

one human family caring for creation



Caritas Internationalis Summary Strategic Framework 2015–2019

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One human family, caring for creation

**“We need to strengthen the conviction
that we are one single human family.”**
(*Laudato Si*, #52)

Caritas Internationalis is at the heart of the Catholic Church, with a network of 165 member organisations reaching out in compassion and solidarity to the poorest and most excluded in our world.



Our Strategic Framework for the next four years finds its main objectives reflected in Pope Francis’s powerful encyclical *Laudato Si* – *On care for our common home*. In it he calls each of us to undertake a mission to save the planet, our relationship with God and our human family.

This letter, addressed to all people of the world, calls us urgently to “bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development” (*LS#13*). This has been the unchanging mission of Caritas, given to us by the Church: to attend to all in need and build a community of love.

**“The climate is a common good,
belonging to all and meant for all.”**
(*Laudato Si*, #23)

The central, urgent theme of the encyclical is climate change, and the dire consequences of our exploitation of environmental resources. Disaster response, our second strategic objective, is a key role for Caritas, in a world where environmental destruction and climate change are hitting the poorest hardest. Ecological disaster is inseparable from human and social



degradation, so the integral human development we seek must include a deep care for the earth as a gift from God.

Pope Francis demands that we challenge the very structures that deprive so many of their basic rights, treating them as expendable. Here and in *Evangelii Gaudium* he demands that we say no to “an economy

of exclusion” (EG, #53). This is a challenge we face in our third objective of eradicating poverty by changing unjust systems. We are working to give excluded people access to the decision-making processes that affect them and to promote pro-poor policies at a global level. We look forward to a world in which governments and institutions are just and accountable.

Pope Francis expresses strong criticism of the economic imbalance in our world, with the widening gap between rich and poor, the rise in migration and human trafficking, and worsening inequality. “It is a struggle to live,” he writes, “and often, to live with precious little dignity.” (EG, #52) The remedy is to reach out across the divide in solidarity and help all to flourish. As the Pope says simply, “we need one another”. Through our campaigning and advocacy objective, we strive to be a positive force for such social change.

These are tremendous tasks, for which we need strength and courage. Developing and sharing our best practises among the many members of the Caritas confederation will increase our ability to serve and mobilise poor communities. We trust that this Strategic Framework will provide all of Caritas Internationalis with a refreshed vision and lead to a stronger confederation actively engaged in transforming our world.

“An authentic faith ... always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it.”
(*Evangelii Gaudium* #183)

We are Caritas

The work of Caritas Internationalis is inspired by scripture, the Church's teachings and the hopes of people living in poverty. We seek a world where love and justice flourish and where the dignity of the human being is upheld; where no-one is excluded and all can enjoy the necessities of life; where our planet is safeguarded, and where the voices of the poor are heard so that we build a just society together. These are the guiding principles that inspire our work:



Dignity of the human person

We believe in the intrinsic dignity and equality of every human person and the sacredness of human life, from conception to natural death. We categorically reject the exclusion of poor, disabled and elderly people, or any other vulnerable members of our human family.

Mercy and compassion

We are compelled to take action to alleviate misery and pain. Mercy is a Gospel value central to the message of Jesus, leading those who work for Caritas to be loving and compassionate.

Formation of the heart

We believe that "Those who work for the Church's charitable organisations must be distinguished by the

fact that ... they dedicate themselves to others with heartfelt concern, enabling them to experience the richness of their humanity. Consequently, in addition to their necessary professional training, these charity workers need a 'formation of the heart.'" (Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, #31)

Equal opportunities and responsibilities

We are committed to promoting equal rights and responsibilities of men and women.

Preferential option for the poor

We combat dehumanising poverty that deprives people of their dignity and we promote the rights of poor and vulnerable people. We accompany them in building a better world for all.



Universal destination of the goods of the earth

We work to transform economic, social, political and cultural structures that are opposed to a just society. We work to change this world into one where all can share in the gifts of creation and enjoy basic rights.

Subsidiarity and cooperation

Our members seek to work together across the confederation when a united approach can increase effectiveness and advance our common mission. We recognise the local autonomy of each organisation.

“Caritas is the heart of the Church.”
(Pope Benedict XVI, 2013)



Solidarity

We are committed to solidarity among all peoples, seeing the world through the eyes of the poor, and recognising the interdependence of the human family. We will always strive to work for the common good.

Stewardship

We believe the earth and its resources are entrusted to all humankind. As true stewards of creation, Caritas members seek to act and inspire others to act in an environmentally sustainable way, so that nature will be preserved for future generations.



