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CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE (CSJ) | FACULTY OF LAW

6TH INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL JUSTICE CONFERENCE (ISJC)

SOCIAL JUSTICE, FOOD SECURITY AND PEACE IN A TURBULENT WORLD: ADVANCING FOOD JUSTICE AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN PURSUIT OF EQUALITY, SOLIDARITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

“[T]he right to adequate food is indivisibly linked to the inherent dignity of the human person and is indispensable for the fulfilment of other human rights enshrined in the International Bill of Human Rights and is also inseparable from social justice” – *Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, “General Comment No 12: The Right to Adequate Food (Art 11 of the Covenant)” (12 May 1999) UN Doc E/C.12/1999/5 para 8.*

Introduction and Background

The 6th International Social Justice Conference (ISJC), themed *Social Justice, Food Security and Peace in a Turbulent World: Advancing Food Justice and Climate Resilience in pursuit of Equality, Solidarity and Sustainable Development*, builds on the legacy of five prior conferences that have shaped global discourse on social justice. Previous ISJCs have convened scholars, legal practitioners, policymakers and civil society to address systemic inequalities, producing actionable frameworks for human rights, constitutional protections and policy reform. Insights from past conferences, including robust discussions on the right to food, have underscored the interconnectedness of inequality, poverty and hunger as social justice imperatives. These efforts have informed regional and global advocacy, including the Global Alliance Against Poverty and Hunger—an initiative launched in 2024 under Brazil’s G20 Presidency, as a flagship initiative to advance sustainable development goals (SDGs) 1 (No Poverty) and 2 (Zero Hunger).¹

In 2025, the ISJC seeks to leverage the final lap of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, South Africa’s G20 Presidency under the theme *Fostering Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability*, and the Copenhagen Declaration review, to reflect on the critical nexus of hunger, poverty, equality, solidarity

¹ Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty <https://globalallianceagainsthungerandpoverty.org/> (accessed 10-06-2025).

and sustainability. The ISJC will deepen these discussions by fostering transformative dialogue among academics, legal professionals, judges, policymakers and civil society researchers. Hosted in the vibrant city of Cape Town at the Cape Town International Convention Centre from 15-16 October 2025, the two-day hybrid event—held in partnership with United Nations South Africa—will facilitate global participation, both in-person and online, to advance interdisciplinary solutions for a socially just world.

According to the National Food and Nutrition Security Survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council between 2021 and 2023, up to 20 million South Africans are severely food insecure, while 63% of households experience food insecurity and 17% face critical undernourishment.² This data reveals a disquieting reality that South Africa is confronting a deepening food insecurity crisis. Global hunger continues to be a critical issue, with approximately 733 million people facing hunger worldwide.³ Projections indicate that by 2030, approximately 582 million individuals will remain chronically undernourished, more than half of them on the African continent.⁴ Alarming, over two billion individuals globally, lack consistent access to adequate nutrition, with devastating consequences for children: 148 million under five years of age experience stunted growth, while another 45 million suffer from severe hunger.⁵ The numbers tell a heartbreaking story. Hunger is not just about empty stomachs; it's about stolen potential, dignity and futures. Yet, in the face of such suffering, there is hope, communities sharing the little they have, volunteers running soup kitchens, and ordinary people fighting for change.⁶ The question isn't just how we solve hunger, but whether we can look away when so many are suffering.

² Simelane, Thokozani. Mutanga, Shingirirai. Hongoro, Charles. Parker, Whadi-ah. Mjimba, Vuyo. Zuma, Khangelani. Kajombo, Richard. Ngidi, Mjabuliseni. Masamha, Blessing. Mokhele, Tholang. Managa, Rodney. Ngungu, Mercy. Sinyolo, Sikhulumile. Tshililo, Fhulufhelo. Ubisi, Nomcebo. Skhosana, Felix. Ndinda, Catherine. Sithole, Moses. Muthige, Mavhung. Lunga, Wilfred. Tshitangano, Fredrick. Dukhi, Natasha. Sewpaul, Ronel. Mkhongi, Aphiwe. Marinda, Edmore. Food Security “National Food and Nutrition Security Survey: National Report” (2023) *Food Security* <https://foodsecurity.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/National-Report-compressed.pdf> (accessed 25-03-2025).

³ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF and WHO *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024 – Financing to End Hunger, Food Insecurity and Malnutrition in all its Forms*. (2024) <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd1254en> (accessed 25-03-2025); See also M Wiemers, M Bachmeier, A Hanano, R Ni Chéilleachair, A Vaughan, C Foley, H Mann, D Weller, K Radtke & H Fritschel 2024 *Global Hunger Index: How Gender Justice Can Advance Climate Resilience and Zero Hunger* (2024)) <https://www.globalhungerindex.org/pdf/en/2024.pdf> (accessed 10-06-2025).

⁴ Wiemers et al 2024 *Global Hunger Index* 8; FAO, IFAD, UNICEF and WHO *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024* 151.

⁵ Wiemers et al 2024 *Global Hunger Index* 8.

