

Inner Development Goals

Background, method and the IDG
framework – *edited and short version*

1 **Being** – Relationship to Self

2 **Thinking** – Cognitive Skills

3 **Relating** – Caring for Others and the World

4 **Collaborating** – Social Skills

5 **Acting** – Driving Change



Introduction

The Inner Development Goals (IDGs) is a framework of skills and qualities that individuals and organizations need to develop in order to successfully work with complex societal issues, in particular those identified in UN Agenda 2030 and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The present version of the IDG framework can be used as a starting point for exploring both individual and collective skills and qualities and how organizations and institutions can support the necessary human growth for sustainable development.

The IDGs initiative is still in its creation phase. The core activities have been gathering researchers and practitioners and organizing a number of discussions to process the responses from two surveys with 1,000+ respondents and using their expertise to develop a list of key skills and qualities.

Background

The starting point for this initiative was a belief that there is a blind spot in our efforts to create a sustainable global society: the need for investing in inner development to build sustainable and regenerative futures. We have accumulated much knowledge about environmental problems, climate change, poverty, public health, various social ills, etc. In UN Agenda 2030, goals and targets have been formulated for 17 critically important areas relating to sustainability. We have a vision of what needs to happen, we have enough technology for achieving these goals but progress has been slow and somewhat disappointing.

At the roots of the many problems the world is facing, we believe there is an imbalance between humankind's material and technological power, which brought us into the Anthropocene, and the relative underdevelopment of the inner skills and qualities we need to manage this power and the increasing complexity it has brought to our world.

The IDG project was initiated in 2019 by a number of organisations that identified an urgent need for the development of relevant skills and qualities for inner growth of leaders who work with complex societal issues. Our aim is to educate, inspire and empower people to be a positive force for change in society, in their own lives and those around them, and at the same time find purpose and meaning in their lives.

A number of business partners and organisations have supported the initiative, including Ekskåret Foundation, 29k, The New Division, Ashoka, Close, Ericsson, Houdini, Hofstede Insights, IKEA, Telia Company, Motivation.se, Midroc, Region Stockholm, Spotify, Tenant & Partners, the EU Erasmus+ programme and others.

Official academic partners of the IDG initiative and research include Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm University, Karolinska Institute, and Lund University. Additional reference group of researchers and experts who contributed significantly along the process of developing the IDG framework, among others include Amy C. Edmondson, Ph.D., Harvard Business School; Jennifer Garvey Berger, Ph.D., Harvard University; Otto Scharmer, Senior Lecturer, MIT Sloan School of Management; Peter Senge, Senior Lecturer, MIT Sloan School of Management; Robert Kegan, Ph.D., Harvard University; and many other distinguished experts.

By having a framework such as the IDGs, which is easy to grasp and which describes those skills and qualities, we hope to mobilize a broader engagement and effort among organizations, companies, and institutions to significantly increase the investments in efforts to develop crucial skills and qualities.

Overview of the Inner Development Goals framework

The IDG framework represents 23 skills and qualities in 5 categories developed through two surveys. The IDGs are a work-in-progress and may continue to change as the project develops and new information and input comes in. The current IDG framework is set out in the following table:

Being – Relationship to Self	Thinking – Cognitive Skills	Relating – Caring for Others and the World	Collaborating – Social Skills	Acting – Driving Change
Inner compass	Critical thinking	Appreciation	Communication skills	Courage
Integrity and Authenticity	Complexity awareness	Connectedness		Co-creation skills
		Humility	Optimism	
Openness and Learning mindset	Perspective skills	Empathy and Compassion	Inclusive mindset and Intercultural competence	
	Sense-making			
Self-awareness	Long-term orientation and visioning		Trust	
Presence				

1

Being — Relationship to Self

Cultivating our inner life and developing and deepening our relationship to our thoughts, feelings and body help us be present, intentional and non-reactive when we face complexity.

Inner compass

Having a deeply felt sense of responsibility and commitment to values and purposes relating to the good of the whole.

Having an Inner Compass is not so much a skill as a consequence of the broad scope of awareness that leads one to care for and contribute to the welfare of something much larger than oneself.

Having an inner compass firmly anchored in a commitment to contribute to the good of the whole is intimately related to other IDGs, such as *Connectedness, Long-term Orientation and Visioning, and Perseverance*.

Integrity and Authenticity

A commitment and ability to act with sincerity, honesty and integrity.

This item is partly about values one has identified with and is committed to practising, but it is also strongly related to personal maturity.

Openness and Learning Mindset

Having a basic mindset of curiosity and a willingness to be vulnerable, to embrace change and grow.

