

# 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*

In 2015, the world agreed a new set of global goals to eradicate extreme poverty and achieve sustainable development. Building on the Millennium Development Goals, they are known as the Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs. But how did these goals come about, what are they, and how can civil society get involved in their realisation? This short booklet gives an overview of the SDGs and suggests some actions for coming years.

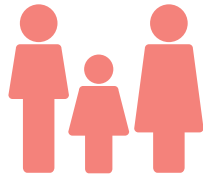
The SDGs reflect an opportunity for us to come together to advocate for positive change built on the values of solidarity, human dignity, care for creation, and inclusive participation. Actions to achieve these global goals should always have those furthest behind – the poorest and most marginalised people – at their heart, so that no goal or target is considered met unless met for all people, wherever and wherever they are.



# 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 inequality 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

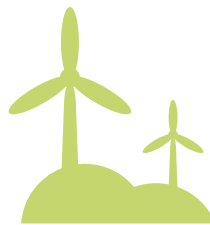
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## Clean water and sanitation

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

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## Decent work and economic development

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth

12



## Sustainable consumption and production

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

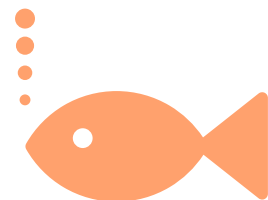
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## Action on climate change

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

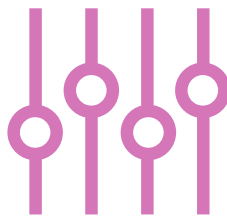
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### Innovation and infrastructure

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

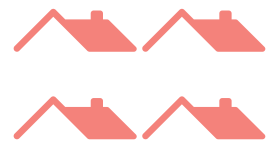
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### Reducing inequalities

Reduce inequality within and among countries

11



### Sustainable cities and communities

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

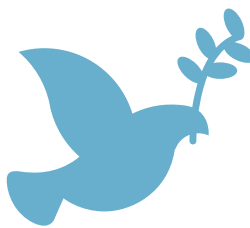
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### Sustainable ecosystems

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 revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development, on finance, technology, capacity-building, trade and systemic issues

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# Arriving at the SDGs

## The MDGs

In 2000, the UN agreed eight Millennium Development Goals with the aim of addressing some of the most pressing issues of the time. The MDGs galvanised unprecedented efforts to address global development challenges and shaped the tone and direction of development over the last decade. There is a lot to celebrate, with fewer people now living in extreme poverty, more girls and boys in primary school, and far more people with access to clean water and essential medicines.

But progress across different goals and in different countries has been mixed. Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia consistently lag behind. The MDGs focused on national averages, obscuring what happens with different groups within a country. **The poorest and most marginalised people often experience the least progress.** Factors such as gender, disability, ethnicity and location determine who is excluded.

While the target to halve the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day has been met, the spirit of MDG1 – to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger – is far from being achieved. **800 million people still live in extreme poverty.** People living in poverty are more vulnerable to the impacts of **climate change** and **environmental degradation**. Years of hard-won progress can be wiped out by even small-scale conflicts or natural disasters



## The MDGs galvanised unprecedented efforts to address global development challenges

# Lessons have been learned and the SDGs attempt to address the root causes of poverty

Lessons have been learned and the SDGs attempt to address the root causes of poverty, inequality within and between countries, climate change and environmental degradation, and peace and justice, as well as other important issues. Since 2011 the international community has been discussing what should follow on from the MDGs in a process that included governments, academics, the private sector and civil society.

The SDGs have more ability to respond to the experiences and priorities of people on the ground. While the MDGs focused mainly on poverty in developing countries, the new goals are applicable to every country. This ambitious agenda moves

beyond the MDGs by addressing the root causes of poverty and calling for all to take action for sustainable development.

To understand how people's lives are changing, better information is needed on progress towards the goals and targets. When data is broken down along the lines of age, gender, location and disability, it can give a more accurate picture of who is benefiting and who is being excluded. New technology can create exciting opportunities to improve data but open, accessible data and data literacy for all will be key for the success of the SDGs.

## How the SDGs were created

The SDGs were created with input from stakeholders but the final decisions were taken by governments at the UN. There were many opportunities for civil society to have their voices heard and it's crucial that this continues throughout implementation over the next 15 years.

In 2011, civil society began to discuss what should follow on from the MDGs. UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon set up a panel to define a vision for development. In 2012, Member States at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, launched a process to develop the SDGs. The aim was to create universal goals, addressing the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development together. The UN held consultations in more than 100 countries. In 2013, a High Level Political Forum (HLPF) was established that will review global implementation. being agreed. The SDGs were agreed at the UN General Assembly in September 2015.

