



Sustainable Development Goals Action Towards 2030

“We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.”

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* (139)

Foreword

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, President of Caritas Internationalis

In 2015, Pope Francis asked, “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” (*Laudato Si’*, 160).

The answer, we hope, is a world without poverty, hunger and inequality. A world with global access to water and sanitation, education and clean energy where people can live safely and fulfil their true human potential. A world where our environment is protected, peace can flourish and we all work together towards a sustainable future.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by all UN Member States in 2015 under the banner “Agenda 2030”, provide an important new opportunity to realise this vision. As a blueprint for development priorities for the next 15 years, they lay out a path of hope on which we will travel together. They offer a transformative agenda for all countries, in which people and the environment are placed at the heart of development.

While we applaud the goals, it is imperative that they are translated into meaningful action. As Christians we are led by the light of hope; we know, however, that hope only becomes reality when followed up with deeds.

Caritas Internationalis members have helped to influence governments and the United Nations throughout the creation of the SDGs, to ensure that Agenda 2030 reflects the real needs of the communities with whom we work. We will continue to engage with governments to ensure that the SDGs are reflected in national plans through a participatory process that seeks to “leave no-one behind”.

Practical steps for building such political commitment and people participation can be found in this booklet, alongside an outline of the SDGs and how they fit with the



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messages of Pope Francis expressed in the encyclical *Laudato Si’*.

God’s love is at the heart of creation and at the centre of our work. It is this love which binds us together as one family with the poor and downtrodden, and gives us the determination to “build one universal human civilisation that spans the globe” as Blessed Paul VI envisaged in 1967 (*Populorum Progressio*, 73). Our profound hope is that the new goals represent a chance to make these words a reality, creating a world where future generations can flourish and grow together, and no-one is excluded.

It is time to put into practice the great truth expressed in the words of Pope Francis: “Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it.” (*Laudato Si’*, 17).

What are the Sustainable Development Goals?

The SDGs cover a wide range of issues. They include traditional MDG areas such as poverty, hunger, health, education, and gender equality but add new topics such as energy, infrastructure, economic growth and employment, inequality, cities, sustainable consumption and production, climate change, forests, oceans, and peace and security.

1



End poverty for all

End poverty in all its forms everywhere

2



Freedom from hunger

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture

6



Clean water and sanitation

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

7



Sustainable energy for all

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

8



Decent work and economic development

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth

12



Sustainable consumption and production

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

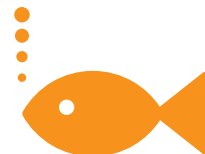
13



Action on climate change

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

14



Healthy oceans

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

3



Health and wellbeing

Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages

4



Quality education

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

5



Gender equality

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

9



Innovation and infrastructure

Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation

10



Reducing inequalities

Reduce inequality within and among countries

11



Sustainable cities and communities

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

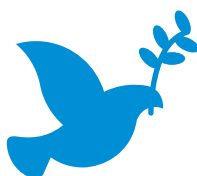
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Sustainable ecosystems

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

16



Peace and justice

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

17



Global partnerships

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development, on finance, technology, capacity-building, trade and systemic issues

From MDGs to SDGs

At the Millennium Summit in 2000, the UN General Assembly declared that it was unacceptable to enter a new millennium with the “scandal of poverty” affecting a billion people. World leaders agreed on eight Millennium Development Goals to galvanise a global effort to make the right to development a reality for everyone.

There has been a lot to celebrate since then: fewer people now live in extreme poverty, more girls and boys are in primary school and far more people have access to clean water, better nutrition, essential medicines and basic health care.

However, progress across different goals and countries has been mixed. Parts of Africa and Asia have consistently lagged behind. The MDGs focused on national averages, obscuring what was happening to specific groups within a country. The most marginalised people often experience the least progress. Factors such as inequality between men and women, disability, ethnicity and location determines who continues to be excluded.

While the target of halving the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day by 2015 was achieved, the spirit of this first goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger has not been met. There are still 800 million people living in extreme poverty. They are more vulnerable than ever to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. Years of progress can be swiftly wiped out by conflict or natural disasters.

Since 2011 the international community has discussed what should follow the MDGs, in a process that has included international organisations, governments,

academics, the private sector, faith groups and civil society. Caritas Internationalis, Catholic Church-inspired and other faith-based organisations (FBOs) participated in the intergovernmental processes through advocacy aimed at governments, continental bodies and the UN.

