

2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals

This document informs Caritas Europa and its members and partners about Agenda 2030 and the way it links to their daily work focusing on the poor and most vulnerable. The document explains what Agenda 2030 and the SDGs are, what is transformational about them, how they can inform policy making in Europe and why civil society is instrumental in delivering them. It focuses specifically on the goals on poverty and inequality, and recommends using the 2030 Agenda in advocacy and programming work at national, EU and international level.

1. What are the Sustainable Development Goals?

The [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) are an integrated set of goals and targets agreed by the United Nations (UN) under the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) that officially came into force on January 1st 2016. They represent the new global development framework that will guide policy and practice at national, regional and global levels until 2030.

There are 17 SDGs and 169 targets that cover a broad range of issues including education, equality between men and women, healthcare, social protection, migration, peace and justice, oceans, forests, sustainable agriculture, climate change, decent jobs and economic development. They are likely to have significant influence on a country's policies and resource allocation on social, environmental and economic issues, as well as donor priorities and funding. The SDGs follow the [Millennium Development Goals](#) (MDGs) that were effective in coordinating efforts against poverty and exclusion in developing countries. But the SDGs go beyond the MDGs. They attempt to bring about transformation and tackle the root causes that generate economic, social, political and environmental problems, not merely the symptoms. Governments are accountable for delivering the SDGs. They need to align these with their national plans and strategies. NGOs are to hold governments and institutions accountable or push for more ambitious policies, and are also key stakeholders in the implementation of policies and programmes.

The 2030 Agenda includes four transformational principles that tell how to pursue development differently: a) a universal agenda applicable to all countries, not only developing countries, b) to integrate environmental protection, social and economic justice, human dignity and human rights to eradicate poverty, c) to promote widespread participation of all state and non-state actors, d) and tackle inequality and promote inclusion with a focus on Leave No One Behind – meaning to reach the furthest behind first, which is at the heart of Catholic Social Teaching¹.

2. The purpose of this Reference Paper

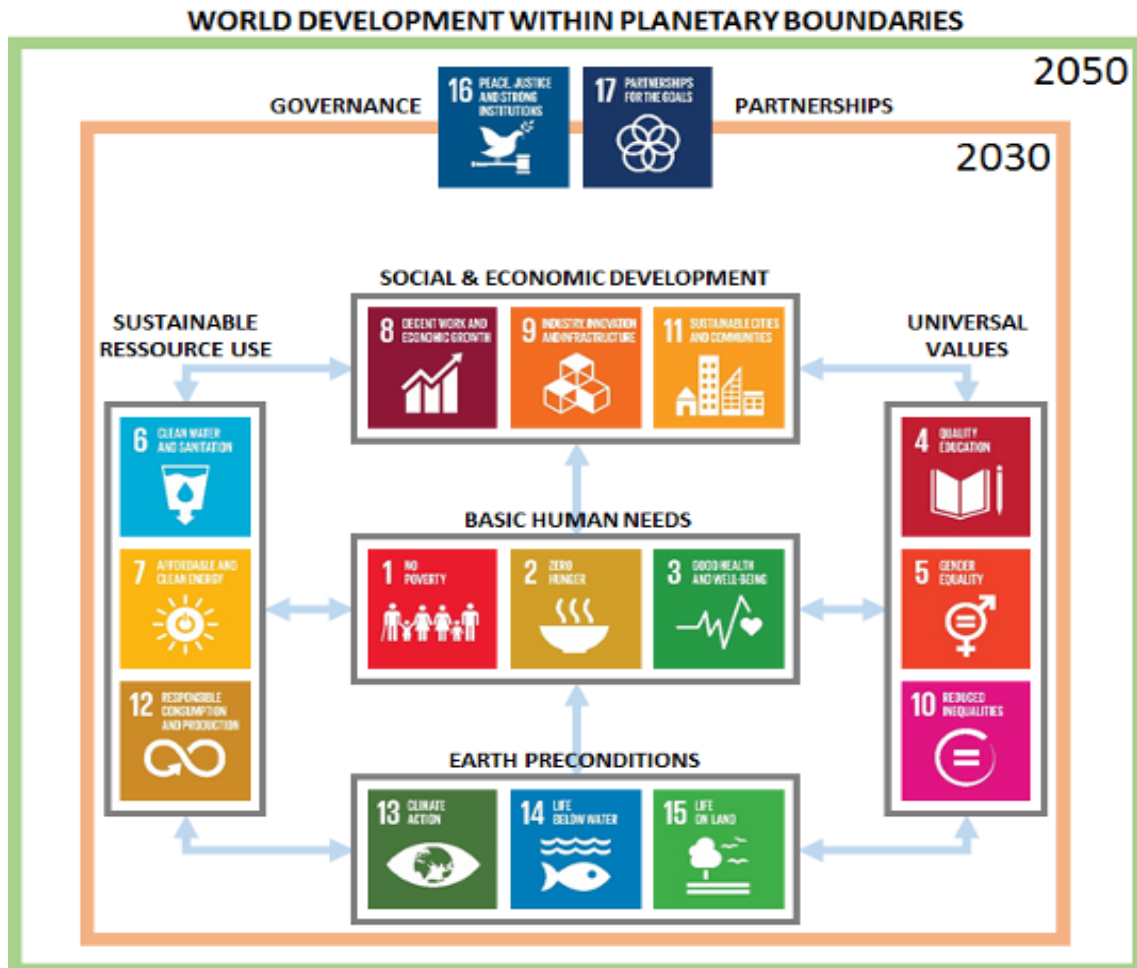
With the implementation of the SDGs, we see new advocacy opportunities for Caritas agencies at local, national and regional levels. We also see an opportunity to engage critically so that the agreed goals, targets and indicators lead to deeper and transformative changes for the poor and most marginalised. This reference paper aims to:

