CORK LIFE CENTRE
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
PERSPECTIVES
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In the year 2000, leaders of 189 countries came together to agree to tackle the many problems they saw in the world. They agreed that issues such as famine, poverty and sickness shouldn’t exist - there was enough food, money and medicine for everybody in the world, and so together they developed a 15 year plan to combat these issues. These 8 goals are known as the Millennium Development Goals. With the help of the United Nations Development Programme and other organisations and initiatives, by 2015, hunger and poverty had been cut in half and education and mortality rates had greatly improved. However, there was still lots more to be done.

In 2015, the world leaders came together again in an attempt to build on the achievements of the past 15 years. They developed the Sustainable Development Goals, a set of 17 goals that aspire to end poverty and hunger and make quality living and working conditions, education and healthcare available to all people by the year 2030. The new goals also focus on our planet. By looking after the land, the water and the animals, we will also take care of ourselves.
AN INTRODUCTION...

This book is a response to the Sustainable Development Goals by students and staff at Cork Life Centre. We are worried about the issues facing our planet and are happy that the leaders of the world have agreed to work together to combat them.

We ourselves are involved in many different projects that help to address some of the issues, such as the October 17th End Poverty campaign, the Jigsaw youth mental health panel and children’s rights advocacy, particularly advocating the right to education for all.

We know it won’t be easy to achieve these Goals, but we will do what we can, and we hope that governments will also do their bit so that we will see a greener, healthier, fairer and more sustainable world within our lifetimes.
The 17 Sustainable Development Goals as outlined by the United Nations are hugely significant for us all. I am excited by the manner in which our students and indeed staff have engaged with the various goals. Our initial involvement with the goals came about from talks and workshops both with ‘Mind the Gap’ and the National Youth Council of Ireland. This was developed further by our students planning and creating a short film last year exploring Goal 4: Ensuring Inclusive and Quality Education for All, with the support of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. This led to a deeper involvement with the October 17th Committee and an opportunity to do further work around raising awareness in Cork around End World Poverty Day and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Again this year, we were fortunate to receive funds from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection as part of their public awareness funding initiative for the United Nations Day for the Eradication of Poverty which takes place on October 17th. Without this support, the production of this collection of insights on the SDG’s, why they matter, how they affect our lives, and how we can have a positive impact could not have been created. It is important to note that the views reflected in this work are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

It has been more than heartening to see our young people and the staff that work with and support them taking a lead in this area and having their voices heard. This is fitting and brings a quote to mind ‘Let us remember: One book, one pen, one child, and one teacher can change the world’ (Malala Yousafzai). The goals, whether they relate directly to education or other areas affecting young people’s lives would make drastic changes to lives globally for all people, but for children in particular. We have an obligation to our students and indeed the young people of Ireland to ensure that these SDG’s are in place by 2030, which of course is the overarching aim of those working
on these goals. While in September 2015, governments of the world signed up to these goals, we in civil society need to be at the forefront of creating a voice for the voiceless and ensuring aims are met. We can do this in numerous ways one of which is to keep informed and another in creating and joining partnerships that have been set up to monitor progress and implementation of the SDGs. In Ireland there is a coalition partnership already in place promoting this work. Again we are hugely proud at the Cork Life Centre of our students and staff and how they have highlighted these issues and presented them in this publication.
Born in France in 1917, Fr. Joseph Wresinski made it his life’s work to tackle extreme poverty. Having had first hand experience of living in such conditions in his own childhood, Wresinski found that his vocation was to help those whose lives poverty had ravaged and in all too many cases ended.

By the 1950s, he had turned this work into a cause. He and many of the families he worked with formed what was to become ATD Fourth World, a research institute which not only found practical ways to alleviate the suffering of those in poverty but brought together thinkers from various fields to search for new ways to combat the causes of poverty in society.

This work culminated thirty years ago with the unveiling of a human rights memorial in Paris on 17 October 1987. In the years before that, Wresinski had been appointed to the French Economic and Social Council and had published the Wresinski Report, calling for those in extreme poverty to be seen as partners in society.

Joseph Wresinski passed away a year after the unveiling, but his work carries on to this day. Twenty five years ago, the United Nations declared 17 October to be the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Much work has been done in this twenty five years by people from all places, of all ages and of all backgrounds coming together to perform the most basic of actions around which Joseph Wresinski based his life’s work: helping those in need and trying to ensure that no man, woman or child has to endure the crippling conditions of extreme poverty.

So, what can we do?
1. NO POVERTY

Everyone is equal and has the right to live in the world and not suffer. There are more than 800 million people today living in extreme poverty, earning less than $1.25 a day. This needs to stop because we waste so much money, which could go to those who need it.

We need to educate people about what it is to be living in real poverty. Doing exchanges and actually seeing first hand the awful conditions in which some people live their whole lives has a better impact than just sending money, which often ends up in the wrong hands.

Governments of different countries have to work together to address the issue of poverty. These projects are proven to work, when actions are taken to improve the living conditions of the poor. Education is always valuable and can give the poor a voice.

With the Sustainable Development Goals and other initiatives, we are on the right track to ending poverty. It could be achieved by 2030...with effort!
1. No Poverty
1 NO POVERTY
The goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030 is achievable but only if we change our attitudes in three simple ways. Attitudinal changes make economic changes, as we are then in charge of the money, rather than the money being in charge of us.