⁶ As the Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa's (SERI) recent report documents, grassroots groups such as the Inner-City Federation and Slovo Park Community Development Forum are stepping in where the state falls short, filling critical gaps in food access through mutual aid and volunteer-led food distribution efforts. These acts of everyday justice illustrate the resilience and collective power of communities confronting systemic

Food security is central to social justice as it intersects with human rights, economic justice, and environmental sustainability. Despite international frameworks such as the SDGs offering pathways to address hunger and climate challenges, disparities persist due to systemic inequalities. Guided by the valuable insights from global reports such as the Global Hunger Index⁷ and the United Nations Report on the SDGs,⁸ the conference will critically and meaningfully examine and engage with these challenges.

Furthermore, South Africa's role in regional food security within the Southern African Development Community highlights the importance of addressing hunger through inclusive policies and governance mechanisms.⁹ This conference will explore how legal frameworks, international trade policies, climate adaptation strategies and local governance can collectively advance food justice. It will also analyse power dynamics in global food systems and the role of human rights litigation in securing equitable food access.

Key Conference Objectives

The ISJC aims to:

1. Deepen legal and policy analysis.

- a) Assess the effectiveness of human rights-based food security and climate justice approaches.
- b) Explore intersections between environmental law, trade agreements and food security policies.
- c) Evaluate international frameworks such as the World Trade Organisation's regulations in shaping equitable food systems.

2. Advance interdisciplinary research.

- a) Facilitate collaboration among legal scholars, economists, sociologists, agricultural and environmental experts.

hunger and poverty in profoundly unequal settings. Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa *Food for Thought: Reflections on Food (In)Security* (June 2025) SERI 16–18 <<https://seri-sa.org>> (accessed 10-06-2025).

⁷ See n3 above.

⁸ United Nations *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023* (2023) <<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/>> (10-06-2025).

⁹ J van Rooyen "Regional food security and agricultural policy in southern Africa: A challenge of policy conversion in diverse settings" (2000) 17 *Development Southern Africa* 7-22.

- b) Develop theoretical frameworks integrating social justice as a cornerstone for achieving sustainable development goals.
- c) Highlight innovative research on hunger eradication and climate resilience.

3. Strengthen advocacy for food justice.

- a) Examine case law on enforcing the right to food globally.
- b) Discuss strategic litigation as a tool for advancing food security in vulnerable communities.
- c) Promote constitutional protections for food access across jurisdictions.

4. Foster global partnerships.

- a) Encourage collaboration between governments, academia, civil society organisations and businesses.
- b) Share best practices in policy implementation for hunger alleviation and climate adaptation.
- c) Enhance regional cooperation within the Global South to address transnational challenges effectively.

5. Support South Africa's G20 Agenda.

- a) Provide evidence-based recommendations for inclusive growth and sustainable development policies.
- b) Contribute scholarly insights into global governance discussions on food security and climate resilience.

Key Outputs and Outcomes

Outputs:

1. A peer-reviewed academic publication.
2. Policy recommendations for strengthening food security frameworks.
3. Comparative research report highlighting best practices across jurisdictions.
4. A special issue summary report on the key findings from the conference.

Outcomes:

1. Enhanced academic contributions to global policy development on food security.
2. Strengthened international networks among scholars advocating for social justice.
3. Increased alignment between academic research and practical policy implementation.
4. Media engagement to increase public awareness of hunger eradication efforts.

Conference Themes and Format

The ICSJ will feature plenary sessions exploring these themes and subthemes:

- 1. Hunger, poverty, the economy and social justice: Analysing systemic inequalities in food access.**
 - a) The legal framework, access to justice and global social justice jurisprudence.
 - b) International human rights and domestic legal frameworks regulating the right to food and adequate nutrition.
 - c) The nexus between access to justice and the right to food.
 - d) Jurisprudence on equality and the right to access to food and adequate nutrition.
 - e) The regulation of the right to nutritious food and food safety.
 - f) Leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) for equitable policy design.
- 2. War, violence (including gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against children) and access to food.**
 - a) Conflict, displacement and food insecurity.
 - b) International Law, humanitarian norms, and the right to food in conflict zones.
 - c) Gender-based violence and economic disempowerment in food systems.
 - d) Child rights, war, and hunger.
 - e) Post-conflict reconstruction, peacebuilding, and food security.
- 3. Climate justice and equitable, sustainable food systems.**
 - a) Equality considerations in the Just Energy Transition.
 - b) The justice implications of laws restricting the use of Indigenous seeds.
- 4. Food sovereignty and the land-food-and-economy-nexus.**
 - a) The role of AI in shaping food sovereignty, agricultural innovation and economic parity.
 - b) Food sovereignty and the physical and economic dimensions of access to food.
 - c) Social security and solidarity.
- 5. Land rights, agriculture and access to adequate food and nutrition.**
 - a) Land rights and the right to food.

- b) Sustainable agricultural practices and food (in)security.
- c) Indigenous agricultural knowledge and practices in advancing food security.
- d) Agriculture beyond commercial production: pathways toward improved food access and inclusive, sustainable food systems.