- inform Caritas Europa members how the SDGs relate to our daily work on poverty and inequality
- explain how the SDGs can transform broader development policies and practice
- enhance our understanding of how to engage strategically with the SDGs and strengthen our advocacy capacity to mobilising in a coordinated way as Caritas

As poverty and inequality are at the heart of Caritas's existence, the SDG framework can help to frame ongoing work, to coordinate our actions and provide a roadmap to connect members and partners in joint programme and advocacy work. This reference paper aims to be complementary to several other resources that have been or are being produced (see chapter 5, textbox 2). It is inspired by ongoing reflections of Catholic development and humanitarian organisations in their local or national contexts. It explores best ways to engage with the 2030 Agenda and to bring about positive change from our Catholic identity and the perspective of Catholic Social Teaching (in particular the 2015 Encyclical paper *Laudato Si'*) and the reality of the people experiencing poverty that we are working with.

Governments are expected to develop or revise national plans for the full implementation of the SDGs, in partnership with all stakeholders including civil society. States are also expected to monitor and demonstrate the contribution of all national actors, including Caritas, in the achievement of the goals and targets. This paper can inspire Caritas Europa and its member organisations in its advocacy work on how states and non-state actors are engaged in the annual

follow-up and review process at national and EU levels and the reporting to the annual meetings of the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York.



3. The SDG principles

The SDG framework is designed in a way to do different things, and to do things differently. It is both innovative and transformative and anything but ‘business as usual’ due to the following principles:

3.1 Leaving No One Behind

The principle to “leave no one behind” forces policy makers to design policies that are aimed to reach the people and groups hardest to reach first. This goes to the core of Catholic Social Teachingⁱⁱ and the dignity of the human person because it focuses on the poorest most vulnerable groups of society and furthest behind. This is a deviation of the MDGs when poverty

was to be 'halved' and development outcomes were assumed to reach the poorest eventually if one would focus on those with at least some resources. The principle of Leaving No One Behind ensures that *all* people, including the millions who have been denied the chance to lead decent, dignified and rewarding lives and to achieve their full human potential.

3.2 Respect for human rights

The 2030 Agenda builds on existing UN commitments of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms based on the inherent dignity of all people, grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations. This principle will ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment. The 2030 Agenda respects, protects and promotes human rights for all, without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status.

3.3 Universality

The universality approach of the SDGs tells us that these must be implemented by all countries. It promotes rights for everyone regardless where they are and helps strengthen a human rights-based approach to economic prosperity, social progress and environmental protection. Issues such as climate change or air pollution have no boundaries. Their response must be universal and coordinated by all governments. Therefore, governments must recognise that to achieve the SDGs they need to work in partnership domestically and internationally.

3.4 Participation and dialogue

Compared to the MDGs, the process to formulate the SDGs was much more inclusive, with national dialogues and thematic consultations involving many people around the world. UN Member States have agreed to implement them in the same participatory manner. This requires participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people. It means meaningful engagement of civil society and other stakeholders around the world, paying particular attention to the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable. The implementation and follow-up and review process must be open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people and support reporting by all relevant stakeholders.

