



Strategy 2020–25

**transforming  
knowledge,  
transforming lives**



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**We want a more equitable and sustainable world, where people everywhere can live their lives free from poverty and injustice**

**Our commitments**

- Upholding climate and environmental justice
- Reducing extreme inequities
- Fostering healthy and fulfilling lives
- Nurturing inclusive, democratic and accountable societies

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**We will transform the knowledge, action and leadership needed through our world-class research, learning and teaching**

**Our priorities**

- 1** Collaborate across sciences and disciplines, sectors and communities to do research that brings about progressive change
- 2** Build future leadership for development
- 3** Champion the use of evidence for social and environmental justice
- 4** Work with partners to expand international research and mutual learning networks for development
- 5** Create a sustainable, resilient and equitable institution

**for better lives globally**

# **section one**

## **responding to the disruptions and shocks of our era**

**Our world faces unprecedented disruptions and shocks. They pose risks but also present opportunities to transform approaches in how we tackle global challenges such as epidemics, climate change and inequities.**



## Global disruptions and shocks – seizing opportunities and addressing challenges

### Health

The Covid–19 pandemic is highlighting the world’s vulnerability to epidemics and infectious diseases, and the limited capacities for effective preparedness and response. The disease and subsequent public health measures are having dramatic impacts on livelihoods, economies and societies, with negative effects on those who are already poor and marginalised. Yet the crisis is also catalysing new local and global solidarities and fresh approaches to science and evidence, which will be invaluable in responding to future health and other global challenges.

### Environment

Changes to the climate and the environment are placing unprecedented pressures on planetary life support systems and are creating new uncertainties in people’s homes and livelihoods. In responding and adapting to these uncertainties, concerted action at global, national and local scales to transform the systems that create environmental vulnerabilities is critical, as is recognising, scaling and replicating the innovative ideas that communities are identifying.

### Economies

Countries worldwide continue to deal with the financial shocks of 2007–2008 and now from the Covid–19 crisis, and due to the increasingly unequal distribution of wealth and resources within and across borders. In response to these shocks and inequalities, enterprises, communities and societies are identifying new ways through which they can have a real stake and a voice in economic decisions.

### Politics

Established orders of representative democracy face crisis, while space for civil society is closing in some parts and changing in others – not always in positive ways. The post–Second World War rules–based international order is being unsettled by rising nationalism and the emergence of new axes of power, such as those linked to China. Yet, at the same time, informal democratic innovations, popular actions and protests around issues, including climate change and inequality, are multiplying.

### Societies

Discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation are intensifying, and along with intersecting inequalities, are undermining livelihoods, health, freedom of religion or belief, status and dignity. Migration and displacement are affecting social cohesion. Despite this, many groups are seeking to reclaim rights and justice, and are helping to imagine new and inclusive futures.

### Technology

Rapid developments in digital technologies have not been shared equally and are being used in negative ways to clamp down on citizen voice and protest. Notwithstanding this, these advances are also opening up access to health and public services and are offering new solutions to societal challenges such as strengthening democracy and accountability.

## Transformative change and a politics of hope

IDS’ research, learning and teaching seeks to understand and respond to these disruptions and shocks by working more ambitiously, collaboratively, politically and internationally than ever before. We are entering the decade of delivery for the United Nations Global Goals for Sustainable Development (Global Goals). The transformative change needed to make progress against this ambitious framework will only happen through a deeper collective recognition that this is a universal agenda, and that the challenges we face are interconnected and cannot be addressed in isolation. By recognising this, a politics of hope can emerge around what is possible in terms of more equitable and sustainable futures.





In the long, narrow Terai Arc landscape, which spans nearly 20,000 square miles of southern Nepal and northern India, women are increasingly becoming guardians of the environment on which they rely for food, water and shelter. © James Morgan

## Our commitments

### Upholding climate and environmental justice

#### The problem

Climate and environmental changes are unfolding fast throughout the world, destroying lives and livelihoods, health and wellbeing. They stem from many of the same processes that cause inequity and marginalisation. To address the consequences of climate and environmental change, we therefore need to focus on the social, economic and political drivers so as to build just transformations towards sustainable futures. Efforts to tackle climate and environmental problems can themselves contribute to increased injustice if they do not sufficiently acknowledge the impact on the livelihoods, homes and habitats of different populations, or if climate and environmental change are viewed as causes rather than symptoms of wider systemic contradictions and failures.