At present our system is based on the creation of wealth often to the virtual exclusion of the moral responsibilities that follow from the increase of wealth. Despite the huge numbers that live in poverty our planet and its people have never possessed so much economic and technological power. Why then is poverty still with us? The three attitude changes that I suggest are necessary will result in economic decisions being made which can, largely, eliminate extreme poverty.

These three changes are:
(1) An increased awareness of our common humanity.
(2) A refusal to be confined by set ideas about classes or groups of people.
(3) The introduction of a guaranteed income system throughout the world that harmonises with the particular needs of various cultures and regions.

(1) We all have the need for security, shelter, and the means to maintain the basics of life in dignity and self respect. Where this is lacking governments and all people must draw attention to the particular cases and not cease insisting on the establishment of social justice until it comes about. Economic benefit must never be at the cost of cheap labour, insecurity of tenure or threats of violence. Governments must openly challenge any such causes of poverty even if trade with the offending country is lessened as a result.

(2) People's potential must not be undermined by thinking of them just as particular groups with needs. Each person must be considered as a full human being with unique qualities and a huge contribution to make. Such ideas as "Third world", "Disability", "Poor people", "Disadvantaged areas" or "The
unemployed” are just some examples. While these labels can
be useful they also lock us into predictable and limiting ideas
about the ability of people to participate in society. The person
in the group starts to see themselves as the label, we all see
the limits and not the potential of their situation. We also limit
ourselves by creating a “them and us” world where “they” can’t
learn from” us” and “we” can’t learn from “them”.

(3) Finally a guaranteed income scheme to apply to all adults
of voting age is essential if we are to end world poverty. Each
person gets an amount of money that is enough to maintain
the basics of life. If they work they are taxed on the work but
the basic income money is a universal payment and is tax free.
Rich and poor receive the payment, as happens with our
children’s allowance payment. More financial security is
achieved, money to invest in small business is available, young
people have more independence from their parents and the
risk of extreme poverty is eliminated. This is already being
piloted in various countries and will become more common as
technology renders more manual work outdated and as debt
levels will have to be reduced in order to stabilise society. In
our present economic model that hoards houses or burns food,
rather than give it away, any accusation that this scheme is far
fetched can easily be refuted.
I chose this goal because I love food and I can’t imagine a world where I don’t have access to not only the food I enjoy, but the food I need.

People need food to survive. They need food for energy to work and go about their daily lives. Mothers need to feed their children. Lack of food results in many health issues, such as malnutrition and starvation. Not having enough food for everybody in one place can lead to violence and even start wars.

In the developed world, we are guilty of wasting food every day. We take food for granted and throw a lot of it out. People need to become conscious of this and a lot more responsible if this goal is to be achieved.

I don’t know if it is possible to end world hunger by 2030, but I hope it is.
2 ZERO HUNGER
2 Zero Hunger
When I think of hunger the first thing to come to mind is the needless waste that we can all be found guilty of. In Ireland alone we throw out over 1 million tonnes of food waste every year and 60% of that waste is avoidable. When we can see that thousands of people die every day across the world from hunger and malnutrition, we are the ones that must make the difference and adopt a change for the better.

If we wish to make headway in solving the hunger problem that plagues mankind, we all must try in any way we can to reduce our food waste. Companies across the nation are helping combat food waste with organizations such as “Food Cloud”, where surplus food from producers, manufacturers and wholesalers is gathered together and given to those in need of it but we as individuals must also make a change for the better.

Just remember that 1/3 of the worlds food gets wasted...

DON’T THROW IT AWAY, GIVE IT AWAY!
I chose the Goal Good Health and Well-being because everybody deserves to be healthy and have access to the healthcare and medicine they need, but this is not the way it is in the world.

Mental ill health is a particularly huge issue. Both here in Cork and around the world there is too much suicide. People struggling with their mental health should be able to access the services and supports that ensure it does not happen.

Small children are dying around the world due to poverty and starvation. That is not fair; young children of today should be able to expect to live a long and healthy life. Governments need to invest in healthcare and make sure people get what they need in every corner of the world.

I don’t know if this Goal is achievable by 2030. There is too much focus on earning money, rather than creating a sustainable, healthy world for the generations of the future.

John
3. Good Health and Well-being
The World Health Organisation defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. However, the UN Sustainable Development Goal of Health and Well-being seems to focus on physical health more than the mental and social influences on health.

The failure of society to acknowledge the growing global mental health crisis is a serious flaw in the development plan. Poor mental health is now acknowledged as one of the fastest growing health issues globally and it affects physical health as well as social health and well-being on a community, national and global level as well as at the individual level.

Furthermore, poor mental health places a significant financial burden on individuals, communities, and nations, and given that one of the three overarching aims of the Sustainable Development Goals is to reduce poverty it is essential that there is a greater focus on mental health.
4. QUALITY EDUCATION

Hi, I’m Adam. I’m a student of Cork Life Centre, which is an alternative school for people who don’t fit into mainstream education. Because of this, I chose to talk about the Goal for Quality Education.

Education is very important because it opens up the doors to other opportunities - employment, college or internships. It also offers new ways, or different ways of thinking and helps us to develop our skills for life - such as mental, social and health awareness.