Leave no one behind and participation – the 2030 Agenda calls for involving people experiencing poverty

For some aid donors, involving people living in poverty into development programmes appears to be too difficult, time-consuming and costly. Refusing to see this exclusion as problematic makes it possible to exacerbate inequalities and the marginalization of the poorest people.

Encouraging and facilitating the voluntary participation of people experiencing poverty should not be regarded as a choice in development projects but as a requirement mandated both by Catholic Social Teachingⁱⁱⁱ and the 2030 Agenda. As stated in section 3.3, both call for full engagement of civil society and other stakeholders around the world, with attention to the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable.

It is also an obligation under human rights principles. The Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2012, states in article 38: “States must ensure the active, free, informed and meaningful participation of persons living in poverty at all stages of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of decisions and policies affecting them.”

“Leaving no one behind”, as called for by the 2030 Agenda, involves designing long-term programmes that can reach those hardest to reach segments of the population first. This means that new mechanisms of participation, empowerment and transparency need to be created at local, national and international levels. At Caritas, we know this approach works if it is supported by the top, allowing programme managers to identify and involve representatives of marginalized and the poorest populations in the elaboration of projects – even if this is slowing down progress and hampering rapid disbursements, short-term results and visibility.

3.5 Integrating environment and development

The SDGs also tell us about the need to address the root causes of global problems through a balanced approach to sustainability, bringing together economic development, social justice and environmental protection. The 2030 Agenda tells us that the goals are indivisible and must be pursued together. Sustainable development recognises that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, combating inequality within and among countries, preserving the planet, creating sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and fostering social inclusions are linked to each other and are interdependent, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations. The 2030 Agenda also addresses the global nature of climate change and calls for the widest possible international cooperation aimed at accelerating the reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions and addressing adaptation to the adverse impacts of climate change.

Apart for these key transformative principles, it should be noted that the 2030 Agenda is the first global policy development framework that recognises the *special needs of fragile and conflict-affected states*, many of which are among the 48 least developed countries (LDCs). Of the 38 most fragile states, 26 are LDCs and mostly in sub-Saharan Africa. These are states whose central government is so weak or ineffective that it has little practical control over much of its territory. Meeting the SDGs will require significant domestic resource mobilisation, implementing programmes and evaluating progress. Their weaknesses in terms of governance capacity, legislative effectiveness, regulatory quality and accountability, widespread corruption and criminality – worsened by negative terms of trade, exploitation and bribery by developed countries and actors – put into doubt the achievement of the SDGs in these countries. What we see instead is a severe lack of provision of public services, sharp economic decline and forced displacement.

4. Caritas Europa's SDG priorities: ending poverty (SDG 1) and reducing inequality (SDG 10)

The SDGs are guiding efforts by the international community to finally end poverty everywhere (SDG 1). Over the past 200 years we have seen dramatic decreases in poverty rates, so the ambition to end extreme poverty is realistic. However, we stress the high numbers of poor and vulnerable people across the globe and the need for governments to take the final and most difficult leap. At the same time, the inequality within and between countries has increased and the SDGs tell us to reduce it (SDG 10). Recent analysis has shown that the richest 8 people own as much as the poorest 50% of the global population of 7.2 billion. As the gap between the rich and poor and between rich and poor countries continues to increase, the global community has identified inequality as one of the key challenges for this and next generations. For Caritas, this means acknowledging that we need to be selective in prioritising our SDG advocacy messages, in giving priority to poverty and inequality. This paper aims to inform and mobilise MOs on both issues of concern.

4.1 SDG 1: Ending poverty

The first goal in the new 2030 Agenda is very ambitious and sets a high standard for the international community: end poverty in all its forms everywhere. The goal of eradicating poverty is central to the mission of Caritas and is now connected to targets and indicators that could bring the target closer than ever before, in every country and community.

Ending poverty is an aspiration that is implicit in the 1945 United Nations charter and in the 1947 Universal Declaration of Human Rights but it was not until the 1974 World Food Conference that the international community agreed to strive to eradicate absolute poverty by the end of the 20th century. This would include the elimination of malnutrition and illiteracy, the reduction of infant mortality, raise life-expectancy standards to those of the developed nations, and include the notion of the relation between poverty and inequalities. This could be done, it was envisaged, if rich countries met the commitment to increasing Overseas Development Aid (ODA) up to 0.7 percent of their GDP, as pledged in a [1970 UN General Assembly resolution](#).