#### Our contribution

We will generate transdisciplinary research that understands power dynamics and identifies and supports the system transformations needed to decarbonise our societies and make them more resilient. We will build on a strong legacy of work that has helped to shape climate and sustainability policy processes across the world, including in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. We will establish new coalitions of hope and positive change with communities, social movements, governments and businesses. Together, we will challenge the political-economic processes that work against just transformations to sustainable development. We will continue to work to ensure that the lived experiences of communities, and their responses to climate change are brought to bear on policy and decision-making. We will develop the skills of those working to promote and progress environmental and climate justice. We will do this through our teaching and learning programmes, working with partners and alumni to provide degrees, online learning, short courses and summer schools that explore the politics, economics and social aspects of climate change and the pathways towards sustainability.





Job seekers with disabilities take part in a research session at Pallet Cafe in Nairobi as part of the Inclusive Futures employment project. ©Patrick Meinhardt / Sightsavers

## Our commitments

### Reducing extreme inequities

#### The problem

The world continues to become a more unequal place economically, socially and politically. Extreme economic inequality intersects and interacts with other forms of inequality, such as gender, race, place, disability, religion or belief and education, to produce extreme forms of injustice or inequity – namely, exclusion, voices silenced, marginalisation. In turn, these inequities further entrench different forms of inequality. The ambition of the Global Goals to leave no one behind can only be achieved if the inequalities and inequities that harm people in rich and poor countries alike are tackled. With the rapid advance of digital technologies, the growth of migrant and displaced populations, and the expansion of global cities, new forms of inequality and inequity are also emerging, and urgently need to be understood.

#### Our contribution

Together with partners, we will focus our research on understanding and countering the drivers of extreme inequity, marginalisation and exclusion. To shape policy and practice, we will work alongside those who live with disabilities, who face child labour and modern-day slavery, and who experience discrimination based on religion or belief. We will bring new evidence and insights to issues of displacement and political and economic exclusion, working with those who are displaced and excluded, and with the social movements that support them. We will expand our already extensive body of knowledge on how taxation policies can promote inclusive growth and good governance, and reduce inequities and inequalities. We will encourage future generations of development leaders and champions to understand and engage with issues of power, inequality and inequity, and to apply this learning in their careers. We will work with partners and alumni to help future generations of development leaders to understand and act on issues of power and to see how unfair systems and injustices increase and entrench inequalities, which in turn further marginalise and exclude certain groups.





In Recife, Brazil, paediatric doctor Danielle Cruz plays music through her phone to calm baby Luhandra, who was born with microcephaly. The mosquito-borne Zika virus continues to spread in Brazil and causes the neurodevelopmental disorder in unborn children. © Lianne Milton, Panos Pictures

### Our commitments

## Fostering healthy and fulfilling lives

### The problem

Health is a fundamental right and a prerequisite for individuals, families, communities and societies to thrive. Good health goes well beyond narrow metrics and categories of disease or its absence, to encompass broader physical, mental and social wellbeing. Despite major investments in universal health coverage, health inequities are worsening in many countries, intensified by environmental change, conflict and violence, and social inequalities. Longstanding health problems are being compounded by new ones linked to epidemics, poor diets and nutrition, and social exclusion and stress.

### Our contribution

We will continue to collaborate with global partners to undertake transdisciplinary research and policy engagement that show how systems, structures, markets, environments and power relations can be changed to support people everywhere to lead healthier and more fulfilling lives. We will bring new understanding and action on tackling epidemics, zoonotic diseases and antimicrobial resistance. We will generate new evidence and analysis on dietary transition and globalisation of food systems, that responds to the ways that marginalisation and inequity drive high child malnutrition rates. We will seek to advance understanding of the complex relationship between food and development through our specifically focused masters' degrees and professional development courses.



An estimated two million demonstrators poured onto the streets of Hong Kong to protest peacefully against the government's proposed extradition law and police violence. © Panos Pictures



**Our commitments**

**Nurturing more inclusive, democratic and accountable societies**

**The problem**

The previous century heralded numerous advances on basic economic and political rights, through the ballot box, social movements and the free labour association. The twenty-first century has so far been punctuated by events and actions that have undermined democratic norms and efforts to strengthen accountability. There has been a growing distrust of democratic institutions, several of which are in crisis, accompanied by new forms of direct political action and protest, some with deeply exclusionary agendas. The highly unequal distribution of market and political power privileges elites, and there has been a failure to invest in approaches and structural transformations necessary for more inclusive and sustainable development. At the same time, around the world, there are new demands for accountability, emerging democratic innovations, and a rise in social movements, for example, on gender and among youth, offering glimmers of hope for the future.

