

## What Agenda 2030 can do about climate change!

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#### Introduction

On August 2, after a final marathon negotiating session that went into the small hours, 193 countries agreed the new global Sustainable Development Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Called “Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>1</sup>”, it is the world’s new to-do list for the next 15 years. If implemented, this ambitious agenda will help eradicate extreme poverty, reduce inequality and address the root causes of our current social, economic and environmental challenges. It is the first agenda coming from the UN that looks at cross-cutting issues related to development and the first one negotiated by all countries involving civil society, academia and the private sector.

The success of this agenda will depend on how it is implemented but it is an ambitious agenda that intends to “free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet<sup>2</sup>”. The 17 goals are framed as integrated and indivisible, and seek to balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental. It is a major challenge but this new Agenda enjoys a high level of ownership by the countries and civil society organisations (CSOs) that have been involved in shaping it. The process that led to this agreement is considered by many to be the most open and transparent process in UN history. Now it’s time for us to recognise this opportunity and ensure that we’re using Agenda 2030 to its full potential to shape how we pursue a sustainable future and solve the challenges the world faces today.

Whether social injustice, gender inequality, migration, corruption, food waste, or climate disasters, we need to see today’s world problems – and the solutions – in a holistic way and address the root causes. Agenda 2030 is one useful tool to help us with this work.

#### What exactly is Agenda 2030?

Agenda 2030 has 5 chapters: preamble, declaration, the 17 SDGs and 169 targets at the core of the agenda, a chapter on means of implementation and the global partnership, and recommendations on follow up and review. In March 2016, the UN Statistical Commission will also announce a set of indicators to measure these targets.

This Agenda came as a framework to replace the MDGs and as a follow of the Rio+20 Earth Summit. The 8 MDGs, appended to the Millennium Declaration in 2000, covered a range of human development outcomes including halving extreme poverty, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, and providing universal primary education by 2015. Together, they formed a blueprint for the global development community. While progress across different goals and in different countries has been mixed, together they galvanized unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world’s poorest. In the UK, for example, 40% of the government’s total overseas development budget is directed towards the MDGs. Some of the issues they focused on have seen real improvement, from reducing the number of people living on very low incomes – although much is due to China’s economic growth – to increasing people’s access to medicines for HIV.

However, the MDGs have also been criticised, among other things, for being created through a top-down, closed-door process that did not engage people living in poverty. CAFOD’s partners have highlighted that the goals were of limited relevance to grassroots work or poor citizens themselves, as they failed to respond to the needs and priorities of people on the ground.<sup>3</sup> A further critique is that the MDGs represent the vision and priorities of donor countries, and have in fact distracted from the structural causes of poverty.<sup>4</sup> CAFOD has been pushing for a new development agenda that better reflects the priorities and experiences defined by our partners and the communities they work with. While the MDGs mainly focused on poverty in developing countries, the new Agenda is both broader and universal, meaning it will be equally applicable to all countries, including all 13 CIHEAM Member Countries.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.un.org/pga/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/08/120815\\_outcome-document-of-Summit-for-adoption-of-the-post-2015-development-agenda.pdf](http://www.un.org/pga/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/08/120815_outcome-document-of-Summit-for-adoption-of-the-post-2015-development-agenda.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Preamble

<sup>3</sup> 100 Voices (2011), CAFOD

<sup>4</sup> 100 Voices

## A new agenda for new challenges

*"The little improvement we gained with hard work over the years was again back to zero because of the flooding" (Celia, F, farmer, Mapulong, Philippines<sup>5</sup>).*

Despite some improvements through the MDGs, over the past 15 years the wellbeing of many people living in poverty has deteriorated as a result of other processes in the global context. These include environmental degradation, violent conflict, rapid changes in the prices paid to farmers, lack of access to energy, climate change impacts, and political and economic crisis among others. They displace people's livelihoods, severely impairing their ability to make a decent living.

A clear example is the effects of climate change. CAFOD's partners have told us that even when small-scale, natural disasters can destroy years of hard-won progress and undermine wellbeing for years to come. But some of these impacts can be prevented and mitigated by building resilience and preparedness, something that the new Agenda could do (see Targets 1.5<sup>6</sup> or 2.4<sup>7</sup>).

In our globally interconnected world, people living in poverty are aware that their wellbeing is dependent on decisions and situations they have no opportunity to influence or control. In 2011 CAFOD did a piece with 104 of its partners across developing countries<sup>8</sup> to find out if the MDGs were useful for them and whether they wanted an overarching, internationally agreed framework for development after 2015.

The answer was that overwhelmingly our partners viewed the MDGs as useful and recognised the importance for a new global development agenda post-2015. But they also stressed that this new agenda had to better respond to national contexts, address environmental issues and climate change and that it should be created through an open, inclusive and participatory practice.

That is why CAFOD, together with partners from civil society, have been advocating for Agenda 2030 and the SDGs to include the perspectives of those living in poverty. CAFOD helped setting up Beyond 2015<sup>9</sup>, a global civil society campaign calling for an over-arching, cross-thematic development framework to succeed the MDGs, created through an open and inclusive process. The campaign, which now has nearly 1,500 participating organisations in more than 130 countries, has been instrumental in bringing civil society's voices into the UN Agenda 2030 process.