When regions are hit by poverty, war or drought, this can lead to education becoming neglected and facilities such as hospitals, schools and libraries often become affected.

The Life Centre is a positive school that promotes Quality Education for All. As students, we can learn in different ways and we are encouraged to express ourselves. We get treated with respect and we are given a good opportunity to gain an education, which is important to people like us, who may never have had a chance without it.

When people are educated, they become more able to motivate themselves to overcome social injustice. This is why I think education plays an important role in everyday life and it is very important that the world achieves quality education for everybody. It is possible to achieve if all governments and communities come together and agree that education plays a big role in people’s lives and provide more education services than they have in place at the moment. More communities should have access to the internet by 2030, so this will make it easier to educate more people.

ADAM
4 QUALITY EDUCATION
Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.  
Nelson Mandela

Education breeds confidence. Confidence breeds hope. Hope breeds peace.  
Confucius

Our greatest natural resource is the minds of our children.  
Walter Elias Disney

The above quotes speak powerfully to me as to why education must remain such a key priority and rightfully hold its place as a Sustainable Development Goal. When delivered in a way that allows children to learn and achieve there is nothing more powerful than education and the fruit it bears - once given it can never be taken away and its impacts are inter-generational.

Statistics by UNESCO in 2016 revealed that 263 million children and youth were out of school globally. To put this in perspective it is equivalent to one quarter of the population of Europe. Of all the regions in the world Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of exclusion. The first ever estimate of those excluded from upper secondary education was included in this data accounting for 142 million of the youth who are out of education across the world. In Sub-Saharan Africa almost 60% of youths aged 15-17 are not in school. Globally the statistics are frightening and we must recognise the inequality in provision of education between developed and developing regions.

What I would like to focus on also however is the educational inequality and disadvantage that I experience daily in our own country of Ireland. Working as I do with young people who find themselves outside the mainstream school system for a variety of reasons it is an issue I have had opportunity to reflect upon. I ruminated on it particularly this August as I had the privilege of sharing Leaving Cert results with our students - here are my thoughts.
At the Cork Life Centre we spent the most extraordinary day yesterday sitting with our young people as they opened results most had never dreamed of achieving. Most of these young people in fact at many stages had given up on the idea that they would ever complete Leaving Certificate due to their life experiences and their experiences in the education system. Don our Director was interviewed on 96fm yesterday morning and very succinctly and eloquently explained - ‘Our students have had to climb mountains and were then asked to do a 100 yard sprint at the end’. We sat with 11 young people yesterday who had not coped with, had struggled with or had been rejected by Ireland’s mainstream education system. Having effectively been let down by the system you can imagine the privilege it is and the pride we take in showing these young people most importantly but also those who might have doubted or overlooked them that they do matter, that they’re capable and that there is so much they can achieve and contribute.

In our work we promote balanced and measured views about the importance of the Leaving Cert. Far too often, and for far too many young people the Leaving Cert becomes associated with a ‘year of hell’ with being the ‘ultimate decider of one’s future’ with being the only ‘measurement for success’. The success in examinations our students celebrated yesterday is just one among many ways in which they have been successful during their journeys with us and often-times not what they will remember or take with them as they move on through their lives.

The number of the day for us yesterday was 11 and the feeling was joy. But as we and our students got to grips with the new Leaving Cert grading system yesterday I started to think about the Leaving Cert in numbers. 58,543 students received Leaving Cert results yesterday across Ireland. Most of these students will have spent 6 years in a system leading them to one set of exams that measure their accomplishments out of a score of 600. We used to have letters and numbers to indicate
achievement - A1’s, B2’s, C3’s etc. This year we got numbers ranging from 1-8.

But let’s look a little deeper at these numbers and think about some of the numbers that often get less focus: This figure of 58,543 represents those students who complete their secondary education. And we focus on them because they are the majority. But we have another somewhat stubborn figure in our education system - It is 10 - representing the 10% of children and young people who do not complete their education and receive the ‘Early School Leavers’ tag and label. We never hear about them on Leaving Cert day but they were very much on our mind at the Cork Life Centre.

We were proud of the achievements of our 11 young people who very likely could have remained uncounted on August 16th-Leaving Cert Results day. But we were disheartened by another number that keeps haunting us—the more than 120 young people we had to refuse placements to this year due to lack of capacity to cater for them.

For too significant a proportion of children and young people our education system just doesn’t add up to meeting their needs. Some children can’t play this numbers game - they get too tired, too lonely, too sad, too frustrated.

I’m thinking of the children that don’t manage in school because they are seen as having too many difficult behaviours and how these children often can’t find anyone to search for or understand the meaning of their behaviour. I’m thinking of the children lost in the sea of the numbers of other children around them - they simply cannot cope with Ireland’s large class sizes - they can’t keep up, they are too anxious - they need more help, more support, more care than our system can provide. I’m thinking of the children that are already facing so many challenges and obstacles in their personal or social lives that algebra, comprehensions, essay-writing become just insurmountable - without having some other needs met first.
I’m also thinking of the children and young people who come to Ireland under the most difficult circumstances to seek asylum, enter the Irish education system - a culture, curriculum and climate they are not familiar with, sit their Leaving Cert in a language often not their first or their own only to find they cannot enter third level education. Because to do so would require large finances - the number here is 10,000. These young people would need 10,000 euros minimum to pursue their education at university level.