By the start of the 21st century, few of those targets were met. Despite years of unprecedented increase in the gross domestic product (GDP) of many developing countries, still nearly 800 million people were surviving on less than a dollar a day, in conditions of malnutrition, exclusion and extreme poverty. Only a few developing countries seriously tackled inequalities (those that did became known as the economic 'miracles' or 'tigers') and ODA never surpassed half of the pledged 0.7 percent except in a handful of countries. Thus, the 2000 Millennium Declaration estimated the number of people in absolute poverty, renamed "extreme poverty", at 1 billion.

The Millennium Declaration promised to "spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected." But the target agreed upon in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was not to end poverty, but only "to halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and, by the same date, to halve the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water."

Later the baseline for that promise was changed to the year 1990 (instead of the year 2000), by which some 400 million Chinese who had been lifted from extreme poverty in the last decade of the 20th century could be included in the accounting. Thus, by 2015 the number of people living on under USD 1.25 a day (the revised extreme poverty line announced by the World Bank in October 2015) is still estimated to be at over 900 million people. But because the world population has grown, the proportion living in extreme poverty has been halved or more than halved and the mission was declared accomplished.

When UN member states met during the post-2015 intergovernmental negotiations, Caritas was among the civil society organisations pushing for a more ambitious SDG, namely to "end

poverty in all its forms everywhere.” This formulation acknowledges very clearly that poverty cannot be defined only by income poverty (USD 1.25 a day) and that it is not concentrated only in low-income countries.

SDG 1 has [7 targets](#). **Target 1.1** captures the ambition on extreme poverty while **Target 1.2** commits all countries to “by 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.” UN Member States have committed themselves to address poverty in “rich” countries as well as “poor” ones. The European Union (EU) estimates that a total of 120 million people (24% of its population) are at risk of poverty and social exclusion, including one of every four children and one of every five people over age 65. In fact, in several EU countries poverty has increased since the global financial and economic crisis of 2008 and subsequent austerity policies. To reverse that trend and cut poverty by half in fifteen years would surely require a major revision of current policies. The [November 2016 European Commission proposals](#) presented by Vice President Timmermans, however, suggested delaying any revision until after the year 2020, when the Europe 2020 Strategy is completed. This is important policy development for the SDG domestic implementation in the EU.

Target 1.3 on social protection floors stresses the need for focus on the poor and vulnerable as these floors would directly contribute to the reduction of poverty, hunger and malnutrition by promoting income security and access to better nutrition, health care and education. By improving human capacities and mitigating the impacts of shocks, social protection is equally valid for countries in the global North. As Caritas has argued for many years, a basic floor of social transfers is globally affordable at any stage of economic development and that its design and implementation is mainly an issue of political will.

Target 1.4 signals the paradigm shift referred to in section 3.2 above by mentioning “equal rights”, including those to land and resources in a poverty context. This formulation recognises that poverty is a human rights concern. It is both a cause and a consequence of human rights violations and an enabling condition for other violations. Not only is extreme poverty characterized by multiple reinforcing violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, but persons living in poverty generally experience regular denials of their dignity and equality. **Target 1.5** relates poverty and vulnerability to climate-related disasters, where the people living in poverty are victims of catastrophes that they had no responsibility in creating.

Finally, **Targets 1.a** and **1.b**, which focus on the means of implementation, call for resource mobilization in particular in rich countries for least developed countries. At the same time, they call for rich people in poorer countries to be properly taxed so that the resources needed to implement the goals can be mobilized locally as well. **Target 1.b** also suggest that pro-poor spending is required for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, which at the same time contradicts the austerity programmes recommended by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) after the 2008 global financial and economic crisis. As these austerity policies encouraged governments to cut spending, at the same time these neoliberal policies have increased poverty and inequalities. And inequality, as we will see in Section 4.2, is having a negative impact on both the level and the durability of economic growth and development.