Working together as Caritas

Caritas promotes good working relationships among its members, while recognising their autonomy. Although we are different, we share a common mission expressed in this Strategic Framework. The aim is to develop a ministry to the poor that begins at parish level and spirals upwards to include the whole confederation.

Strengthening ourselves as a network means building the capacity of each organisation, developing specific responsibilities at the level of parish and diocese, bishops' conference, and region. We are working towards a point where each national Caritas is the reference point for other members in that country. This in turn will allow us to empower people at the grassroots to participate more fully in creating a just society for all.

Five strategic objectives to 2019



Save lives, rebuild communities

Reduce the impact of humanitarian crises through disaster preparedness and response



Caritas at the heart of the Church

Uphold the Catholic identity of Caritas as an essential service of the Church to the poor



Promote sustainable integral human development

Eradicate poverty by empowering people and changing unjust systems

4 Build global solidarity

Address the causes of extreme poverty through education and campaigning, and raise the profile of Caritas



“If there is any power we should exercise, it’s the power of love and goodness.”

*Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle,
President of Caritas Internationalis*



5 Make the Caritas confederation more effective

Build a stronger confederation and mobilise more resources





Caritas at the heart of the Church

Objective One: Uphold the Catholic identity of Caritas as an essential service of the Church to the poor

Fulfilling the task given to us by the Church to attend to all in need, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, spreading charity and justice in the light of the Gospel and Catholic teaching.

1

Strategies

Encourage a culture of service, cooperation and spiritual commitment within Caritas, based on Church teaching.

Promote cooperation throughout the Church based on good relationships across the Caritas confederation at all levels: global, regional, national and diocesan.

Strengthen the coordination role and leadership of each national Caritas under the guidance of local bishops' conferences and Church hierarchy.

Towards 2019: the change we seek

- All staff and volunteers have had training in Catholic Social Teaching and the Church's exercise of charity. Together with people living in poverty, they have access to useful tools and materials about the Catholic identity and mission of Caritas.
- The Church's social and development work is being taken forward by good collaborative practice among Caritas members and between the confederation and Church sectors in areas such as education, catechism and formation.
- Caritas staff and partners are living witnesses to Gospel values, working to create a society where justice, peace, prosperity and dignity prevail.
- All Caritas policy and output is inspired by Church teaching. More Caritas messages and actions are reaching grassroots level.
- Caritas develops programmes in cooperation with all levels of Church hierarchy. Church leaders promote this work. Caritas has ongoing dialogue with Church leaders at international, regional and national levels.
- Member organisations help their local Church hierarchy prepare positions and statements.



“...while the existing world order proves powerless to assume its responsibilities, local individuals and groups can make a real difference.”
(*Laudato Sí*, #179)

Promote a culture of partnership, ecumenism
and interfaith cooperation.

Promote the organisation of committed
faith communities.

Foster respect for religious diversity and work
to eliminate religious fundamentalism by
promoting the right to live in peace.

- Caritas is seen as an organisation which promotes cooperation between different peoples, cultures and religions.
- Parish Caritas and communities are supported, becoming places where people in poverty or with other needs can share experiences and solidarity. They are well prepared to respond to emergencies, to promote development and to work for social justice.
- Understanding religious diversity is part of education programmes across Caritas, with the aim of preventing religious extremism.





Save lives, rebuild communities

Objective Two: Reduce the impact of humanitarian crises through disaster preparedness and response

Responding quickly and effectively to crises such as conflict, epidemics, natural disasters and the effects of climate change. Saving lives, relieving suffering, promoting peace and helping men, women and children in the most vulnerable communities to survive and thrive, supported by forward planning against future disasters.

2



Strategies

Launch effective emergency responses, according to international standards, in close cooperation with other agencies.

Lobby governments, intergovernmental organisations and the private sector to promote best humanitarian practice.

Help communities plan ahead through disaster preparedness and risk reduction strategies.

Towards 2019: the change we seek

- Caritas organisations are equipped to give humanitarian help and respond to crisis alongside communities.
- Caritas members have built skills which increase the capacity of the confederation to respond to emergencies. These skills are coordinated across Caritas to provide the best outcome for vulnerable communities.
- Policies are in place across the confederation to ensure we are meeting the needs of those we serve in an accountable and effective way, appropriate to local situations and cultures.
- Through the actions of Caritas, people in power will hear the voices of those caught up in humanitarian crises, leading to changes in humanitarian policy, law and disaster response.
- More communities have the technical and financial means to adapt to erratic climate threats.
- Community-based Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is mainstreamed into recovery and development work. With our support, governments, Church groups and communities improve disaster risk reduction.



“Injustice is not invincible.”
(*Laudato Si* #74)

2

Promote peace and reconciliation in conflict zones.