Here are some more much smaller but related numbers: 5 is the number of years an asylum seeking child needs to spend in the Irish education system to quality for third level education in spite of the fact that their families will have often fled their country of origin for fear of death. 4 is the number of applicants who were successful in the last two years in accessing 3rd Level education via the government’s scheme for allowing asylum seekers access to higher education.

I return again to the number of 58,543 which our Department of Education and our Minister for Education were happy to speak about and celebrate yesterday. But we did not hear about the 10% of young people who have fallen through the cracks of our education system. We did the maths quickly. If 58,543 represents the 90% of young people who complete their Leaving Certificate and finish school then we can put a rough figure on the number of young people who didn’t get there at 6504.

6504 young people we don’t recall hearing anything about yesterday. And the government will argue they have taken alternative routes - Youthreach and other training programmes. I commend the young people who have done so and encourage that there be alternatives available to young people. But a large percentage of the above figure will have ended up with no opportunities to progress in education and will become part of another number, another statistic - NEETs.
NEET’s are young people aged 16-21 years not in education, employment or training in any given country in any given year. In 2014 Ireland’s percentage of NEET’s was 21% with the EU average at 15%. These numbers must be part of the Leaving Cert story also and their relevance recognised.

What seems clear as we look at the numbers and do the maths is that our education system continues to fall short - we need a new formula, new numbers, a new equation that works for all children and young people and leaves no child behind.

We would like to return to the number 11 that we started with - a number which might feel small and insignificant to some but for our community represents so many life-changing journeys and achievements. We would like to thank the 11 wonderful young people we handed results to yesterday for letting us into their lives, allowing us to know them, struggle with them, learn from them, encourage them and celebrate with them. When you choose to work with stories as we do, rather than statistics - the outcomes, the joy, the satisfaction is truly immeasurable.

You just can’t put a number on it.
5. GENDER EQUALITY

I picked this Goal because I believe what makes a person valuable is what’s in their head, not their physical differences. Very little is being done to achieve gender equality in the world. Even in ‘developed’ countries, such as here in Ireland, women often still earn considerably less than men for doing the same work. They also face discrimination in the workplace, due to the fact that they may become pregnant and they may not be considered for certain roles or promotions because of this. In many countries, women are viewed as second class citizens. They may not be allowed to drive, they may not have a choice in who they marry or they may need their husband’s permission to perform certain activities, such as voting or attending education. Girls are often forced to leave education before boys and they may even be forced to marry much older men at a very young age.

These injustices make Gender Equality one of the hardest goals to achieve. But, through education, awareness and empowerment, governments can address the issue of Gender Equality and implement initiatives to effectively work towards the Goal. This Goal can happen if we make it happen. We can begin by ensuring we commit to full Gender Equality here in Ireland. Only then will we have the right to preach about it so that other countries can follow suit.
5 GENDER
EQUALITY
5 GENDER EQUALITY
By 2030 the world should be a ‘gender blind’ society, where all rights and opportunities apply equally and universally to everyone - male, female and transgender.

Women’s safety, wellbeing and access to education should be a right, not a privilege. Barbaric practices, such as Female Genital Mutilation, child and enforced marriages will be consigned to the history books. All women should have the right to control their fertility and reproduction and have access to health care.

At present, the percentage of female CEOs in the Fortune 500 is 4%. By 2030, the goal is 50%. This can only be achieved through equality in education and opportunity. Gender must not exclude women and girls from any position in society. Meritocracy, not gender should determine success.
This Goal is very important, because we can’t survive without water. There are a lot of places in the world without clean water, which leads to disease.

This Goal has to be achieved by 2030 because it is too important for the survival of all people. Governments need to ensure it is sustainable, but we have to rely on each other throughout the world to keep our water clean and ensure it does not continue to be polluted. Without co-operation, this will not be a sustainable Goal.
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
A cup of tea, a hot shower or a dip in the swimming pool on those beautiful but rare hot summer’s day. We don’t even think twice – we are an island, surrounded by water and certainly have enough rainfall. Why should we be concerned?

Water is our most precious resource, we cannot survive without it, it is the basis of our food, the industries that produce the gadgets we simply cannot live without, energy supplies, the ecosystems that control our climate…the list goes on.

A water gap exists between growing demand and diminishing supplies and it is the most vulnerable people in our society who deal with this problem everyday. 633 million people are still without access to clean drinking water. Water scarcity affects more than 40% of the global population. Each day nearly 1,000 children die due to preventable water and sanitation-related diarrhoeal diseases.

This is one goal we can all help work to achieve; by playing our small part in water conservation we can also combat climate change, reduce hunger and food insecurity, improve life on land and below water.

Think...do you really need to leave the tap running as you wash your teeth tomorrow morning?!!
Affordable, clean energy is vital for survival. We can no longer rely on fossil fuels, which are due to run out and which create dangerous greenhouse gases. Restrictions should be enforced on large companies that use fossil fuels in order to cut down on emissions. Instead of using fossil fuels, we should encourage more research and investment into cleaner energy, such as solar panels, wind farms and wave energy and make more use of these free and natural resources if we want to save our world.
7 Affordable and Clean Energy
7 Affordable and Clean Energy
The current global energy crisis is driven by a confluence of unsustainable economic and developmental paradigms, an over-dependency on fossil fuels and the socio-economic monopoly of energy resources.