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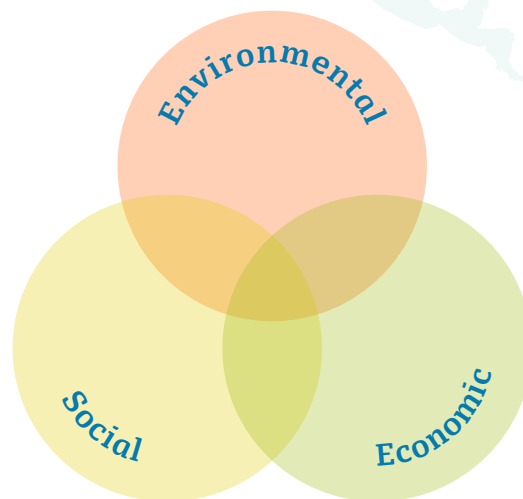
# The big shifts from MDGs to SDGs

## Universality

The MDGs focused on poverty in developing countries. Most MDG targets were for action in low income countries; only MDG 7 on environmental sustainability and MDG 8 on the global partnership held rich countries responsible for action. Learning from that experience, the SDGs take a different approach. They are universal, meaning they are equally applicable to all countries with challenging targets for rich countries as well as poor. They can be used to advocate for more equitable development based on tackling the root causes of poverty and unsustainable development.

## Integrating sustainable development

Sustainable development includes social, economic and environmental dimensions. The MDGs focused heavily on important social development issues, such as poverty, health and education, to the exclusion of economic and environmental aspects. The SDGs attempt to balance the three dimensions and they are the first attempt that has been made to integrate this approach across such a broad range of issues at the UN. The effort to move beyond single issues is not perfect and there are contradictions between some of the goals and targets.



**A stronger sense of ownership should make the SDGs a more effective tool for change**

## Participation – whose voice is heard?

Most governments had little input when the MDGs were being created in 2000, let alone people on the ground who were meant to benefit from them. This delayed actions to implement them and reduced their impact. The process to create the SDGs has been much more open, with national dialogues and thematic consultations involving many people around the world. Every government at the UN has signed up to implement them. This stronger sense of ownership should make them a more effective tool for change over the next 15 years.





# The SDGs are universal, meaning they are equally applicable to all countries. They include challenging targets for rich countries as well as poor.

## Looking at the SDGs through *Laudato Si'*

The SDGs are a useful tool for engaging with governments when used with a clear vision for a better world and as part of a wider strategy for transformational change – alone, they do not provide the answer to all problems or tackle major structural issues. In 2015 Pope Francis released an encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, on the connection between dignity, development and human ecology. In it, he invites us all to enter into dialogue on our common home and the environmental crises we face. He calls for us to re-examine our relationships to each other, the planet and the economy. How do the SDGs meet this challenge?

The dignity of the human person is at the heart of both the SDGs and *Laudato Si'*. The SDGs commit to leaving no one behind, reaching the furthest behind first and paying particular attention to the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable. If this is what happens over the next 15 years it will be, as *Laudato Si'* asks, hearing the cry of the poor.

The SDGs were created through an open process, reflecting the more equitable power balance between nations called for by the encyclical. They are universally applicable to all countries, breaking down the paradigm where poor countries carry the burden for change, and aligning them with a vision where 'everything is connected' as articulated by *Laudato Si'*.

*Laudato Si'* calls for us to understand 'the mysterious network of relations between things'

**The SDGs were created through an open process, reflecting the more equitable power balance between nations called for by the encyclical.**

and the dangers of solving 'one problem only to create others'. The SDGs are interlinked and indivisible, addressing the environmental, economic and social together.

However, the SDGs rely on economic growth to end poverty. *Laudato Si'* criticises the concept of 'infinite or unlimited growth... It 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.' (LS 106). The SDGs fail to recognise that the current global economic model is incapable of addressing our shared challenges and do not challenge the existing definition of progress.

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# How to get involved

The SDGs will influence government planning and donor priorities over the coming decades. Already, institutional donors have started to use the SDGs to shape funding flows. Many governments are creating national sustainable development plans that integrate action on the goals. As a UN agreement, they will also be important to different UN agencies and national offices. This means that there will be openings and opportunities to influence policy at global, regional, national and local levels. The SDGs are a voluntary framework, meaning that governments are not legally required to implement them, or report on progress towards them. Civil society will need to hold governments' feet to the fire to ensure they are not forgotten.



*Women from a community-based green energy project with solar panels in Isiolo, Kenya*

## Action will need to take place at the national, regional and global level to effect real change

National governments will be responsible for implementation of the global goals from 2015 through to 2030, with support from the international community. The UN has set up a mechanism for global follow up and review but action will be needed at the national, regional and global level to effect real change.





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## Ask your national government to:

**1. Develop a national sustainable development strategy.** This should be done with the participation of people experiencing poverty and marginalisation, and the organisations which represent them, and make meaningful, measurable commitments on the realisation of all goals.

**2. Commit to implementation of all the global goals** and include this in national development plans and priorities. Universality is one of the keys for successful implementation at both global and national level. It should address not only the achievement of the goals within that country but also each country's fair contribution to global achievement of the goals.

**3. Set up cross-departmental committees** including ministries of finance, planning, the environment, and foreign affairs, as well as national statistical offices, on implementation and monitoring.

