

UP FOR JUSTICE



Welcome to the monthly prayer letter #UpForJustice from the ISJC.
July 2016



Welcome to the June 2016 edition of #UpForJustice – a monthly news and prayer letter from the International Social Justice Commission (ISJC) based in New York City, USA.

We continue using the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a framework for prayer and reflection. There are 17 goals, which all 193 United Nations (UN) member states endorsed at the UN General Assembly in September 2015. The SDGs will shape the development agendas in all countries until 2030. Read more about the SDGs by visiting www.salvationarmy.org/isjc/SDGs.



Reduce inequality within and among countries

Oxfam, a UK charity, reported in 2010 that 388 of the richest people owned the same wealth as half of the world's population – the poorest half. When Oxfam reported in 2014, the number of rich people had dropped to 80, and by 2015 the number was down to 62 who owned the same wealth as half the world's population.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/jan/18/richest-62-billionaires-wealthy-half-world-population-combined>

Income inequality is on the rise, with the richest 10 per cent earning up to 40 per cent of total global income. The poorest 10 per cent earn only between two and seven per cent of total global income. When taking into account the growth of population in developing countries, inequality has increased by 11 per cent.

Increasing inequality needs urgent action. But what can be done to help those who earn so little? What policies will include all people regardless of sex, race or ethnicity? Income inequality is a complex global problem that requires complex global solutions. This involves improving the regulation and monitoring of financial markets and institutions, as well as encouraging development assistance and direct foreign investment to regions where the need is greatest.

SDG goal 10 is a commitment by global leaders of the 193 UN member states to work to reduce inequality within and among countries. The specific targets set by these governments for goal 10 are:

1. Progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population.
2. Empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all.
3. Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome.
4. Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies.
5. Improve regulation and monitoring of global financial markets.
6. Ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making.
7. Implement the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries.

How does this affect you and me?

Most of these targets use very complicated language. We might think this has nothing to do with us. Wrong! Every Christian needs to follow the example of Jesus and care particularly for the poor. While Jesus did say, 'The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me' (Matthew 26:11 *New International Version*), he was not giving us an excuse to do nothing about poverty.

We have the wonderful opportunity through The Salvation Army Self-Denial Fund (World Services programme) to help others who deal with inequity in many of the poorest places on earth. Every Salvationist – even those living in the poorest countries – is asked to participate in the annual altar service. That money enables people with few financial resources to help themselves.

Corruption and greed are usually the root cause of why there is inequality within and among countries. The human desire to look after oneself, rather than care about others, is caused by our sinful nature. Scripture addresses inequality, and in 1 John 2:16 we read: 'For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world' (*English Standard Version*).

Three temptations: Lust of the Eyes, Lust of the Flesh and the Pride of Life

Lust of the Eyes: This is the temptation to look at things we shouldn't look at or to want things that we shouldn't have. In other words, it is to cast our eyes upon something with desire or pleasure, therefore potentially being a cause of inequality. Instead, Christians are told: 'Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God' (Hebrews 12:2 *New American Standard Bible*).

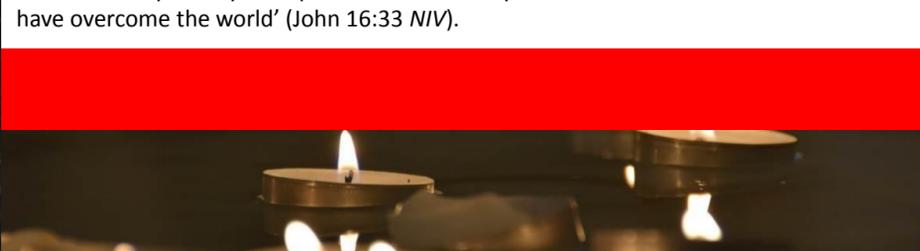
Lust of the Flesh: We live in a world that covets what others have – a potential cause of inequality among countries. Clear examples of this are the many wars fought over the years – countries invading others for their resources, such as oil and minerals.

Pride of Life: This is the temptation for greatness or power that takes over our ability to think and is also evident in inequality of nations. We are reminded that pride can take over a person's life and, before long, destroy them unless they keep their heart constantly before the Lord. Here are some examples of pride:

- Our desire to get the credit or glory for things that others (or God) have done.
- Our desire for others to 'worship' us or hold us in high esteem – to 'make a name for ourselves'.
- Our desire to feel valued or more important than others.
- Our desire to be in a position of power over others in such a way as to boost our ego or for the sake of 'bragging rights' (Jesus said that those who desire to be great should be the greatest servant – see Matthew 20:25-28).

Proverbs 4:25-27 (*NIV*) instructs us: 'Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.'

As long as there is sin in this world, reducing inequities within and among countries will be a problem. But the words of Jesus remind us of a reality: 'I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world' (John 16:33 *NIV*).



Prayer Topics

As we reflect on the challenge of SDG 10, let us pray:

- For Captains Pierson and Swetha Vincent who, with their two sons, moved into the ISJC apartment in New York City as they took up new appointments at the end of June. Captain Pierson Vincent has an IHQ appointment as ISJC Administration Officer. Captain Swetha will be working alongside the ISJC team as part of the Greater New York Division's International Outreach Ministry.
- About vacant positions at the ISJC. Please pray for the process of filling these roles and may new staff settle quickly into the ISJC team.
- For fellow Salvationists who experience inequality, injustice and poverty in their daily lives. May their faith in Christ remain strong despite their challenges.

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But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Amos 5:24, NRSV