There is an inverse correlation between the populations which are the highest consumers of fossil fuels and those most highly affected. Climate justice and the related energy poverty are burgeoning socio-economic crises. More than 95% of those living without electricity and modern cooking fuels are in sub-Saharan Africa and developing Asia. According to the International Energy Agency, a population similar to that of the E.U. and the U.S. combined live without access to electricity in India; nearly 240 million people.

Access to modern energy is essential for the provision of clean water, sanitation and healthcare; reliable and efficient lighting, heating, cooking and mechanical power, transport and communication services.

Transition to sustainable democratic resource distribution is essential to ameliorate energy poverty. At the global level this means the sharing of resources within attainable and sustainable ecological limits and ‘morally appropriate responses to climate change rooted in equality and justice.’ (International Rights Framework)

On the national level this means commitment to the most progressive global energy agreements and holding politicians accountable to implementing policies in accordance with The Energy Efficiency and Affordability Division’s target of 20% improvement in energy efficiency by 2020 – which means an energy saving of 31,925GWh which will alleviate the burden of energy poverty on Irish households and small businesses.

On a community level this means choosing sustainable energy sources like wind, wave and solar power, buying local products, and committing to healthy energy consumption levels.
I think this Goal is important because everyone is equal and should be entitled to a decent job with good pay. We all need to earn a living wage for the work we do - we need enough money to afford shelter, food and education for ourselves and our families, as well as a few extras. If these needs are met, economic growth will follow as people will not just be focused on surviving, but will have money to spend to keep the economy going. If people earn more money, more jobs will be created.

Globally, people are still affected by poverty and are forced into work that is dangerous and that takes away their human rights. Governments need to ensure that their citizens are protected from slavery and forced labour, which happen even here in Ireland.

It is the responsibility of governments to ensure things remain affordable so that people don’t slip into the poverty trap. Rent and property prices need to be controlled. Third level education needs to be affordable and lead to decent work, rather than leaving graduates in debt with few job prospects. Special initiatives, tax breaks and affordable rent for businesses would encourage entrepreneurship and stimulate the economy.

This will be a difficult Goal to achieve. Many things stay affordable due to cheap labour, so finding a balance between decent pay and good prices is key. Wealth needs to be distributed fairly around the world. We need to close the economic gap and make the world equal and fair.
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
The western world is currently burdened by an economic model that relies on poor regulation, weak political structures and misled or misinformed citizens for its survival.
When asked if he wanted to do market research for his latest project, the late Steve Jobs famously said ‘No, because customers don’t know what they want until we’ve shown them.’ Innovative? Yes. Visionary? Yes. Dangerous? Yes. This approach turned ‘traditional market research’ on its head. No more would consumer opinion have an impact on design, desire or price. Today, the new ‘iPhone’, model sells for €800, the equivalent of two weeks’ wages for some, or more than four unemployment benefit payments for others.

Concurrently, the greatest problem facing the European Union is unemployment, particularly among the young. The mass movement of displaced people from countries ravaged by war, occupation and corruption, adds to the problem in at least two ways: 1) In host countries, the cost of labour is reduced to a pittance, and 2), the market takes full advantage of this cheap labour resulting from our humanitarian efforts, while greatly increasing profits.

Widening inequalities must be addressed by every stratum of society. The global markets see us as ‘commodified consumers’, rather than citizens. We are very much citizens - citizens of Ireland, of Europe and of the world; though the global economy continues to undermine the very core of that citizenship socially, politically and culturally.

If we are to demand an economic model that is inclusive, sustainable and provides productive employment in fair conditions for all, then we must, as citizens, engage with our politicians locally, nationally and internationally. The European project is in disarray. It must be restructured and rethought to become a citizen’s Europe. Fairness and equity will not simply be handed to us; we must demand it through political, intellectual and cultural discourse.
9. INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

I chose this Goal because it is interesting to me. It’s 2017 and the internet has been widely available for 20 years, yet there are still so many people, areas and even countries that are without access to it. This means that they are not getting information at the same rate as the rest of the world and so they are not progressing as fast.

By ensuring these areas have reliable and affordable internet, we will be able to help and educate more people, who will then be able to go on to help and educate others. Improving infrastructure will help to get the internet to areas that do not have it, in turn they will see more business and innovation, which will ensure more income for that country.

Technology is only getting better, I believe it is definitely possible to reach this goal by 2030.
9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
The word “innovation” in this day and age conjures up an image of a world online, of far off places connected by a single screen and almost any person in the world available for us to talk to at the click of a button. The image then branches out and causes us to think of a technological industry which is constantly revolutionising itself, each revolution bringing new benefits for the rest of us: new tools we never knew we needed, new features we never knew could exist. This image extends so far and so deeply that before we know it our lives are immersed within it and a hidden infrastructure extends from our fingertips to the far corners of the globe.

This digital infrastructure allows us to perform actions our parents and grandparents would have thought of as flights of fancy, generations of media would have led us to believe in. Being connected to the whole world allows for magnificent innovations in the fields of education, science and the arts, to name a few. The world of twenty years ago could not have predicted the heights to which these advances have brought us. The next twenty years will no doubt continue to astound us, but how far forward can we look before we remember to look back?

