

The IFS-Helsinki-Declaration

Neighbourhoods First: Making the world a better place

The International Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres (IFS) represents a world wide movement of settlements, community and neighbourhood centres. As a movement, it is dedicated to enabling neighbours to work together to meet local challenges and create shared approaches to building community.

We believe that strong, sustainable community-based organisations provide a crucial focus and support for community development and change. They address the needs of their area in a multi-purpose, holistic way by integrating services, capacity building and social reform. Inspired by the tradition of innovation within the Settlement house movement, today's community organisations take many forms as they generate local solutions to global challenges.

Together and separately we seek to catalyse change by:

- Developing relationships of trust and mutuality among people from different backgrounds and experience, as individuals, families and groups
- Bridging between those who are affected by decisions and those who make them
- Providing open and safe space for people to meet, organise and participate in decision-making Building on people's potential and gifts rather than focusing on their problems
- Releasing the potential of communities as places of creativity and enterprise
- Giving a voice to people normally left out or ignored
- Cherishing our independence in order to remain flexible and responsive to opportunity
- Pioneering innovative approaches to neighbourhood issues, linking the neighbourhood with the national and global
- Investing and reinvesting in community assets to build local sustainability.

Our organisations contribute to a world in which the "international community" is shaped by people working together from their local communities, a power and legitimacy from the base of society.

We are already working with our communities to move from the stance of "I can't" to „We can together“ and to face the future with passion and an inclusive vision.

Approved by the IFS board on May 5th Debrecen, Hungary