4.2 SDG 10: Reducing inequality

SDG 10 is no doubt one of the most ground-breaking elements of the 2030 Agenda, along with SDG 16 on peace and justice, especially when compared to the MDGs. It requires states to tackle inequality within and between countries, including income inequality; social, political and economic exclusion; key policy determinants of inequality; inequalities of opportunity and outcome; discrimination; and reform of global governance. This is different from the MDGs that pursued and measured aggregate progress, implicitly neglecting disparities. For Caritas, the need to tackle inequality as a matter of policy priority is long overdue. It has long been evident that many development policies and interventions have exacerbated inequalities. Equality and non-discrimination are cornerstone principles of Catholic Social Teaching^{iv} but also of international human rights law, suggesting that a focus on absolute poverty and basic needs alone is far from sufficient for achieving the full realization of human rights.

SDG 10 covers several different types of social and economic inequalities. It looks at overall levels of economic inequality (i.e., disparities of income and wealth) between individuals and households in society but also at social inequalities and exclusion of particular groups such as women, migrants or ethnic minorities. In recent years, the social justice implications of economic inequality are being analysed, showing many detrimental human rights effects and reinforcing almost every other type of inequality. Evidence also shows that high levels of economic inequality impact negatively on economic growth, poverty reduction, health and education outcomes, social cohesion and political stability. This has reinforced the view for example, that eradicating poverty will be impossible without tackling economic inequality. Caritas therefore

argues not only for a specific stand-alone “goal 10” but also for tackling inequalities as a cross-cutting priority.

SDG 10 is also the main goal addressing migrants and migration, recognizing migrants (including the diaspora) and refugees as development actors, both in countries of origin, transit and destination. In line with the focus on fragile and conflict-affected states, it calls for addressing the root causes of forced migration and displacement. Through SDG 10, states agree to promote orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. It also focuses on reducing the costs of migrant remittances, important for diaspora engagement. It connects with SDG 8 on promoting fair and decent labour migration, ethical recruitment, and improving human working conditions to help enhance the impact of migrants on development.

SDG 10: reduced inequalities and Leaving no one Behind

The catch phrase “Leaving No One Behind” has become the overarching rallying cry of the 2030 Agenda. Despite its good intentions and although it has been widely accepted and repeated, Leave no one Behind risks being a meaningless rhetoric if it is not linked explicitly to economic and social inequality.

It will be impossible to ensure no one is left behind without addressing discrimination, social exclusion and economic inequality. These features are not inevitable. It is created, perpetuated and exacerbated by laws, policies and practices of the past few decades. Inequality is compounded and reinforced by disparities and discrimination on grounds such as sex, race and migration status. SDG 10 represents a significant opportunity to reverse course and to make Leave no one Behind a reality.

Inequalities between countries will also need to be seriously reduced, in particular by dismantling the structural, institutional and policy barriers which severely constrain the policy space of the poorest countries, where the greatest number of those most at risk of being – or already left behind live.

SDG 10 is about inequalities in the North and South, in developed or least developed countries, in the UK, India or Brazil as well as in small island states such as Barbados or Mauritius. All countries in the world have stark and persistent inequalities, which in many cases have widened in recent decades, and particularly during the period covered by the MDGs. The previous period, however, did not result in unified political support for a stand-alone inequality goal. During the intergovernmental negotiations, there was significant and sustained resistance by several

governments, and these states could in fact neglect the agenda and be very slow in their implementation plans. Such resistance is likely attributed to the fact that SDG 10 marks one of the SDGs whose achievement depends most on profound changes to the ‘business-as-usual’ model of economic growth. Success will require significant redistribution of wealth, resources, opportunities and power, which in turn means robustly addressing the financial and political privileges of wealthy elites and transnational corporations. This redistribution of power will also be necessary at the global level, as reducing inequalities between countries is a stated aim of the goal, and will in any case be necessary to allow poorer nations the policy space necessary to tackle domestic inequalities.

The political resistance by some powerful governments during the post-2015 negotiations is manifested in a set of targets that fail to fully reflect the intention of the goal, and to set out a strong and specific action agenda for reducing inequality. Moreover, the global indicators agreed on for SDG 10 do not properly cover the scope and intentions of the goal and targets, nor do they incentivize the most important policy actions.

