culture, and laws that produce and justify the exclusion and oppression of a significant part of the society, as a result of a person's sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

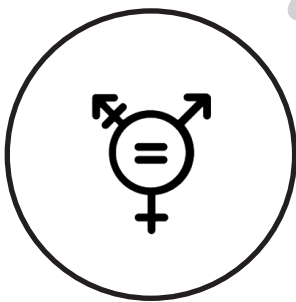
A gender-equality approach with an intersectional perspective, allows development actors to better understand what type of outcomes and impacts can be generated through a project or program in a specific community, considering their needs, issues and capacities. Applying a gender-sensitive and Do-No-Harm Framework is key to understanding gender power relations and help Forum Syd design and implement more inclusive interventions. Forum Syd promotes awareness among rights-holders and duty-bearers of the root causes and the consequences of sexual and gender-based violence and acknowledges that sexual violence is used selectively for strategic reasons.

What is intersectionality?

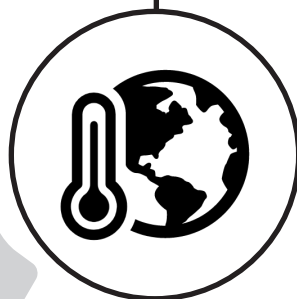
An intersectional perspective sheds light on the connections between patriarchal structures and other forms of oppression based on nationality, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, political ideology or religion. Forum Syd uses an intersectional analysis to better capture the complexity of a person's everyday life and create more accurate interventions.

How are the developments perspectives connected?

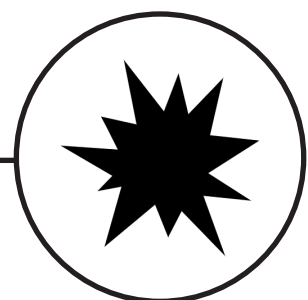
Forum Syd enriches the gender approach with an intersectional perspective and interlinking it with its environmental and its conflict sensitivity approach.



Working with gender equality, Forum Syd recognises the relation between **gender and environment**; the underlying systems of patriarchy, and economic and political inequality must be addressed for real change to endure. Systems which promote gender inequality contribute to poverty, environmental degradation, climate change and exacerbate conflict. Forum Syd advocates for the inclusion and enabling of all persons to develop contextualised and sustainable strategies for mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. Those who are most marginalised and oppressed by the systems in which they live, will always be most exposed to climate and environment related vulnerabilities.



Forum Syd recognises that **conflict** has a greater impact on and specific implications for women and girls, who often are not considered in conflict situations, due to societal restrictions and norms. Forum Syd promotes the inclusion of all individuals with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities into peace building processes and interventions. Forum Syd believes that gender identities and norms including all institutions, systems, traditions and attitudes that support them are key to conflict-dynamic and responses.



Conflict Sensitivity & Do-No-Harm

Definition

Conflict is defined as a situation in which two or more parties perceive their interests as incompatible, for example because of opposing beliefs, ideas, needs, values or goals. This definition recognises that conflicts occur at different levels, such as among individuals, groups, classes and states, and that they may be localised or global. While it acknowledges that conflicts are natural and an inherent part of human coexistence, it also recognises that responding to incompatible interests with violence will have an adverse impact on development, social structures, the environment and quality of life.

When addressing violence, Forum Syd does not only recognise **direct violence**, but also **cultural violence** which refers to the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that justify **structural violence** that is reflected in the institutions, norms, laws, rules and procedures within society that grant privilege to some groups and oppress others.

In applying a conflict sensitive approach Forum Syd uses the Do-No-Harm Framework which refers to striving to minimise the harm it may unintentionally cause through its interventions or the harm it might cause through its non-intervention. It recognises the importance of using the Do-No-Harm Framework to ensure that actions contribute to positive development and connection, instead of harm and division. This is necessary not only for assuming responsibility, but also for implementing sustainable initiatives that are likely to succeed. The Do-No-Harm Framework means that Forum Syd becomes part of the context(s) in which it operates. Forum Syd knows that the details of its interventions are important and that all actions will have consequences and leave an impact.

How we work with Conflict Sensitivity

Forum Syd uses a conflict-sensitivity approach via the Do-No-Harm Framework as a mainstreamed method

across its interventions, from the planning phase, the implementation and the evaluation of all its programmes and projects.