The Sustainable Development Goals were formulated with input from all these stakeholders, but the final decisions were taken by national governments at the UN in September 2015.

Big shifts

Important lessons have been learned since the Millennium Summit and the implementation of the MDGs. The new SDGs attempt to address the root causes of poverty, inequality within and between countries, climate change and environmental degradation, and the lack of peace and justice, alongside other important issues.

The SDGs represent big shifts from the MDGs in the way that development is understood. It is vital that governments reflect these changes when implementing the new goals.

• Universality

The MDGs focused on poverty in developing countries, with most targets set for action in low-income countries. Only MDG 7 on environmental sustainability and MDG 8 on global partnership held rich countries responsible for action.

Learning from that experience, the SDGs take a different approach. They are universal, meaning they

apply equally to all countries, with challenging targets for rich countries as well as poor ones. They can be used to advocate for more equitable development based on tackling the root causes of poverty and unsustainable development.

- **Integrated sustainable development**

Sustainable development includes social, economic, environmental and spiritual dimensions. The MDGs focused heavily on important issues of social development – such as poverty, health and education – but largely excluded economic and environmental aspects. The SDGs attempt to balance all three dimensions, in the first effort ever made by the UN to integrate this approach across such a broad range of concerns. The attempt to move beyond single issues is not perfect, however, and there are contradictions between some of the goals and targets.

- **Leave no-one behind**

The commitment to “leave no-one behind” is a key feature of the SDGs. The goals are not considered to have been met if those who are most vulnerable and hard to reach are not included. While such efforts may be more costly and time consuming, they aim to correct some of the imbalances in the MDGs, whereby accepting targets based on averages obscured the reality of very marginalised groups.

- **Participation**

Most governments had little input when the MDGs were being developed in 2000, let alone people on the



Elodie Perriot/Secours Catholique

ground who were meant to benefit from them. This top-down process delayed actions to implement the goals and reduced their impact.

The process to formulate the SDGs was much more inclusive, with national dialogues and thematic consultations involving many people around the world. Every UN Member State has agreed to implement them (193 countries). This strong sense of ownership should make them an effective force for change over the next 15 years.

The SDGs are a useful tool for civil society to engage with governments striving to achieve sustainable development for their citizens. Alone, however, the goals do not provide a complete solution to all global or national problems, nor do they tackle major structural issues.



Looking at the SDGs through the lens of *Laudato Si'*

In 2015, Pope Francis released his encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*, addressed to all people of good will. In it he emphasises the connection between dignity, development and human ecology. He invites us all to enter into dialogue about our “common home” and the environmental crises we face. He calls on us to re-examine our relationships with each other, the planet and the economy. How do the Sustainable Development Goals answer this call?

The dignity of the human person is at the heart of the SDGs and of *Laudato Si'*. The goals commit to leaving no-one behind, reaching the furthest-behind first and hearing the “cry of the poor”, as *Laudato Si'* asks (49).

This attention to the poor is inseparable from the “cry of the earth”, Pope Francis reminds us, since “the human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together” (LS 48). This relationship is reflected in the new development goals, which are interlinked and indivisible, addressing the environmental, the economic and the social at the same time. This acknowledges what the Pope

calls “the mysterious network of relations between things” and the consequent dangers of solving “one problem only to create others” (LS 20).

The SDGs were developed through an open and inclusive process, reflecting the more equitable power balance between nations called for by the encyclical. They are universally applicable to all countries. The greatest burden for change is no longer placed on poor countries.

Where *Laudato Si'* and the goals diverge, however, is over how to end poverty. Pope Francis challenges the assumption that unlimited economic growth is possible, stating this is “based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the Earth’s goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry beyond every limit” (106). He asks us to redefine our very notion of progress. The SDGs meanwhile do not question the existing definition of progress, and rely mainly on economic growth to end poverty, failing to recognise that the current global economic model cannot fully address our shared challenges.

Get involved

The UN has set up a mechanism for follow-up and review, but action is needed at all levels to effect real change especially at the national level. The SDGs will influence government planning and donor priorities over the coming decades. Institutional donors, for example, have already started to use them to make decisions about funding.

All governments are committed to forming sustainable development strategies based on the goals, as of January 2016. However, they are voluntary, so there is no legal requirement to implement them. This means faith groups and civil society must take every opportunity to influence policy, to ensure that our governments fully implement the SDGs and are accountable for their impact.

