

# Faith communities and SDGs

PRESENTATION BY:  
 REV FR. MCDONALD NAH  
 AT THE CARITAS AFRICA SIDE EVENT  
 AFRICA REGIONAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
 VICTORIA FALLS ZIMBABWE  
 26<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2020

1

## The connection between Development and Faith

- Worldwide, 8 in 10 people identify with a particular religious group.
  - According to a comprehensive demographic study conducted by Pew Research centre on Religion and public life, 84% of the worlds population are religiously affiliated adults and children.
    - a) 2.2 Billion Christians out of which 1.2 billion are Catholics
    - b) 1 billion Hindus
    - c) 14 Million Jews
    - d) 500 Million Budhists
    - e) Over 400 Million people are practising various folk or traditional religions
- Research evidence further reveals that “people in need” trust their places of worship more than any other institution .
- Therefore, faiths are vital in shaping attitudes and beliefs that informs people’s approach to social, political, economic and moral issues.
- Also, Faith generates trust networks among groups of people and ensures the possibility of globalisation. Faith communities can play a vital role in **transforming the system**. (*If 1.2 Billion Catholics decided to plant 2 trees per person in a day, the environment would register a form of impact*)

2

## The connection between Development and Faith

At the heart of the UN Agenda for the year 2030 is the commitment to ' **Leave no one behind**' this can be compared to the Biblical parable of the shepherd who sets out to find the one lost sheep. Indeed, this reflects our deeply-held faith convictions and practices.

Over the years, Faith based Organizations **advocated for the vision of inclusivity**. Now we have a unique opportunity with the SDGs to intentionally fulfill this vision.

Before the coming of SDGs, faith based organizations worked in various communities with **diverse groups of people. It was not about gender, race or creed, rather, to honor the dignity of the human person.**

Faith groups have demonstrated their commitment to the slogan 'leave no one behind' with their different developmental programs among **"marginalized communities", through the provision of quality and avoidable health, education and other services.**

**The Catholic Church through its structures** has been in a position to contribute to various SDGs through its education and health Institutions, The Justice and Peace commission, its social pastoral arm (Caritas) etc

3

## The connection between Development and Faith

Because of their commitment to **stay with the communities before and after disasters, faith based organizations and actors occupy a crucial space for sustainable development.**

It is therefore good news that development discourse and practice today acknowledges the significant role that religion plays in this area.

**Greater portions of development aid are now channeled via faith based organizations** and religion is increasingly recognized as a resource for- rather than as an obstacle to development.

For the past seven years, civil society, faith based actors and the private sector have been increasingly involved in adopting approaches and methods aimed at implementing the goals. **It is therefore important for us to maintain this partnership in reference to SDG 17**

4

## Contributions by the Catholic Church in Liberia

1. **The Bringing Agenda 2030 to life project-** Findings from this research are being used to encourage development actors to do development differently by focusing on the transformational potential of Agenda 2030 and in line with Laudato Si. NCJPC Liberia approaches this advocacy agenda in reference to the transformational principles (1) **leave no one behind** (2) **tackling inequalities** (3) **Environmental Support and protection** and (4) **Participation and Dialogue**.
2. **The Access to Justice project** significantly contributes to SDG 16 and intersects with other SDGs such as SDG 1, SDG 5 and SDG 17
3. **Media Advocacy** through the Diocesan radio station
4. The Catholic Bishops Conference has convened a meeting and part of the Agenda **will be to engage the priests on Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063** after which the forum will develop an elaborate strategy to push for the implementation of SDGs in line with the Government's pro-poor agenda
5. **NCJPC in partnership with CAFOD will lead a number of processes ahead of the 2020 VNR.** For the first time the Civil Society will contribute to the government's VNR Report.
6. The Catholic Church in Liberia has also taken concrete steps to **engage the youth in response to Pope Francis' Post-Synodal apostolic exhortation- *Christus Vivit*.**
6. Different development programmes implemented in the Diocesan Caritas feed into the SDGs

5

## Suggested Next Steps for engaging Faith Groups in Agenda 2030 and Africa's Agenda 2063

1. **Work with Faith Based entities in the process of Localising the Sustainable Development Goals.** Church structures are strategic entry points to train communities on Civic education, Governance , socio-economic issues, climate change etc. The acquired knowledge can be used by communities to inform their contribution, participation and dialogue in government processes.
2. **Faith leaders can support the implementation of the SDGs** in simple ways such as engaging the youth in climate change interventions, encouraging the faithful to vote based on thematic issues ,
3. **Formation of Children at the early stages of development is crucial.** The family is an important agent of socialisation and these are entry points to shape attitudes , perceptions and knowledge on Gender equality, Gender parity, effects of Gender based violence, conflict transformation by discouraging tribalism, encouraging young children and women to participate In political processes such as voting.
4. **Use of media advocacy through Communication channels** that are owned by Faith Groups. Eg the Radio Network of the Catholic Church, blogs, print media and various social media pages

6

## Suggested Next Steps for engaging Faith Groups in Agenda 2030 and Africa's Agenda 2063

**5. Schools owned by faith Communities can be used to change academic practices.** There is the possibility of exchanging knowledge without slowly killing planet- ***Minimise printing of papers, adoption of the use of renewable energy, engaging the youth and young adults in decision Making spaces such as the ARFSD and HLPF.***

**6. Faith Groups have a role to play in promoting democracy** (especially during elections) and good governance in their respective countries.

**7. Strengthening collaboration amongst faith communities working on SDGs in Africa** to identify opportunities for partnership, collaboration in such forums, joint fundraising to translate commitments to action on the ground and also conducting National Level advocacy while engaging governments on Issues affecting the communities we work with.

**8. Give Faith communities a seat at the table** in regional and global advocacy processes.

7

Thank you!

8