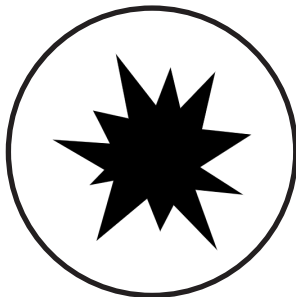
Forum Syd sees conflict as an opportunity for development; conflict, when transformed, could lead to cooperation and lasting partnerships. Working in conflict/post-conflict areas is a very delicate issue. Forum Syd and its partners have developed their capacity for working with a **conflict-sensitive approach** by applying the Do-No-Harm Framework. By working with a conflict-sensitive approach Forum Syd assumes responsibility to ensure that its actions do not create or aggravate conflicts or result in other forms of negative changes. Conflict sensitivity means that one understands the context in which one operates, as well as the interactions between actions and the context, and acts upon that to avoid negative impacts and maximise positive impacts on the conflict.

Forum Syd aims to address the root causes of conflict by supporting rights-holders in their work for changing discriminatory structures and addressing the attitudes, behaviours and beliefs that led to those structures. The focus is also on gradually transforming those negative attitudes into collaboration; aiming to strengthen democracy and human rights.

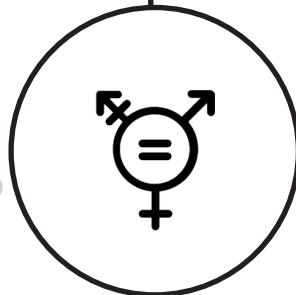
Forum Syd conducts multiple stakeholder analyses in all its work. Different societal stakeholders can play crucial roles in conflict and its transformation; such as the role of youth, persons with disabilities and the private sector. Forum Syd recognises the role youth can play towards peace. Young people are often portrayed as victims and perpetrators in the context of conflicts. However, young people can also play the role of peacebuilders and be positive change agents when they are included in conflict transformation processes, if provided with the right tools and capacities. Responsible private companies have the potential to play a significant role, they can often help rebuild communities, offer economic alternatives, skills diversification and other essential components necessary for peace processes.

How are the developments perspectives connected?

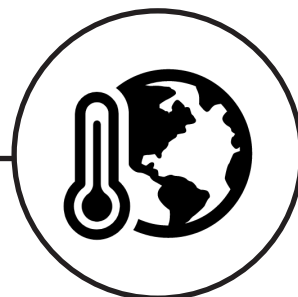
Forum Syd adopts a holistic approach in working with conflict since it believes that conflict transformations are never complete without having gender and environmental perspectives taken into consideration in all interventions.



Conflict has a greater impact on women and girls. However, women and girls are not well represented in peacebuilding processes and a gender perspective is still missing in many development related interventions due to social, political and cultural practices in different regions. Forum Syd in its approach to working with conflict considers the impact conflict has on all people with different **gender** identities.



Environmental factors play a dynamic and complex role in exacerbating conflict, largely due to resource scarcity. Climate change and environmental degradation is complex and affects every area of society. Responses need to be conflict-sensitive and adapted to local conditions which consider current and future environmental pressures.



Environment & Climate Change

Definition

Forum Syd The **environment** is the natural world – composed of soil, water, land, air, ecosystems and living things, including humans – that through biodiversity, which comprises systems, environmental goods and services, provides all the necessary elements for life.

Climate change is the shift in our climate driven by human-activity which has led to the release of unprecedented levels of greenhouse gases leading to a rise in global temperatures and planetary destabilisation.

Forum Syd understands that we are in an ecological and climate emergency. The socio-economic system which produced this emergency is also responsible for the decline in living standards for many and the rise of inequality. The decline in communities' and individuals' power to decide over their environmental goods and services together with an ever-increasing shrinking civic space, shows that the environment, people and their rights are not separate.

The effects of the current emergency are borderless. Therefore, Forum Syd believes in and recognises interdependence, complementarity and partnerships for effective and sustainable solutions to make the planet earth a safe place to live. Forum Syd considers that everyone should strive for a world in which the needs of all are met, whilst living within planetary boundaries; acknowledging that this is not compatible with our current system and its dependency on infinite growth.

Biodiversity is a fundamental component to a healthy environment. It supports and enhances all of these other aspects of the natural world, and/or reduces the risks to them.