**Our contribution**

We will work with partners including our alumni network to build on decades of research, learning and teaching that have explored, identified and engaged new approaches to build democratic futures in which people have a say over the decisions that affect their lives. We will deepen this work in the most fragile and difficult contexts, and explore how social and political action can contribute to empowerment and accountability in these settings. We will shine a light on innovative ways in which economic, social and political participation are being strengthened and how freedom of religion or belief is promoted, and how these could be scaled. Through our degrees and learning programmes, we will seek to provide practical advice and guidance, as well as deepen conceptual understanding on how to strengthen communities' and others' involvement in social change processes.



# **section two**

## **knowledge, action and leadership for better lives**

**We believe that we can transform the knowledge, action and leadership needed for better lives through our world-class research, learning and teaching globally. We have identified five strategic priorities for 2020–25 for the work we do with academic, business, civil society, government and philanthropic partners.**





## Our priorities

# 1

### We will collaborate across sciences and disciplines, sectors and communities to do research that brings about progressive change

The way in which research is undertaken matters. We will collaborate innovatively across social, natural, medical and other sciences and disciplines, as well as with governments, non-governmental organisations, civil society and communities to generate and apply evidence in ways that ultimately make a difference to people's lives.

#### We are committed to:

**Promoting** the value that social science perspectives can bring to tackling global challenges. We will bring insights into the cultural, social, economic and political realities that, for example, enable or prevent people from acting on health advice, benefitting from improved public services, or holding decision makers to account through new mobile technologies.

**Strengthening** our engagement with the arts and humanities. We will actively seek to bring creative and historical-based perspectives to our efforts to engage research with policy and practice and ensure that they are underpinned by the lessons of what works.

**Extending** our legacy around participatory research methods. We will collaborate with the most marginalised to shape the solutions intended to ensure they are not left behind. We will also develop and share tools and guidelines for researchers and practitioners working in fragile and conflict-affected settings to help them navigate complex political and ethical challenges.

**Fostering** new knowledge, leadership and action on emergent global challenges. We will launch strategic research initiatives that bridge academia, policy and practice and help define what is required to tackle issues including:

- Building climate and environmental justice.
- Upholding gender and social justice in the context of closing civic space.
- Ensuring decent work and political inclusion for young people.
- Achieving social justice and sustainable livelihoods in a digital age.
- Transforming knowledge and action on global food equity.
- Innovating for equity in protracted displacement and forced migration.



Alan Herbert, founder of Black Albinism, directs a video in Nairobi at Signs TV production studios as part of the Inclusive Futures employment project. © Patrick Meinhardt / Sightsavers