The world wide web doesn’t connect everyone. There are thousands of people for whom internet access is the least of their concerns – not when their priority must be food, shelter or medicine for themselves and their loved ones. We take a lot of pride in the digital infrastructure we have created, but how does this infrastructure benefit a starving child? How does it help a refugee fleeing destruction? How does it connect an elderly person in the west of Ireland whose bus route has been cancelled and whose post office has been shut down? An infrastructure is only as good as its ability to support those who need it most.

There are solutions to each of those problems: one can text a charity to donate money to help the child, one can sign an online petition calling for more to be done to save the refugee,
and the elderly person can be shown how to Skype a far-flung relative. These are all well-meaning solutions, but they are tokens. They don’t address the fundamental problem: for all of our innovation, for all of our industrial revolutions and for all the places our modern infrastructure can reach, there are people left behind. There are people who are unable to enjoy the basic security provided by simply living in a community with roads, trade, the protection of laws and the provision of simple public services. If people can’t at least have that, then what’s the point of our great digital world?

Of course our technological industries should continue to turn ideas from the impossible to the possible. We should continue to strive to find new innovations to benefit our societies. But above all, we should always remember that just because this new type of infrastructure is so ingrained into our own lives, it has not been the same for everyone else. If we become impatient and expect that everyone else should catch up to our advances, then we risk destroying the infrastructures that got us there in the first place. Now how would that be progress?
10. REDUCED INEQUALITIES

I am interested in this Goal because I see inequality everywhere. Even here in Cork, I see a lot of people who are not being treated the same as everybody else. If there is racism, ageism, sexism, homelessness and poverty on our doorstep, these must be happening in worse ways all over the world. Compared to the rest of the world, the issues that I notice here might seem insignificant, but all the small things contribute to the bigger problems and need to be tackled.

I think it is possible for inequalities to be reduced. We need to keep fighting, so that everybody has an equal place in society, everybody is valued equally and everybody has access to the necessities and accessories they need to survive and prosper.

We are all human beings, no one human is better than any other, we need to realise this and learn to treat everyone the way they deserve.
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
As I entered into my 30s I was hit with the realisation that things are monumentally different for me than they were for my parents at my age. It’s that time of life when things like marriage, babies and owning your own home move from being endeavours of the far future to expected short term goals. But for so many people of my generation it’s less of a goal than it is a fantasy. A recent survey found that 15% of people aged between 25 and 35 question whether they will ever be homeowners in their lifetime - house prices are simply too steep for any but the very well-off to consider buying a place to call their own.

That’s just one symptom of the astonishingly unequal society we live in - a society in which the rich seem to be getting richer while the poor are left to get poorer. While I might complain about the difficulties faced by young people looking for their own home, at least I have a place that I can call home. In the supposed bastion of hospitality that we claim our country to be, about 5,000 adults and 3,000 children are homeless. If a town of a similar population fell victim to a disaster which displaced its people, our government would act quickly to ensure their safety. Spread that number out across the whole country, and the official response slows to a glacial, ineffective pace.

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar spoke recently of fostering a culture of aspiration. That sounds nice, but aspiration does not exist without inspiration. How can people feel inspired living in a society that imposes such huge obstacles to achieving one’s goals? How does inspiration thrive where thousands are left to sleep on streets, in doorways or in emergency accommodation? How inspired can one feel when faced with the other forms of inequality which manifest - prejudice against people because of some aspect of their identity or where they come from, and in some cases their reasons for coming here.

A culture of aspiration can be a very good thing, but it can’t mean the kind of society where it’s every person for themselves, all of us stepping on each other in an attempt to
climb that ladder. We’ve seen the outcome of that culture more than enough times to know that it doesn’t work. On the other hand, if we mean the kind of culture wherein we aspire to be a better kind of society, where we aspire to help each other and where those in positions of power do all they can to help those most in need - a society where we aspire to equality for all rather than the best we can get for ourselves - that’s an aspiration we can all get behind. My hope is that as our society evolves into the future, our government and our people can move from seeing “us” and “them” to just seeing “us”, all together. What better goal is there to have?
Over half of the world’s population is living in urban areas and this figure will soon grow to two thirds. Cities need to become more organised, innovative and economical if they are to sustain all these people. This can be done by encouraging city planners and developers to think about housing in more creative ways in order to deal with congestion and rising costs of accommodation: people could live in smaller spaces, such as modified shipping containers, to make housing affordable.

Cities should also employ more staff to manage their spaces - such as cleaners and artists. Job initiatives that give the unemployed, young people or homeless money for doing this kind of work on a casual basis would also tackle a lot of the social problems caused by unemployment and boredom.

Cities need to consider their inhabitants and not just focus on businesses. More shelters for the homeless and more centres for young people are important. More parks with free activities for all ages and free parking/buses/bikes will get people into and active in the city and then business will follow.

If all the people involved in a city, from the council to the members of the public were made aware of this SDG, everybody could work together for their city, making it more likely that this Goal will be achieved.
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

HELEN
Ubuntu is a Southern-African philosophy rooted in the idea that “Ubuntu ngumtu ngabanye abantu” - or, a person is a person through other people. Ubuntu applies to both the individual and the entire community as one whole. This idea that all parts are connected is at the essence of most communities, so this in turn should form the foundations of all cities. After all, what is a city but a collection of communities?