The new set of 17 SDGs that have been agreed as part of the new sustainable development agenda will be formally adopted by the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015. They cover a wide range of issues, continuing 'traditional' MDG areas such as poverty, hunger, health, education and gender inequality, but add important new areas such as energy, infrastructure, economic development and employment, inequality, cities, sustainable consumption and production, climate change, forests, oceans, peace and security, and means of implementation. This breadth of scope is ambitious but many have recognised that it is impossible to make progress on poverty eradication and sustainable development without addressing the root causes of problems.

## Climate change in Agenda 2030

*"The environment has changed. Now stronger rains come, the land collapses, and just stones are left behind. It is now three years that we have had this bad weather. Before there were just showers and the rain did not destroy the crops. Now it comes with hailstones and it takes the land away. It brings all kinds of diseases for the plants and does not let them produce well. There are more thunderstorms now and that kills sheep, men... before, this was not happening." (Artisan workshops, Yamparáez, Bolivia, COMPASS 2015)*

The global context has significantly changed during the last 15 years. CAFOD and other development practitioners have seen a range of factors that have displaced the livelihoods of people living in poverty, often resulting in a deterioration of wellbeing experienced by the poorest and most vulnerable people. While some of these, such as environmental degradation and climate change can affect us all, people living in poverty are often impacted first and hardest. Climate change is an example of how interconnected the world is, where actions, decisions and behaviours in one country can have global implications. People experiencing poverty are aware of this interconnectedness and that we all share just one world finite in resources.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> COMPASS 2015 (2013): Setting the post-2015 development compass: voices from the ground. [http://www.cafod.org.uk/content/download/11319/89078/file/CF-Compass\\_report.pdf](http://www.cafod.org.uk/content/download/11319/89078/file/CF-Compass_report.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> 1.5 by 2030 build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations, and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters

<sup>7</sup> 2.4 by 2030 ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters, and that progressively improve land and soil quality

<sup>8</sup> 100 Voices

<sup>9</sup> See [www.beyond2015.org](http://www.beyond2015.org)

<sup>10</sup> COMPASS 2015

*"If we don't confront climate change, we won't end poverty" (Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank)*

In recent years there has been growing global recognition that climate change is a critical development challenge, capable of undermining sustainable development and poverty eradication. The sustainable development pathways that we choose today to deal with hunger, poverty, provide energy access or resilient infrastructure will also determine how well we address the mitigation and adaptation challenges of climate change so both must be considered together.

During early discussions around Agenda 2030, there was fear that including climate change could either undermine the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, as the UNFCCC is the main body in charge of leading climate negotiations towards a legally binding agreement. Worse, there were fears it could import some of the tensions and entrenched divisions from the UNFCCC talks into the post-2015 process. However, negotiators finally agreed that addressing climate change had to be part of the new sustainable development agenda because it is not possible to achieve sustainable development without tackling one of the greatest challenges of our times.

Agenda 2030 includes SDG 13 to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, with a range of targets covering resilience, adaptive capacity, and resource mobilisation. It also includes SDG 7 on ensuring access to sustainable energy<sup>11</sup> that calls for more renewable energies and increased energy efficiency by 2030, which could contribute to action for climate mitigation. It also includes several climate-relevant targets across other goal areas such as building resilience and reduce exposure to climate extreme events, strengthen adaptation to climate change when producing food, or phase down fossil fuel subsidies. So, it offers a significant opportunity for more and better-coordinated climate action vis-à-vis poverty reduction within and beyond the UNFCCC. This is crucial for many reasons: it will ensure that development is done in a more climate-compatible way and it will help create a common narrative framing both climate change and development as inherently interconnected.

However, the Agenda also addresses climate change on other important levels: the Preamble reaffirms the need for urgent action on climate change over the next fifteen years. The Declaration highlights the need for climate-compatible development and urges us to consider climate change as one of the biggest challenges to the achievement of the whole agenda<sup>12</sup>. It outlines a *supremely ambitious and transformational vision*<sup>13</sup> that envisages a world in which development and the application of technology are climate-sensitive and resilient<sup>14</sup>.

All of these send a strong message to governments, UN agencies, development banks and civil society to ensure that climate change is adequately incorporated when planning and implementing development projects. For instance, projects focusing on sustainable cities, transport, production and consumption will now be more likely to do so while mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, adapting to climate and building resilience.

The most recent assessments of climate change science prepared by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reconfirmed that climate change is real and happening now, that greenhouse gas emissions released by human activities are the primary cause, and that the world is on a pathway towards global warming of 4°C. While we hope for a global climate deal to be agreed under the UNFCCC this year in Paris, to enter into force in 2020, we also look for all available opportunities that increase our likelihood to stay below a 2°C future.

Agenda 2030 has the potential to contribute to that. It calls for climate action that is consistent with holding the increase in temperatures below 2°C or 1.5°C and it urges us to start before 2020<sup>15</sup>. So this agenda opens up the possibility to increase further action in a new area and to add momentum to the fight against climate change beyond the UNFCCC. We must embrace it and make the most out of it.

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<sup>11</sup> SDG7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

<sup>12</sup> Para. 14

<sup>13</sup> Para. 7

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<sup>15</sup> Para. 30