## 2

**Our priorities****We will build future leadership for development**

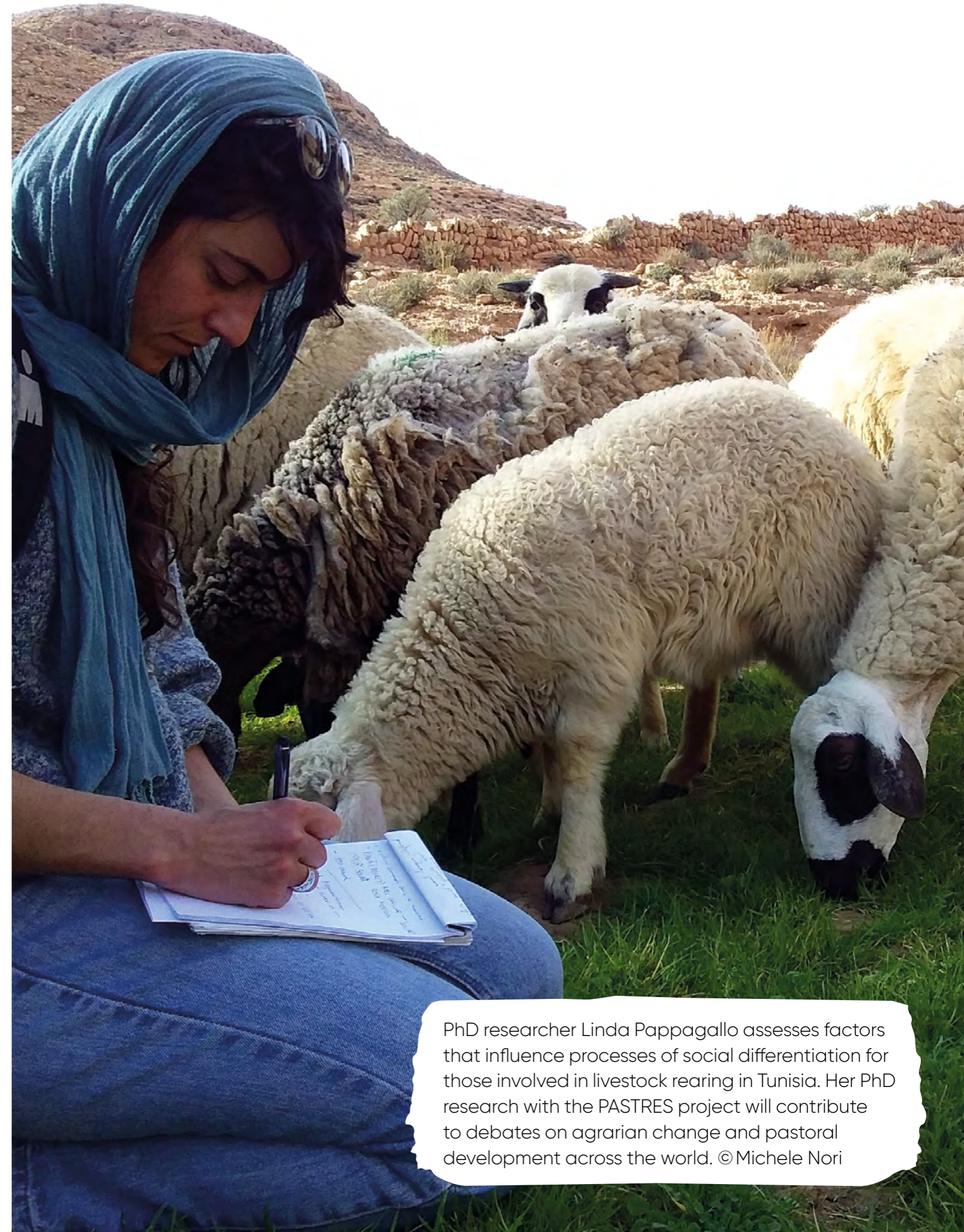
To respond to global challenges, we need new generations of informed and knowledgeable leaders and champions – from presidents and ambassadors to intellectuals and activists, entrepreneurs and journalists. We will strengthen, expand and extend the opportunities for learning through our world-renowned postgraduate degrees, PhD research programmes, and professional development courses for development practitioners and decision makers.

**We are committed to:**

**Strengthening** the capabilities of partners, policy actors, peers, staff and students to use evidence to influence change. Through this, we will enhance their ability to critically reflect on and address major global challenges. We will actively seek out and support PhD researchers with the potential to contribute to equitable and sustainable development globally. We will continue to offer development professionals, including our own staff, alumni, students and partners, the opportunity to strengthen and reflect on their practice through our professional development and learning programme and investment in our staff learning and training.

**Ensuring** excellence and equity in our learning and teaching. We will seek to continue to provide a world-ranked learning experience. We will further enhance the diversity of our student body and professional learners through scholarships and collaborations with partners to develop training opportunities in international research and mutual learning hubs in Brazil, China, Ghana and Pakistan, and also in Europe. We will strengthen our teaching methods and practices to shape change and will work to ensure that our course materials include a wide diversity of global perspectives.

**Innovating** in teaching delivery. We will embrace and invest in technology to expand the reach, excellence and equity of our learning and teaching. We will also collaborate with the University of Sussex in the provision of new online distance learning.



PhD researcher Linda Pappagallo assesses factors that influence processes of social differentiation for those involved in livestock rearing in Tunisia. Her PhD research with the PASTRES project will contribute to debates on agrarian change and pastoral development across the world. © Michele Nori



### Our priorities

# 3

## We will champion the use of evidence for social and environmental justice

We will redouble our efforts to underline the value of evidence in decision-making in this ‘post-truth’ era, and to bring evidence to bear on policy and practice in ways that improve people’s lives. Across our research, learning and teaching programmes, we will build on our well-established approaches to understand how power and politics shape the generation and use of evidence.