**4. Build on the experience of MDG Parliamentary Committees** by creating multi-party SDG Parliamentary Committees, which will reinforce and support executive efforts on implementation. CSOs and local level institutions should be able to actively participate.

**5. Call upon decentralised administrations and local government to work closely with civil society** and other relevant actors to ensure ownership of the goals at national and sub-national levels.

**6. Ensure that national and local resources are allocated** to the implementation of the SDGs.

**7. Establish public, participatory and inclusive monitoring** and reporting mechanisms for the implementation of the goals, led by a national review body which includes members of the public - especially from the poorest and most marginalised groups - and their legitimate representatives.

**8. Participate fully and actively in agreed international follow up and review processes.**

*Developed from the Beyond 2015 toolkit 'From Policy to Action'*

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# Principles for engaging

Pope Francis has called on us all to participate in a global conversation on the future of our planet. In light of the encyclical *Laudato Si'* there is an opportunity to use these global goals as a tool to discuss human flourishing and care for our common home, based on the values of solidarity, inclusion, participation and environmental consciousness. These principles are based on participatory research with people on the ground.

## Make connections

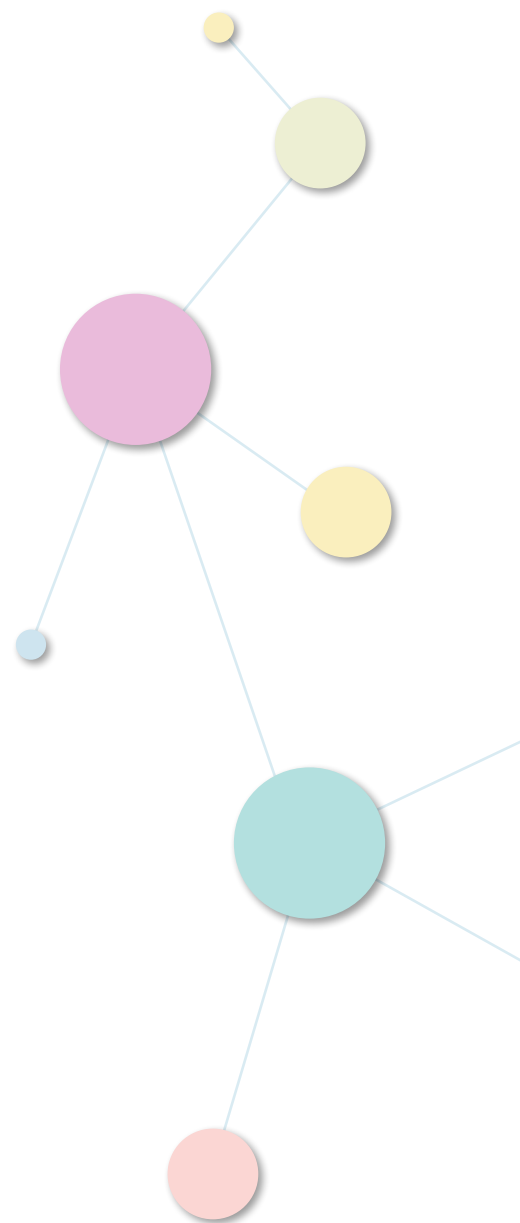
Find out who is interested in action towards realising the goals. See if national or local platforms already exist, and how you can join. With a wide range of goals, working collaboratively with others will be essential.

## Build the power of people

People know their own problems and the solutions that will work best in their contexts. Their voices must be heard. Processes to support implementation should include citizens and civil society organisations, especially those from marginalised and excluded groups, and commit to the values of inclusivity and respect for all people as a guiding principle.

## Strengthen participation

Real dialogue on implementation of the goals is needed, especially with marginalised and excluded groups. One way of doing this is through public dialogues and debates within community, parliament and local government. National conferences, public forums, and meetings with decision-makers to discuss implementation and share best practices can strengthen impact.



People in Soroti, Uganda, discuss the changes they want to see

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# Reflections

*What important issues that were missing from the MDGs are included in the Sustainable Development Goals?*

*What are the similarities and differences between the SDGs and the Laudato Si?*

*How do you think that these global goals can strengthen your advocacy, whether at the local, national, regional or global level?*

*How can we best hold governments accountable at the national level for commitments they have made at the global level?*

*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 you can join in with?*

*Which issues are your government prioritising initially?*

*Which issues do you think they should prioritise, and why?*

*What proposals do you already have for SDG implementation at the local and national level?*

## Resources

Beyond 2015 global campaign website:  
[www.beyond2015.org](http://www.beyond2015.org)

Beyond 2015 'From Policy to Action' toolkit

World We Want website:  
[www.worldwewant2015.org](http://www.worldwewant2015.org)

UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform:  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org>

CAFOD  
[www.cafod.org.uk](http://www.cafod.org.uk)

The Global Goals for Sustainable Development:  
[www.globalgoals.org](http://www.globalgoals.org)

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**DRAFT COPY FOR COMMENTS**

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For more information please contact  
Diego Martinez Schutt  
[dmartinez@cafod.org.uk](mailto:dmartinez@cafod.org.uk)