SDG 10 has [10 targets](#). For example, **Target 10.1** concentrates on the bottom 40 % of national populations rather than on the top end of the wealth and income distribution. Given that the accumulation of wealth and income at the top has direct impacts on those at the bottom, this neglect is counter-productive when it comes to achieving the overall goal. **Target 10.4** commits governments to “adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.” Clearly, not all such policies will be conducive to reducing inequalities. In fact, the above-mentioned austerity policies have rather contributed to the escalation in inequality in the last 10-15 years. The global indicators agreed on to measure SDG 10 are equally problematic. Indicators and data are important for accountability because they provide the ‘measure of progress’ (or lack thereof), against which government policies and actions can be judged. Considering “what is measured, is managed”, indicators have the potential of incentivizing certain policy actions at the expense of others. At the moment, however, the current global indicators are miles away from adequately measuring economic inequality (even though good methodologies already exist) or from even measuring inequalities between countries for which more far-reaching measures are yet to be developed.

Target 10.7 is an important vehicle to promote safe and responsible migration, eliminating unsafe passage and maximizing protection of migrants and refugees in countries of origin, transit

and destination. However, it could also lead to the more restrictive migration policies that the European Union is adopting, aiming to keep people out and send people back – in a “well-managed fashion”, so to speak. The indicator for safe migration would need to refer to numbers of injuries or fatalities along the migratory routes, but instead an index indicator grouping together migration policies has been agreed.

Even though the exact package of measures for tackling economic inequality will vary by country (social protection, fiscal policy, public service provision, labour and wage policies, ...), in most cases these will include redistributive policies that change the current status quo of where wealth, income, power and resources are concentrated. In every area, policy-makers will also have to carefully consider the impact on equality between men and women and the promotion of women’s rights.

SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) recognizes official development assistance (ODA) and other forms of financial assistance from rich countries as an important vehicle for sharing more justly wealth and economic resources. In recent years, there has been increasing emphasis on domestic resource mobilization for development. But, as argued above, the ability of governments to raise and use domestic resources effectively has been especially minimal in fragile and conflict affected states. Also, while the international financial system facilitates or encourages practices like cross-border tax evasion, tax competition, the use of tax havens and corporate profit shifting, developing countries lose billions of dollars in potential revenue each year – far more than they receive in ODA. These practices therefore perpetuate inequalities at a global scale and inhibit progress towards greater equality in the poorest countries. That is why 2030 Agenda also calls for more policy coherence for sustainable development (target 17.14). Without a policy shift in these areas, global forces are likely to make national efforts to achieve SDG 10 redundant. In this respect, rich countries have by far the greater responsibility to act considering that most large transnational corporations are under their jurisdictions.

In the understanding of the 2030 Agenda, the transformative potential of SDG 1 and SDG 10 should not be underestimated. SDG 10 has firmly placed economic inequality on the development agenda. The global stand-alone goal for all countries that directly addresses inequalities would have been unthinkable fifteen years ago, and was made possible thanks to steadfast civil society advocacy including that of Caritas. If prioritized and pursued with commitment, SDG 10 could be part of a much-needed, larger paradigm shift in how

‘development’ is conceptualized and pursued – towards societies in which wealth, resources and power are more evenly shared, founded on a human rights-based vision of human dignity, social and economic justice and environmental stewardship. This opportunity should not be wasted.

5. Way forward for Caritas Europa

The 2030 Agenda provides an opportunity for Caritas organisations to connect the SDGs to their programme work in sectors such as health care or education, often in partnership with Caritas members in partner countries. It is relevant to many areas of our work and speaks about many of our shared concerns and priorities. Working together is important, both within the Caritas family and with other stakeholders. Whatever the precise focus and priority interest, it is important for all Caritas agencies to contribute to the overall agenda, and explore the emerging funding and advocacy opportunities.



In terms of advocacy, one thing is clear: SDG implementation processes are creating new opportunities for civil society and government dialogue. Caritas agencies have a unique role to play to ensure that local, national, regional and global SDG implementation and monitoring processes lead to real transformative change. Many Caritas agencies are already engaging with their governments, parliaments, other civil society organisations (CSOs), and the UN High-level

Political Forum (HLPF). Each year, some 30-40 countries are presenting their Voluntary National Report, offering opportunities for CSOs to give input and/or present their critical reflection after publication. In 2016 and 2017, Caritas Internationalis organised a Caritas delegation and a side event during the HLPF in order to highlight specific thematic priorities.