A capacity to be open to learning, re-evaluation and curiosity about alternative ways of perceiving and interpreting various issues requires a sense of identity robust and complex enough not to feel threatened by cognitive dissonance.

Self-awareness

An ability to be in reflective contact with one's own thoughts, feelings and desires; having a realistic self-image and the ability to regulate oneself.

What goes on inside a person has a considerable impact on that person's potential for being effective when engaging with complex issues, especially in interaction with people with diverse perspectives and interests.

Presence

Ability to be in the here and now, without judgment and in a state of open-ended presence.

This capacity is strongly linked to the *Openness and Learning Mindset*, but emphasizes the quality of making oneself fully available in encounters with other people, in an accepting, mindful, sensitive and non-judgmental way.

2

Thinking — Cognitive Skills

Developing our cognitive skills by taking different perspectives, evaluating information and making sense of the world as an interconnected whole is essential for wise decision-making.

Critical thinking

Skills in critically reviewing the validity of views, evidence and plans.

Critical thinking is strongly related to "reflective judgment" or "skills of argument". One way of describing critical thinking skills is to focus on the habit of asking probing questions in relation to statements, validity claims, views and opinions.

Critical thinking is closely related to and partially overlaps with *Perspective Skills*.

Complexity Awareness

Understanding of and skills in working with complex and systemic conditions and causalities.

Complexity Awareness is first and foremost a keen awareness that certain issues might be complex, and perhaps complex in ways that one is not yet aware of. A very significant and often mentioned aspect of Complexity Awareness is systems thinking: the propensity to look for patterns of wholes, how elements of systems interact in complex ways, leading to system dynamics and emergent properties of systems.

Complexity Awareness is an important condition for having a genuine openness and learning mindset. Complexity awareness is closely related to *Critical Thinking*, *Sense-making* and *Perspective Skills*.

Perspective Skills

Skills in seeking, understanding and actively making use of insights from contrasting perspectives.

A basic Perspective Skill is simply being aware that your view of the world and its issues and events *is* a view: an interpretation based on a limited and selective set of data and complemented by assumptions and judgments not necessarily backed up by proven facts.

Perspective skills are related to *Openness and Learning Mindset, Sense-making, Complexity Awareness, Critical Thinking and Inclusive Mindset and Intercultural Competence.*

Sense-making

Skills in seeing patterns, structuring the unknown and being able to consciously create stories.

This item is partly about values one has identified with and is committed to practising, but it is also strongly related to personal maturity.

Long-term Orientation and Visioning

Long-term Orientation and ability to formulate and sustain a commitment to visions relating to the larger context.

A capacity to be open to learning and re-evaluation, and curiosity about alternative ways of perceiving and interpreting various issues, requires a robust sense of self.

Long-term Orientation and Visioning is closely related to Critical Thinking, Complexity Awareness, Perspective Skills, Humility, Creativity and Communication Skills.

3

Relating — Caring for Others and the World

Appreciating, caring for and feeling connected to others, such as neighbors, future generations or the biosphere, helps us create more just and sustainable systems and societies for everyone.

Appreciation

Relating to others and to the world with a basic sense of appreciation, gratitude and joy.

Appreciation is not a skill in the traditional sense, but a mode of relating to people and the social, material and natural worlds, and can be strengthened by effort. A basic appreciative attitude is helpful in building connection to and trust between people, and is thus conducive to creative and collaborative work performance.

Appreciation is related to *Humility, Openness and Learning Mindset and Presence*, and can be an important factor for *Mobilization Skills*.

Connectedness

Having a keen sense of being connected with and/or being a part of a larger whole, such as a community, humanity or the global ecosystem.

This is one of the items in the IDG framework that is most profoundly intertwined with felt identity. This sense of connectedness more or less automatically leads to a sense of caring for the well-being of the larger whole.

Humility

Being able to act in accordance with the needs of the situation without concern for one's own importance.

Here, humility means the capacity to act without concern for looking good in the eyes of others or of oneself. The stance of humility is here understood to be a consequence of not being (overly) identified with a certain self-image and a need to be confirmed in that self-image by others.

Empathy and Compassion

The ability to relate to others, oneself and nature with kindness, empathy and compassion and to address related suffering.

Here, Empathy is seen as the capacity to understand and feel into what other people feel with reasonable accuracy, while compassion adds the quality of wanting to relate to other people with benevolence. Empathy and compassion are, of course, important components of emotional intelligence, connectedness and appreciation.

4

Collaborating – Social Skills

To make progress on shared concerns, we need to develop our abilities to include, hold space and communicate with stakeholders with different values, skills and competencies.

