

Social inclusion and empowerment

Social inclusion is the creation of facilities or the provision of improved access to facilities to enable people to actively participate in society. Social inclusion is a vital component in building a sustainable society. Individuals and groups need to be and feel able to develop themselves and prosper.

How to create a society in which all people can fully participate?

- > Stimulate and increase empowerment
- > Decrease inequality in opportunities
- > Be a social frontrunner



The Triodos perspective

It is important that people are empowered. Education is key in fighting inequality and promoting active engagement. It is fundamental in achieving robust and well-functioning democracies, social emancipation, decent wages, and in harnessing people against the downsides of technology. Empowering girls and women is essential, as this may generate positive ripple effects. Access to media and information contributes to achieving a well-balanced opinion on societal developments and helps discern between 'real news' and 'fake news'. Access to media also improves the level of social inclusion through the use of social media and digital networks. Access to financial services can be catalyst for change, especially in underbanked countries where access to finance can directly facilitate sustainable growth. It offers the ability to start a business, employ people and expand.

Empowerment is not enough. Our economy and society can only be truly sustainable if they are inclusive. This requires equal distribution of prosperity and opportunity. In our current

economic system, people are confronted with all kinds of barriers that prevent them from fully participating in their societies' political, economic and social life. A redistribution of material and non-material wealth is necessary.

We also believe that communication and cooperation are important foundations of every society. In the current economic system, these foundations aren't valued enough (or not at all). As a result, the world tensions between different groups in society and different countries increase and the world becomes more and more polarised. We must revalue the way we live, cooperate and communicate by rebuilding trust.

Empowering girls and women is essential, as this may generate a positive ripple effect.

Investing in social inclusion and empowerment

EMPOWERMENT

Our SRI funds focus on companies that make products or provide services to empower people. This can be achieved through access to a wide range of products and services. Companies that may qualify have, for example, activities in education and financial services for the underprivileged. ICT-enabled innovations often play an important role by increasing accessibility of these services.

INCLUSION

ICT can serve as critical channel for inclusion by connecting people with information sources and opportunities that may otherwise be poorly accessible. ICT can also foster social connection

and enable people to organise. Therefore, we invest in companies that improve ICT access, ICT use and ICT skills of the underprivileged. Companies that advance social inclusion via their products and services, such as affordable housing, are also interesting.

SOCIAL FRONTRUNNERS

In addition to investing in companies that advance social inclusion through their products and services, we also invest in companies that stimulate social inclusiveness via their policies and practices. We think that frontrunners in social inclusion stimulate gender equality, equal pay, board diversity and providing job opportunities to the disadvantaged or disabled.