- Our work in conflict zones includes conflict resolution and transformation, peace and reconciliation. Lobbying and advocacy are part of our response.
- Communities have the capacity to dialogue for peace, including inter-religious dialogue.

Protect and support the most vulnerable, especially families, women and children.

- Our emergency work prioritises the needs of vulnerable families, women and children. More women take the lead in emergency work and peacebuilding.



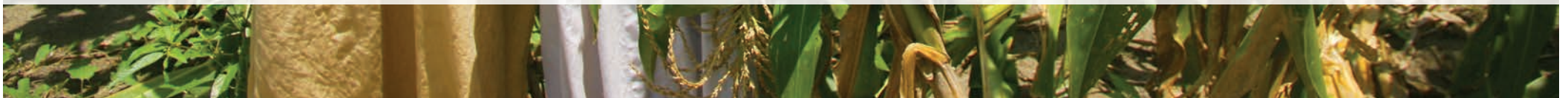


Promote sustainable integral human development

Objective Three: Eradicate poverty by empowering people and changing unjust systems

Supporting the most disadvantaged communities to drive their own development and influence systems that affect them. Promoting good governance and equal access to the basic services and resources such as education, clean water, healthcare, energy and land that people need in order to live with dignity.

3



Strategies

Advocate for a decent life for the poorest men, women and children through changing the conditions that keep them in poverty.

Towards 2019: the change we seek

Caritas has the right structures in place to help achieve the following:

- Communities have enough food, through programmes and policies promoting sustainable food production. We promote people's right to land, water and social protection.
- Justice is achieved regarding climate change and the use of natural resources, through programmes and policy change. Communities care for their environment and have better access to green, affordable energy. The rights of indigenous communities are protected.
- Caritas has increased activities for peace and reconciliation. Across the confederation we undertake more advocacy work for peace, for environmental protection and for communities affected by the extractive industry.
- More people have access to universal healthcare. Caritas has lobbied for more funding for religious organisations providing healthcare, and for affordable diagnostics, treatment and health insurance.



“...a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”
(*Laudato Si* #49)

Through training and support, help empower people as self-reliant citizens who attain access to basic rights.

Help develop Church and civil society organisations in order to address governance and human rights issues.

- Caritas members have eliminated particular instances of human trafficking and poor working conditions and have promoted the right to decent work and justice, including for migrants.
- More national policies ensure safe and legal migration, especially for women and children, while better social policies support migrant families.
- We have studied new models of development and social protection, towards an economy based on solidarity. We have encouraged peer learning, especially between poor communities.
- Caritas collects and shares good practices that help poor people attain sustainable livelihoods.
- Caritas helps create an environment in which faith and civil society groups can flourish, enlisting the aid of Church structures and other stakeholders. We actively participate in world social movements.
- We have well-defined relationships with our allies, especially Councils and Commissions for Justice and Peace, religious congregations and other Church structures, both local and global.





Monitor the Sustainable Development Goals.

- All Caritas members fully understand the Goals, and more members are able to track how well these are working for the benefit of poor people.
- Caritas has contributed to 'pro-poor' policies at international, regional and national levels.

Promote environmental justice and care for the earth.

- Caritas is active worldwide highlighting the urgency of the climate crisis and promoting a way of life that respects creation. All our work is inspired by the encyclical *Laudato Si'*.
- The voices of people affected by climate change have been heard by those in power. Caritas has demanded accountability from governments and private sector groups responsible for causing environmental harm, and helped change systems that damage the planet. By engaging in high-level debates we have contributed to making climate justice a priority for all.

3

Strengthen families in difficult conditions as they seek to improve their lives.

- Caritas programmes support disadvantaged families and promote education in values of love, sharing and inter-generational dialogue.
- Caritas works for the legal protection of human rights of families. We lobby government for pro-family housing and employment policies, and for policies aimed at reuniting migrant families and people affected by war, famine and natural disasters.
- Caritas runs job training and promotes microcredit for small businesses to help poor families participate fully in society.
- We have programmes aimed at education and social inclusion of young people at risk.



3



Build global solidarity

Objective Four: Address the causes of extreme poverty through education and campaigning, and raise the profile of Caritas

Explaining and challenging the structural causes of poverty through communication and lobbying, Caritas brings the voice of the poor to the global stage. We are seen as a positive force, changing hearts and minds towards solidarity with people living in poverty.

4

Strategies

Promote the voices of the poor to raise awareness of extreme poverty and injustice and to call for action.

Run a global campaign to eliminate the root causes of poverty, to uphold the dignity of all and to defend the environment.