The value of biodiversity can be understood in three dimensions: (i) Functional – it sustains flows of many benefits that have material value of which many livelihoods depend; (ii) Cultural – it is an intimate and essential part of community, aesthetic and spiritual values; (iii) Security – biodiversity is a fundamental basis for life itself, the foundation of a secure and functioning environment.

Forum Syd sees our current reality as an opportunity for transformation through non-violent means, by engaging with partners and communities to explore alternate solutions. These solutions contribute towards the creation of regenerative and sustainable cultures and systems, which are healthy, resilient, and adaptable – not solely responding to negative pressures, but free and able to determine their own trajectories. This climate transformative approach, from a rights-based perspective, is centred around **environmental and climate justice**, founded in a Do-No-Harm Framework. Attaining this is seen as a prerequisite for fulfilling just and sustainable lives.

Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people irrespective of nationality, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, political ideology or religion with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. It is the right of all persons to enjoy the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to maintain a healthy environment in which to live.

Climate justice focuses on the root causes of climate change and making the systemic changes that are therefore required to bring about change. It is a commitment to address the disproportionate burden of the climate crisis on the poor and marginalised and demands for participatory democracy in changing these systems, which require dismantling damaging power structures. Climate Justice is working at the intersections of environmental degradation and the social political and economic inequities it perpetuates. It highlights the violation of youth and future generations' rights to live on a healthy planet due to inadequate action and accelerated environmental degradation.

Environmental and climate justice acknowledge that direct and indirect violence is inflicted and experienced by individuals and communities when these rights are violated. It also recognises that the marginalisation of certain groups adds to the already complex layers of discrimination, creating further barriers to attaining

these rights. This definition also recognises that the environment holds intrinsic worth beyond monetary and economic value; encouraging the protection and promotion of environmental stewardship of communities who have a long standing and positive interaction with their environment.

How we work with Environment and Climate Change

Forum Syd works towards finding integrated ways to enhance our positive impact on the environment and climate change. This is made possible through a rights-based approach with a Do-No-Harm Framework, and by including environmental and climate perspectives into our interventions – from planning to evaluation.

A climate transformational approach, through environment and climate justice, means working from the bottom-up to create solutions to attain just and sustainable lives for all. This requires a consideration of existing social, economic and political systems and how they interact, in order to produce climate transformative solutions.

Forum Syd challenges unjust power structures, and applies methodologies for participatory democracy, strengthening the voices of communities to claim their

rights for environmental and climate justice. Forum Syd supports partners who promote fundamentally alternative visions and pathways that positively contribute to their communities, locally and globally. From the promotion of indigenous and peasant land rights to the democratisation of environmental policies.

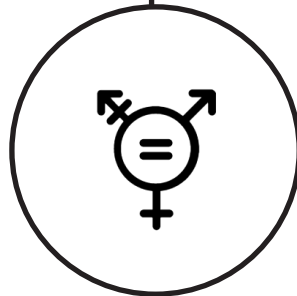
Forum Syd uses and promotes innovative approaches, from advocacy, activism and artivism (activism & art), to sustainable business creation which promotes gender equality and environmental stewardship. Forum Syd recognises the complex role the private sector plays regarding the environment and climate change, acknowledging that responsible business can be used as a mechanism for positive transformation and just transition.

How are the developments perspectives connected?

Forum Syd works to ensure access to and equitable decision-making-power over environmental goods and services for those who are most affected. Thus, it is also necessary to connect **environmental and climate justice** together with gender equality and conflict sensitivity to strengthen marginalised people around the world, who organise to claim their rights and advocate for changes that contribute to a just and sustainable world. A healthy planet cannot be achieved without gender equality or peace.



As **women and girls** who live in vulnerable and unsafe conditions are affected disproportionately by climate change and environmental degradation. Because they are more exposed to natural variations due to bound social norms, restricted influence and access to decision making regarding environmental goods and services, and are more vulnerable due to reduced coping mechanisms. It is therefore necessary to consider their needs and contributions towards attaining environmental and climate justice.



As environmental factors play a dynamic and complex role in exacerbating **conflict**, responses must be conflict-sensitive and adapted to local conditions with risk analyses which consider current and future environmental pressures. A growing body of research points toward climate change driving conflict. This trend is likely to increase over time. Conflict also contributes to further environmental degradation, as supportive structures to a healthy environment are often compromised given weakened infrastructure and/or governance.