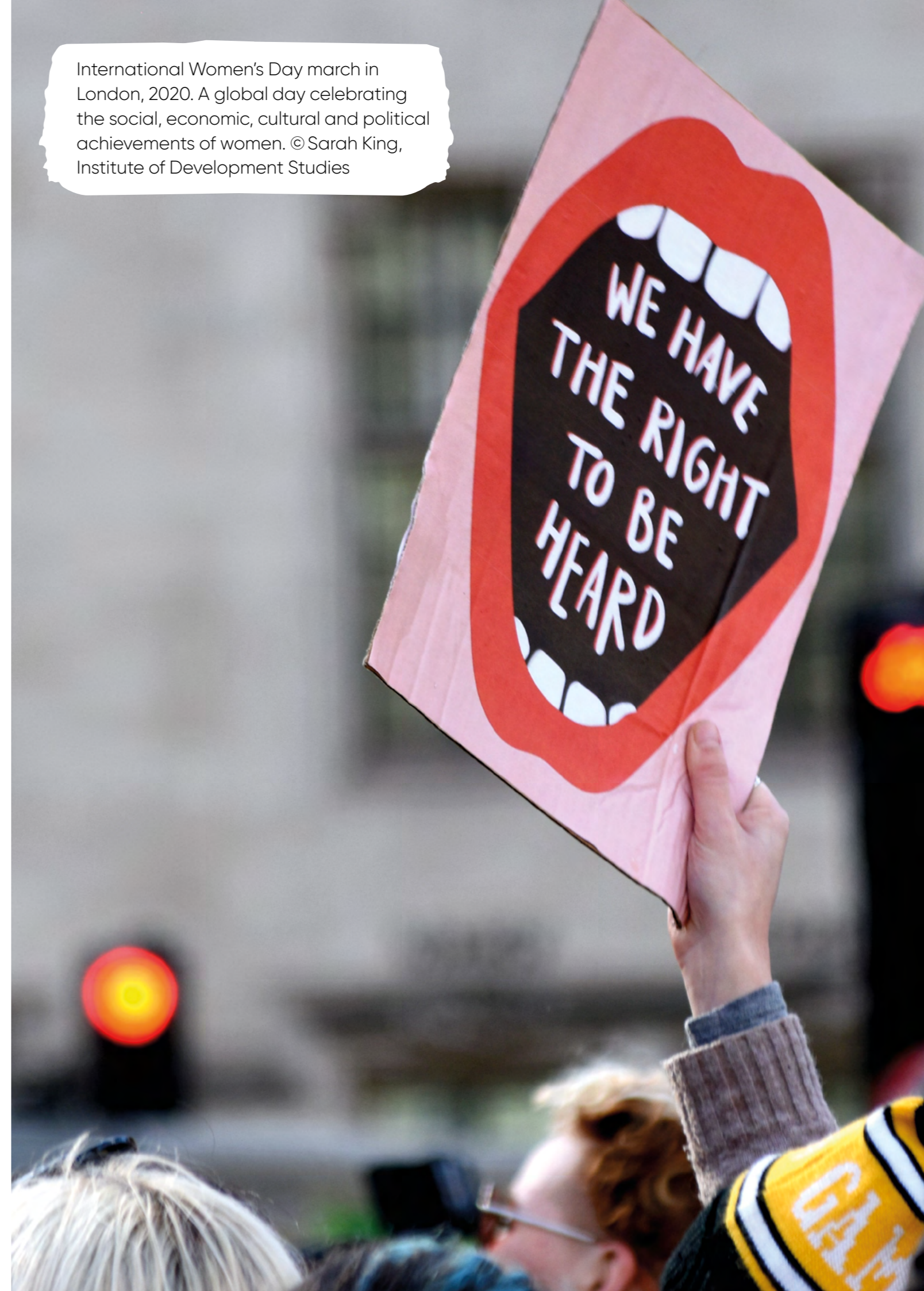
### We are committed to:

**Engaging** evidence more effectively with the politics of policy and practice. We will collaborate globally to cultivate approaches and methods that effectively engage evidence with the realities of how change happens. We will seek to establish ourselves as a global centre of excellence in this area through innovative research agendas and an expanded professional development and learning programme.