Principles for engaging

Pope Francis has called on us all to participate in a global conversation about the future of our planet and its inhabitants. In light of *Laudato Si'*, there is an opportunity to use the new goals as a way of promoting human flourishing and care for our common home, based on key values of Catholic teaching such as solidarity, inclusion, participation and environmental concern.

- **Build relationships:**

In tackling such a wide range of goals, working collaboratively with others will be essential. Find out who is interested. See if national or local platforms already exist and how you can join or help create such

platforms. Reach out to your bishops' conference, diocese and parish, and to other people of faith and good will through their organisations at national, diocesan and local levels.

- **Build the power of people:**

Accompany people as they empower themselves. People know their own problems and the solutions that will work best in their contexts. Their voices must be heard. Find out what processes your government is setting up to work towards the goals and make sure that they involve citizens, faith leaders, religious groups and civil society organisations, especially any marginalised groups.

- **Strengthen participation:**

Help build strong people movements within Church structures, such as those for Catholic women, men and youth, to get involved with the practical application of the goals.

Real dialogue on how to achieve the goals is needed, especially in partnership with marginalised and excluded groups. One way of doing this is through organising public workshops and debates within community, local government and national legislative and policy-making bodies. Impact can be increased through national conferences, public forums and meetings with decision-makers to discuss implementation and share best practices.





Demands for governments

Ask your national government to:

- 1 Develop a national sustainable development strategy.** This should be done together with people experiencing poverty and marginalisation and the organisations that represent them, and should aim towards meaningful, measurable commitments to the SDGs. The strategy should also include the principle “leave no-one behind” and integration of the social, environmental and economic aspects of development.
- 2 Commit to implementing all the goals** and include this in national development priorities. Universality is key to success at both global and national level. Governments should address not only the advancement of the goals within their country but also each country’s fair contribution to global achievement of the goals.
- 3 Set up inter-departmental committees** on implementation and monitoring, including ministries of finance, planning, environment and foreign affairs, as well as national statistical offices.
- 4 Build on the experience of MDG Parliamentary Committees** by creating multi-party SDG

Parliamentary Committees, to reinforce executive efforts on implementation. Civil society, faith-based organisations and local-level institutions should be able to participate actively.

- 5 Call upon decentralised administrations and local government to work closely with civil society,** including faith-based groups and local Churches, to ensure shared ownership of the goals.
- 6 Ensure that sufficient national and local resources are allocated** to meeting the goals.
- 7 Establish public, participatory and inclusive monitoring and reporting mechanisms** for implementing the SDGs, led by a national review body which includes members of the target groups – especially the poorest and most marginalised – and their legitimate representatives.
- 8 Participate fully in agreed international follow-up and review processes.**

(Developed from the Beyond 2015 toolkit ‘From Policy to Action’)

Questions for reflection

The following questions provide some suggestions for reflection within your organisation, church or community on how you can get involved in working towards the new development goals.

- What important issues that were missing from the MDGs are included in the Sustainable Development Goals?
- What have we learned from working on the MDGs which could be helpful for the new goals?
- Where do the SDGs and *Laudato Si'* complement and reinforce each other? How do they differ?
- How do we think that these global goals can strengthen our advocacy, whether at the local, national, regional or global level?
- What can we do to promote the interconnected nature of the goals in our work?
- How can we best hold governments accountable at the national level for commitments they have made at the global level? What are the national political systems for participatory decision-making we could build on? If they don't exist, what could we suggest?
- How can we ensure that the implementation of the global goals puts the poorest people first? How can we



avoid some people and groups being ignored, forgotten or excluded?

- Who else is working on this at the national level that we can join?
- Which issues are our government prioritising initially?
- Which issues do we think they should prioritise, and why?
- What proposals do we already have for SDG implementation at the local and national level?

Resources

Caritas Internationalis:

www.caritas.org

Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis – *Laudato Si', On Care For Our Common Home*:

w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

Beyond 2015 global campaign:

www.beyond2015.org

Beyond 2015 toolkit:

www.beyond2015.org/sites/default/files/EN%20Beyond%202015%20Policy%20to%20Action%20Toolkit.pdf

World We Want:

www.worldwewant2030.org

UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform:

sustainabledevelopment.un.org

The Global Goals for Sustainable Development:

www.globalgoals.org

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This report draws from their paper *Sustainable Development Goals: Action Towards 2030* available on their website:

www.cafod.org.uk

www.caritas.org