The High-level Political Forum (HLPF) – opportunities for Caritas advocacy

The [High-Level Political Forum \(HLPF\)](#) is the UN's main platform for review of the implementation of sustainable development. The HLPF is meant to provide guidance on implementing the SDGs, addressing emerging issues on the horizon, and promoting cross-sector collaboration. The Forum meets in New York annually under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and every four years at the level of Heads of State and Government under the auspices of the General Assembly

Voluntary National Reviews are conducted under the framework of the annual HLPF. Governments are expected to *'conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven'* (paragraph 79, 2030 Agenda). It is also stated that reviews should be *'open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people'* (paragraph 74, 2030 Agenda), meaning that civil society engagement should not only be facilitated but also encouraged at national level, as part of this accountability process. [Click here if you want to know more on VNRs and when is your country passing the exam.](#)

In conclusion, the Forum has proved to be a unique opportunity for civil society to interact with their national governments and influence their decisions. Each year, Caritas Internationalis coordinates a delegation of southern and northern Caritas agencies to attend the HLPF. The objectives are to scrutinise governments, coordinate advocacy efforts, create visibility, establish partnerships, and ensure that the voice of those marginalised and vulnerable is represented in the process. Activities supportive to these objectives are side events, public interventions, face-to-face meetings and coordinated advocacy activities with delegations, UNDP and broader CSO coalitions.

Caritas can also support the creation of strong accountability mechanisms, as is being undertaken by Caritas Spain, including the development of robust national indicators (based on the [global indicators agreed by the UN](#)), which are required to measure real progress and to determine gaps, weaknesses and solutions. The [Caritas Cares Series](#) is a useful example of how poverty and inequalities are being monitored in Europe. The engagement with national SDG implementation should best build on Caritas' existing policy and advocacy work. For example, the work in Europe around the Pillar of Social Rights and the Social Charter already include monitoring of social protection and social justice, and could well feed into the advocacy around Voluntary National Reports at the United Nations. The same holds true for the [Universal Periodic Review](#)

for the Human Rights Council. Monitoring national implementation in developing countries, and the support of development actors, can be undertaken in close collaboration with the local Caritas partners.

The three-year advocacy and campaigning project, referred to as the [MIND \(Migration, Interconnectedness, Development\) project](#), funded by the European Union Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) Programme, also provides a great opportunity for Caritas organisations to raise awareness around the Sustainable Development Goals and their interlink to the migration and development nexus.

Overall, the 2030 Agenda will not succeed if their transformational principles are not taken seriously by national governments. The global community must use the 2030 Agenda to push for a change in policies in the right direction. As Caritas, we have the opportunity to work constructively with our governments to use the SDGs to strengthen our thematic focus and influence the process at the appropriate level. Our efforts will also need to include a focus on raising public awareness to encourage citizens and residents to put pressure on our governments to deliver. Our role in the implementation and delivery of the SDGs will depend on our interest, capacities and strategic decisions. But one thing is certain: it is up to civil society and faith-based groups to hold governments accountable to their promises and commitments.

Caritas advocacy resources

In the run up to the 25 September 2015 Sustainable Development Summit, Caritas Internationalis produced a [policy paper](#) and [FAQs](#).

Caritas Europa produces newsletters and several [blogs](#) on SDG implementation in EU Member States. It also offers perspectives on SDG implementation at [EU-level](#), including in [revision processes on the EU development policy](#).

CAFOD, a Caritas member in England and Wales, has produced six easy to understand [animations](#) on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, in French, English and Spanish.

CAFOD has led an international steering group developing a critical reflection on the 2030 Agenda and SDGs from the perspective of *Laudato Si'*. [The document is entitled: Engaging in the 2030 Agenda through the lens of Laudato Si'](#).

The next [UN High-level Political Forum](#) meetings will be held in July 2018 and 2019. The HLPF-18 will focus specifically on Goals 6, 7, 11, 12, 15 and 17. The HLPF-19 will focus

specifically on Goals 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17. In 2018, some [30 countries](#) have already committed to present their Voluntary National Reports.

To get in touch with CE's Action Group on SDGs, contact its Chair, Tom Devriendt of Caritas Belgium: t.devriendt@caritasint.be

To get in touch with CI's Working Group on SDGs, including about the annual CI delegations to the HLPF, contact its Chair, Amparo Alonso, CI's representative to the UN in Geneva: aalonso@caritas-internationalis.com

ⁱ Evangelii Gaudium 195: "...but there is one sign which we should never lack: the option for those who are least, those whom society discards" (195).

ⁱⁱ CST reference.

ⁱⁱⁱ Idem.

^{iv} Idem.