**Challenging** views of how change happens and is measured. Through international collaborations, we will seek to influence donors, academics, governments and civil society to promote social justice and good governance through the equitable co-production of inclusive and transdisciplinary evidence. We will pioneer new approaches that draw together different perspectives on how change happens. We will seek to counter power imbalances and inequities in how evidence is generated, valued and used. We will work to shape new impact agendas that recognise the importance of behaviours, attitudes and capacities in the way that change happens.

**Pioneering** and developing cutting-edge evaluation. We will seek to improve the quality and use of evidence produced by evaluation, in a way that will ultimately help to improve lives. We will pioneer rigorous approaches that are attuned to complexity in order to build and test theories of change. We will do this through contribution analysis, political economy analysis, power analysis, and participatory and reflective methodologies for individual and organisational learning. We will use our convening power to share these approaches more widely and to challenge ineffective practices.

International Women’s Day march in London, 2020. A global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. © Sarah King, Institute of Development Studies





## 4

**Our priorities****We will work with partners to expand international research and mutual learning networks for development**

We will advocate for greater investment by funders, governments, civil society, academic institutions and others in equitable and sustainable partnerships that generate knowledge which is shaped by a greater range of perspectives. We will promote mutual learning, exchange and knowledge generation through the establishment of regional networks. These will challenge entrenched behaviours and attitudes about whose knowledge counts, and will actively shape new development research and learning agendas.

**We are committed to:**

**Ensuring** inclusive and diverse research and teaching agendas. We will engage actively with broader debates around how knowledge is prioritised and what this means for development studies. We will develop alliances with universities, social movements and others across the world to enable mutual learning between the UK and countries globally. We will seek to bring theory and policy innovations from outside the UK into our national debates and policy processes.

**Working** with partners to establish international development research and mutual learning hubs. These hubs will co-generate research, learning and teaching engagement activities in locations where we are already involved with a critical mass of projects and partners, including Brazil, China, Ghana and Pakistan initially, and also in Europe. The hubs will facilitate the sharing of knowledge and experience, and will enhance mutual learning, with the joint aims of meeting domestic development priorities and influencing development agendas internationally.

**Enriching** and extending our European engagements. We will intensify interactions with our European partners and contribute actively to European networks related to development studies. In this way, we will firmly locate IDS' UK base as part of a European international research and learning hub. We will also seek to shape the UK's future approaches to international research partnerships, promoting the value of maintaining our existing European collaborations in helping to transform the knowledge needed for development globally.



Participants take a selfie at the Fourth Global Symposium on Health Systems Research. The Symposium, convened by Health Systems Global, connects research and policy communities to contribute to the attainment of better health, equity and wellbeing. ©Health Systems Global



## Our priorities

# 5

## We will create a sustainable, resilient and equitable institution

We seek to be excellent, inclusive, resourceful and respectful across all of our work, and to contribute to the changes we want to see, not just through our research, learning and teaching activities, but also in the way that our organisation operates and in how we support and nurture our people.

### We are committed to:

**Acting** to reduce our carbon footprint and institutional environmental impacts through our Climate Action Taskforce.

**Fostering** equality, diversity and inclusion. We will work to eliminate discrimination by implementing and embedding our equality, diversity and inclusion action plan. We will develop and deliver a reward, pay and benefits system that reflects our values and that enables us to deliver our strategic aims. We will continually develop our infrastructure, buildings and services to ensure that these are inclusive and accessible to all.

**Ensuring** we are a resilient organisation. We will maintain sustainable financial and operational models, which are adaptable and innovative, and will ensure that we remain a vibrant going concern. We will strive for a diverse, robust and sustainable fundraising pipeline. This includes strengthening our partnership with the University of Sussex through new and existing collaborative initiatives and joint fundraising. We will continue to embrace regulatory, compliance and professional expectations, and to integrate these into our ways of working. We will do everything possible to maximise the value for money of our projects, so that they maximise the impact on people's lives. This means bringing together the right people, the most appropriate research methodologies, adaptive management systems and embedded learning throughout all aspects of our work.

The iconic Seven Sisters, part of the beautiful Sussex countryside that surrounds our campus. © Torres, Pixabay





Delivering world-class research, learning and teaching that transforms the knowledge, action and leadership needed for more equitable and sustainable development globally.

Cover image: Rajina Tamang lifts her baby girl Devi Yani into the air amid the rubble of what remains of Kuni Village in Dhading District, Nepal. Following a powerful earthquake, all 220 houses in Kuni were destroyed, leaving more than a thousand people homeless. © Brian Sokol, Panos Pictures

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