Communication Skills

The ability to really listen to others, to foster genuine dialogue, to advocate one's own views skilfully, to manage conflicts constructively and to adapt one's communication to different groups.

Communication skills can be described in terms of certain concrete behaviours, such as conveying positive intentions and regard, attentive and active listening, asking open-ended questions and advocating views in constructive ways.

Co-creation Skills

The skills and motivation to build, develop and facilitate collaborative relationships with different stakeholders, characterized by psychological safety and genuine co-creation.

The focus here is on skills in creating favourable conditions for and facilitating productive collaboration and co-creation. Sub-skills include skills in creating an open climate characterized by trust and psychological safety; leading meetings in ways that structure the work process through shared focus, encourage creativity and openness to diverse input; and deconstruct power dynamics that hinder open and creative collaboration.

Inclusive Mindset and Intercultural Competence

The willingness and competence to embrace diversity and include people and collectives with different views and backgrounds.

Being actively interested in seeking out, considering and involving individuals and groups with diverse backgrounds, identities and views is one facet of this cluster. More specifically, working in international contexts means that differences in culturally conditioned norms, values, attitudes, expectations, behavioural patterns, etc. play a significant role in successful collaboration.

Trust

The ability to show trust and to create and maintain trusting relationships.

We include trust in the framework even though trust often is understood as an outcome, rather than a skill or a basic attitude.

Mobilization skills

Skills in inspiring and mobilizing others to engage in shared purposes.

Mobilization skills do, of course, overlap with co-creation skills, but deserve a separate listing because mobilization includes reaching out broadly to different groups of people, evoking their interest and offering productive ways for people to become actively involved in various kinds of work towards fulfilling the SDGs.

Qualities such as courage and optimism help us acquire true agency, break old patterns, generate original ideas and act with persistence in uncertain times.

Courage

The ability to stand up for values, make decisions, take decisive action and, if need be, challenge and disrupt existing structures and views.

Courage is another IDG that cannot easily be regarded as a skill, but which is still a quality that can be nurtured and developed through a range of strategies. We have here subsumed a couple of related qualities: the courage to advocate convictions, the capacity to go from ideas to actually making decisions, and the propensity to engage in decisive actions in order to achieve tangible results.

Creativity

The ability to generate and develop original ideas, to innovate, and being willing to disrupt conventional patterns.

Creativity is linked to adult development processes. A common distinction in the adult development field is to differentiate between preconventional, conventional and postconventional patterns of meaning-making. Conventional meaning-making is associated with taking prevailing norms and practices as given, rather than inquiring into alternative possibilities, whereas postconventional meaning-making involves independent envisioning of what is desirable and how it can be realized.

Optimism

The ability to sustain and communicate a sense of hope, positive attitude and confidence in the possibility of meaningful change.

Optimism may be regarded as a personality trait, but here the emphasis is on the capacity to inspire hope in others (and oneself) that it is possible to achieve meaningful results by focusing on what is doable.

Perseverance

The ability to sustain engagement and remain determined and patient even when one's efforts take a long time to bear fruit.

Perseverance may also be understood as a personality trait or virtue, although it is likely that the capacity for sustaining engagement can be strengthened by conscious focusing on the possibilities to achieve long-term positive outcomes. As such, perseverance is related to *Long-term Orientation and Visioning*.

Inner Development Goals:

Background, method and the IDG framework

It is obvious that capacities are often properties of systems rather than individuals, and we think that the present version of the IDG framework can be used as a starting point for exploring individual and collective skills and qualities, and the ways in which culture, organizations and institutions can support the development needed.

These expanded descriptions are a starting point for more thorough reflection, revisions and refinement.

What's next?

The first phase has been focused on identifying WHICH abilities, skills and qualities are needed, and even though this area will continue to develop, the project is now (November 2021) moving into focusing on HOW to support the development of these abilities, skills and qualities.

The IDG initiative will now proceed into Phase 2, which consists of:

1. broadening the scope of people from around the world getting involved and being able to give input to the IDG framework;
2. mapping out what validated methods, practices and tools already exist for supporting skills development as well as adult development and mindset;
3. from the above, creating an “IDG field-kit” with an overview of these methods regarding each of the 5 IDG Categories. This will be open-source and free for all to use.

The presentation of the field-kit and the results of the Phase 2 is scheduled for **29th April 2022 during a “Growth That Matters”** Conference, bringing together IDG partners and stakeholders from around the globe.

The start of the second phase will also include efforts to mobilize more local and global partners and financial resources: this is a major task that will require comprehensive efforts.

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