A community with ubuntu intrinsically practices connection, co-operation, empathy, ethics and active-citizenship. Its individuals are self-assured and confident in belonging and protection. When members are oppressed, mistreated or vulnerable, it is the responsibility of the entire community to work together to support, encourage and guide one another, to emerge resilient and empowered from such struggles.

If we are to tackle socio-economic issues to produce effective, sustainable cities, we would all do well to approach problems from the holistic, humanistic perspective of ubuntu. The current management of most cities tends to be top down - it is the People vs. City Hall - where City Hall is often a mis-managed, unco-operative community in itself. If city managers were to incorporate the practice of ubuntu, then we should in turn see new and “innovative” (though these philosophies are hardly new) patterns emerge.

My vision for a sustainable city is one where: everybody’s voice is listened to and respected; people are empowered through autonomy and the practice of active citizenship; equitable community housing schemes are established; greed and exploitation are curtailed through fair practice and penalties; enterpreneurship is encouraged through incentives and the creative use of empty buildings; the city is an open and welcoming place to be - with free and inviting spaces and activities encouraging participation and activeness during both the day and night; the city, in the spirit of ubuntu recognises that it is one part of a wider community - the world.
I chose this goal because I think it is very important that we consume and produce in responsible ways. There isn’t a fair balance of consumption in the world at the moment.

Electronics and food such as meat and crops are being produced at an unbelievable rate to keep up with the unrealistic demands of the developed world. Animals are being killed, trees are being cut down and our water is being polluted to provide for people who already have too much. This all needs to stop if we are to achieve this Goal. We need to think about the future and those that do not have enough.

There is enough for everybody.
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
Goal 12 is about working together with governments, business and society to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. Our world is growing rapidly and as a result the consumption and production of food, plastic and energy is on the increase. It is vital that we consume in a way that is natural to our habitat and fair to our planet.

The food industry is a fitting example of how our consumption and production can be reckless in some countries and underdeveloped in others. The amount of food wasted per day in most households would feed a family in another country. It is hard to justify such waste when close to 800 million people on the planet are chronically hungry.

A way we can tackle this issue is to move towards educating people on waste and waste management within the household, encourage governments in developed and newly developing countries to provide education and incentive to be conscientious and responsible consumers.
I picked Climate Action because I find climate change to be a problem that has already started and it is destroying our natural habitat as well as the animals and plants that surround us. I think it is important to take action as soon as possible because as it happens, climate change is growing faster and faster because of our way of living.

I think to save the planet, we need to figure out a way of everyday living without producing so much carbon dioxide. We need to promote electrical transport and degradable packaging and big companies need to find responsible ways of mass production without the contamination and pollution many of them produce, or face prosecution.

We can only hope to achieve this goal by 2030 if urgent action is taken by everybody.
13 CLIMATE ACTION
Climate change is the single greatest threat to the future of Planet Earth. Thanks to reckless pollution and rampant emissions, humans have set our world on a dangerous path, one that threatens devastation and destruction for all living things.

The recent Paris Agreement is an ambitious plan to reduce greenhouse emissions and produce sustainable energy in order to limit global temperature rises. The decision by Donald Trump’s America to pull out of the agreement is a huge blow, but one that cannot be allowed to lessen the resolve of the other 195 countries to tackle climate change.

As a species, we have been responsible for the disastrous impact of global warming. And as a species we must come together as one to protect this planet for all living creatures and for generations to come.
It is important to protect life under water because if we don’t, we will all perish. We are polluting our seas so much that over two-thirds of the world’s fish suffer from plastic ingestion. Plastic doesn’t decompose and stays in rivers and seas forever. As well as this, industrial waste, oil and radiation are all leaking into the ocean. Ocean life is greatly affected by this, which means humans are too, as we in turn eat fish and rely on water.

I hope that it’s not already too late to save our seas.
14 LIFE
BELOW WATER
14 LIFE BELOW WATER
Oceans cover three quarters of the Earth’s surface and contain 97% of the Earth’s water. Water is life and it is imperative that we protect this valuable resource in order to survive.

Our oceans are being polluted at an alarming rate. Enormous islands of plastic have been found floating in the Pacific, contaminating the water and harming marine life. Overfishing has had an adverse effect on marine biodiversity, leading to the extinction of many species and upsetting delicate marine ecosystems.

Our well-being and livelihoods are dependent on water from the ocean, which produces the oxygen we breathe and absorbs harmful greenhouse gasses. If this resource is destroyed, it will be to the detriment of future generations. Action must be taken now to ensure that pollution is slowed down and oceans are cleaned up. Over 40% of the world’s oceans have been affected by human activities and governments must act now to reverse this trend.

Already some countries have taken steps to reduce the use of certain plastic items. There has been a call to ban the use of plastic drinking straws, with Belgium and France leading the initiative. Other countries have put a tax on plastic bags and are hoping to introduce an outright ban on plastic plates, utensils and coffee cups. A ban on the release of balloons at charitable events has been already been introduced in many cities around the world, with Cork set to follow suit.

While this may not seem much in the grand scheme of things, it is often the small actions that can have the most impact. We can become overwhelmed by the enormity of an issue, but by taking personal responsibility for the amount of plastic we use, we can all make a difference.

The United Nations has come up with a global challenge entitled ‘Be the Change,’ which encourages individuals to live a more sustainable life and to be accountable for impact that we are
having on the planet as a whole.