Share knowledge and good practice across Caritas organisations.

Towards 2019: the change we seek

- Caritas seeks to ensure that community leaders, both men and women, are present or represented during global advocacy work.
- Caritas has implemented a global campaign and is seen as a leading actor promoting a world without poverty and cooperation between peoples and cultures.
- Caritas worldwide has united Church groups and the general public on a single issue, leading to changes in policy and behaviour.
- Tools exist to share information across Caritas, and members have agreed to build internal databases that sum up their work.





Raise the profile of Caritas by promoting its strengths.

- Caritas Internationalis is recognised as a key humanitarian network, and this strengthens the impact and fundraising potential of all members. All members co-brand as Caritas in major emergencies.
- A survey has been published of Caritas national and diocesan organisations, on programming, staff, reach and impact. Data is then gathered annually.
- Caritas members make communications a priority, including social media training. Regional communications strategies are in place.

“Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home.”
(*Laudato Sí*, #13)

4



Make the Caritas confederation more effective

Objective Five: Build a stronger confederation and mobilise more resources

Strengthening the skills and standards of Caritas confederation members to best serve poor and vulnerable communities in a compassionate and culturally appropriate way. Members are accountable, financially sustainable and provide staff training in both professional and spiritual areas.

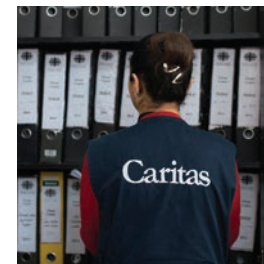
5

Strategies

Towards 2019: the change we seek

Implement Management Standards and Codes of Ethics and Conduct.

- CI Management Standards are implemented on a trial basis, so that members are more professional, transparent and accountable. Further plans for improvement are made. Codes of Ethics and Conduct are in place across the confederation.
- Fewer members are in fragile situations, and all have governance structures in place.
- Caritas members are clearly seen as charitable organisations of the Church in their local contexts, while also meeting Caritas-wide standards. Terms of reference for a Caritas organisation are in place.
- Evaluation of the CI Management Standards takes place in 2017. Decisions on improvements are made in 2018 for the period starting 2019.



“We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it.”
(*Laudato Si*, #229)

**Coordinate capacity building across
the confederation.**

- Regional strategies for strengthening organisations are implemented. Members are benefiting from sharing capacity-building ideas. A database exists of Caritas activities at national level, for sharing experience.
- Larger Caritas organisations accompany members in fragile situations, while recognising the autonomy of each member.
- Caritas members have renewed their commitment to working in partnership.

**Support effective fundraising by
member organisations.**

- Members have fundraising strategies in place.

Promote young Caritas workers and volunteers.

- A forum exists where young workers and volunteers can share knowledge and engage.
- Caritas organisations include recruitment of young people, and youth leaders are co-opted to help develop future youth leadership programmes.





Achieve a fair balance of leadership roles among men and women within the confederation.

Provide resources for “formation of the heart” alongside professional training.

- Member organisations work actively for the equal rights of women and men in their workplace.
- There are more women in Caritas Internationalis governance and among Caritas national directors. More women are part of confederation meetings and working structures.
- A women's forum exists to promote the advancement of women across Caritas.
- Caritas staff and volunteers are trained in the Christian values that motivate the work of Caritas, and our activities reflect these values.

5

Towards a civilisation of love



From the beginning of his papal ministry, Pope Francis has acknowledged Caritas as “the caress ... to those suffering ... being at the continuous service of people living in extreme situations.” (*Address to Caritas, May 2013*)

The members of Caritas Internationalis strive to fulfil that promise by touching the lives and supporting the wellbeing of millions of people in need each day. At the centre of our attention and action are our sisters and brothers who survive on the periphery of society, who simply wish to be recognised as equals and given the opportunity to live out their God-given potential.

We have set out briefly here who we are at Caritas, what we intend to achieve, and how we plan to do this*. These strategic goals, developed in broad consultation with the women and men, young and old, associated with our confederation, reflect the

hopes and dreams of so many beyond our membership: all of our sisters and brothers who work tirelessly on behalf of the Church to serve others, and all people of good will who put the common good above personal gain.

We know that God sends us to work for a better world. Speaking at the opening Mass of the Caritas General Assembly in May 2015, Pope Francis encouraged us to live up to the special role of Caritas:

“One who lives the Caritas mission is not a simple worker but indeed a witness to Christ ... All of our strategies and planning stand empty if we do not bear this love within us.”

It is in this spirit that we pursue with joy and commitment our desire to create **one human family, caring for creation.**

** This is a short form of the Caritas Strategic Framework. The full document can be found on our website.*

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