Submission and Acceptance of Abstracts

Academics, legal professionals, judges, policymakers and civil society researchers interested in presenting at the ISJC are invited to submit an abstract of 250–300 words (in English) by **30 July 2025** to socialjustice@sun.ac.za. Submissions should engage with the conference's core themes by examining the intersections of social justice with food security, equality, solidarity, sustainable development and climate justice. Abstracts must demonstrate how the proposed paper contributes to advancing these priorities in today's turbulent global context.

1. You are required to:
 - a) Indicate the **stream** most relevant to your research.
 - b) Choose an appropriate **sub-stream** (refer to the conference themes).
2. **Notification of abstract acceptance** will be sent by **19 August 2025**.
3. If accepted, you must submit your draft paper by **10 October 2025**.
4. Accepted authors will present their papers at the **ISJC** on **15 or 16 October 2025**. The conference will be **hybrid**; presenters may participate in person in Cape Town or online.
5. Selected papers may be published in the official conference proceedings.
6. All submissions must be in **MS Word format** and adhere to academic writing standards.
7. Conference slides must be submitted to the conference organisers by **13 October 2025**.

Abstract Review Committee

1. Prof Thuli Madonsela (Director, Centre for Social Justice, Stellenbosch University)
2. Prof Zsa-Zsa Boggenpoel (Professor of Law, Stellenbosch University)
3. Prof Nic Olivier (Senior International Consultant and Advisor and Extraordinary Professor, North-West University)
4. Dr Qinisani Qwabe (Lecturer, Nelson Mandela University)
5. Dr Marna Lourens (Project Manager and Researcher, Centre for Social Justice, Stellenbosch University)
6. Mr Akhona Sandaza (Lecturer, Rosebank College)

7. Mr Thembaletu Seyisi (Research Officer: Law Reform, Data Interface and Outreach, Centre for Social Justice, Stellenbosch University)

Conference Fees:

R850 per day

R1500 over 2 days

R900 per delegate group discount for 10 delegates or more

Conclusion

The 6th ISJC aims to catalyse meaningful progress toward achieving SDG 2, while addressing broader issues of equality, solidarity and sustainable development amid global turbulence. By fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and actionable advocacy strategies, the conference seeks to advance a transformative agenda for social justice that prioritises food security as a fundamental human right intertwined with climate resilience and the SDGs.

Draft Programme

Date: Wednesday, 15 October 2025

Time: 08:30 am – 5:35 pm

1. **Registration**
2. **Opening Plenary:** Remarks by the programme director, anthems, Preamble to the Constitution, welcoming remarks, opening address, keynote address, and closing remarks
3. **Tea and Coffee/Photo Session /Media Briefing**
4. **Keynote Plenary**
5. **Strengthening International Cooperation for Food Justice, Peace, Sustainable Development and Climate Resilience: Global Practices and Diplomatic Perspectives**
6. **Lunch**
7. **Plenary session I:** Hunger, poverty, the economy and social justice: Analysing systemic inequalities in food access
8. **Plenary session II:** War, violence (including gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against children), and access to food
9. **Adjournment Day I**

Date: Thursday, 16 October 2025

Time: 08:00 am – 4:45 pm

- 1. Registration**
- 2. Opening and Reflections from Day I**
- 3. Plenary Session III: Climate justice and equitable, sustainable food systems**
- 4. Plenary Session IV: Food sovereignty and the land-food-and-economy-nexus**
- 5. Lunch**
- 6. Plenary Session V: Land rights, agriculture and access to adequate food and nutrition**
- 7. Report Back Plenary by Five Rapporteurs**
- 8. Summation and Adoption of Statement**
- 9. Closing Ceremony** (Certificates of appreciation to speakers, closing address, and vote of thanks)

Conference Project Implementation Process

Phase 1: Determination of and Consultations on Theme for the International Conference on Social Justice (ISJC) (November 2024 – January 2025)

Phase 2: Save the Date and Project Implementation Plan (January 2025 – May 2025)

Phase 3: Publication of Call for Abstracts (27 June 2025 – 30 July 2025)

Phase 4: Consideration and Acceptance of Abstracts (1 August 2025 – 19 August 2025) and Finalising Partnerships, Including Media Partner(s).

Phase 5: Conference Marketing and Announcement of Speakers and Key Partners (1 July 2025 – 14 October 2025)

Phase 6: 6th International Conference on Social Justice (15 – 16 October 2025)

The Project Team

Project Manager: Dr Marna Lourens: mlourens@sun.ac.za

Project Sponsor: Prof Thuli Madonsela

Conference Organising Committee Members: Representatives of partnering departments and institutions.

Media Team and Partner(s): To be finalised.

Phase 7: Publication of Conference Resolutions and Summary Report of Conference and Presented Papers (November 2025 – 15 December 2025)

Phase 8: Preparation and Publication of Special Academic Journal Issue on Refined and Peer-Reviewed Conference Papers (November 2025 – July 2026)