If we all play our part, however small, it should be possible to reverse some of the damage that has already been done, which will lead to a better future, not only for ourselves, but for generations to come.
Life on land is important to all other life on land. This may come as a shocking revelation to some of you, but hopefully you can bear with me here.

Easter Island is a small island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It used to be lush with palm trees and a rich, biodiverse ecosystem (as well as some really cool statues). Then, the people who lived there cut down the trees to make agricultural land, to burn it for firewood and to help build the huge statues. Without the trees, the soil became useless over time and soil erosion took place, leaving the island barren. Neither animals nor people could survive any longer on the island, so it became deserted. The people committed ecocide.

This is an example of what could happen to the world - it could become an Easter World! Why would we want this to happen when we have so many other options, like a Christmas world?

The SDG of Life on Land aims to conserve and restore ecosystems. We can all do a little bit to help this to happen: we can plant flowers to attract bees; plant more trees and become more conscious of the consequences of our actions.

If everyone, including governments, do their bit, then life on land will sustain itself.
15 LIFE ON LAND
Mankind has been living off the land since prehistoric times, and everything we do and have today comes from the land. But actions like deforestation are having a devastating effect on this planet and the land we thrive off of.

Trees play a vital role in human life. They influence the water cycle, help reduce greenhouse gases by absorbing carbon dioxide, and generate oxygen. It takes roughly 8 trees to produce the amount of oxygen needed by one human. Yet every minute we are felling 55000 trees, and it is estimated that if current trends continue, there will be no more rainforests in less than 100 years. Though a majority of this is for agriculture, the mass removal of trees affects the climate, resulting in land becoming unsuitable for farming.

In addition, trees and forests play home to thousands of species of animal who all have a vital role in our ecosystem. If deforestation continues, 28,000 species will become extinct while greenhouse gases will continue to increase dramatically over the next 20 years.

Some of the Sustainable Development Goals include halting deforestation, restoring degraded habitats, increasing reforestation, and protecting endangered species. It is extremely important that we protect the land if we want to continue to live off it, before the human race itself becomes an endangered species.
I chose this Goal because we all need peace. A lot of people today are conflicted by crime, torture and exploitation.

I believe people should try to have peace inside them, instead of always being angry. Anger can lead to outbursts of aggression, which could eventually even lead to war. We should all be together, we should all believe in each other.

Governments who sign up for peace treaties should implement them and follow the guidelines as laid down by the Geneva Convention, which prohibits certain types of warfare and torture.

Dialogue is always better than physical action! If populations believe they have a voice, they would feel better and there would be no need for wars. If this were the case, this Goal could be attainable by 2030...
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
I feel some prison sentences are too harsh in some countries. I think that there should be standards set for prisons internationally as well as there are poor quality prisons in all countries around the world, rich or poor, where prison guards are known to act unprofessionally and out of conduct towards inmates.

I think that everyone should have the same level of respect regardless of class or gender etc. and that if this was the case that there would me some basis of mutual peace in the world. If everyone felt equal and that their voice and opinion shared the same value as anyone else and was taken into consideration.
The set of 17 sustainable goals was compiled by the United Nations in 2015 in order to get countries to try and transform the world by 2030 by making changes that would tackle some of the most important issues facing us today.

The Sustainable Development Goals include changes that would tackle social and environmental issues like climate change, cleaner energy, poverty, gender equality and sustainable agriculture.

We as individuals can all make a difference, but we cannot do it alone. If we co-operate and form partnerships with industries and governments, these changes can be implemented. This would have a huge impact on society globally and we would all benefit from a cleaner, more equal and harmonious world.
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
Co-operation is the thorough conviction that nobody can get there unless everybody gets there.

Virginia Burden

The SDG’s provide us with 17 goals to transform our world. The 17th goal is vital because it reminds us that we will achieve little unless we work together: revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. If sustainable development is to become and remain a reality, strong partnerships will be required between governments, the private sector and civil society. While interests and agendas may differ, we need to speak a common language when it comes to making the world we live in a better place for all. These partnerships need to be built upon values, principles and shared goals that prioritise people and the planet. These partnerships are needed not just at a global level but need to be built from the ground up, beginning at grassroots level and moving from local to national to regional to global.

What we need to remain clear about is that we are all in this together - rather than feeling that the task is too large and we cannot possibly hope as individuals to make an impact on global issues, we need to realise that we all have the power to make change. We can replace hopelessness or a feeling that we lack agency with direct action. Some examples of what we can do are: Joining or indeed creating a local group that looks to make action happen in relation to one or more of the SDG’s; use our voices to encourage our local TD’s and government to partner with businesses for the implementation of the SDG’s; raising awareness of the projects we are involved with or have knowledge of in order to inform, educate, network and be or remain inspired.

Even when it seems difficult to work together or we feel our voices are not strong enough to be heard we need to bear in mind the wisdom of Bertrand Russell who said, ‘The only thing that will redeem mankind is co-operation.’.
Thanks to the students and staff of Cork Life Centre for their valued contributions to this book.

Special thanks to Sheelin, Jason and Angela for their help in collating and editing and to Helen for graphic design.
Cork Life Centre would like to thank the Irish 17 October Committee for their ongoing commitment to the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

We also extend our thanks to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, whose funding made the publication of this book possible.