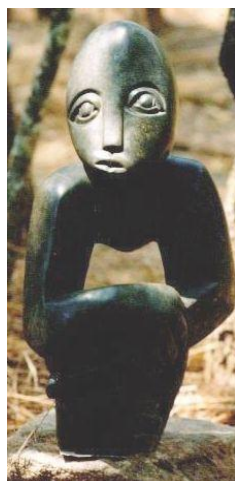




SDGs – A new challenge

On 25 September 2015, the General Assembly of the United Nations passed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) replace the Millennium



Development Goals (MDGs). They link the principle of sustainability with economic, environmental and social development. The SDGs concern all, industrialised, emerging and developing nations alike. The realisation of these goals and targets would be an important step to stem the massive flow of migrants and refugees who have left their homes in search of security and a better life. The implementation of the SDGs will not succeed without strong political pressure from civil society. AEFJN has already worked for many years on some of the SDGs. During the weeks of Lent we will present some of the new development goals and ask ourselves how we could contribute to their implementation.

What are the strengths of the SDGs?

Compared to the Millennium Goals (MDGs) the sustainable development Goals (SDGs) present a considerable progress:

- They oblige not only developing countries, but all states. European countries also need a new sustainability strategy.
- The MDGs focussed on cutting the number of the poor by half. The SDGs want to link poverty reduction with the sustainability goals decided during the world summit of 1992 in Rio de Janeiro.
- As the starting point for development is very different in each country, every government must define its own goals and targets.

What are the weaknesses of the SDGs?

The 17 goals and the 168 targets contain some contradictions:

- They are not legally binding and do not foresee any sanctions.
- They are based on a neo-liberal economic model with a strong emphasis on economic growth and technical progress. Yet a truly sustainable system cannot be achieved without radical changes in our present patterns of consumption and production.
- They remain rather vague without measureable targets.

Words to challenge us

We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity. Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others. (Laudato Si 159)

‘As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning... Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.’ (LS 207)

The 17 SDGs

- Goal 1. End **poverty** in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2. End **hunger**, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3. Ensure **healthy lives** and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality **education** and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5. Achieve **gender equality** and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of **water and sanitation** for all
- Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern **energy** for all
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and **sustainable economic growth**, full and productive **employment** and decent work for all
- Goal 9. Build resilient **infrastructure**, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10. Reduce **inequality** within and among countries
- Goal 11. Make **cities** and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12. Ensure **sustainable consumption and production** patterns
- Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat **climate change** and its impacts
- Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the **oceans**, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial **ecosystems**, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16. Promote **peaceful and inclusive societies** for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the **global partnership** for sustainable development



End poverty – reduce inequality

The last 15 years have seen some progress in reducing poverty in the world. Yet 10% of the world's population still live in extreme poverty. The causes of poverty are manifold: wide spread corruption, tax evasion by multinational companies, the effects of climate change, the discrimination of minority groups. Every year some two trillion dollars' flow from the developing countries to the industrialised countries. At the same time the number of millionaires and billionaires are increasing continually. The gap between rich and poor is increasing at an alarming rate. 62 of the richest persons own more property than the poorer half of the world population. Scientific research shows that extreme inequality is one of the causes of social tensions and violent conflicts. It is appropriate that the first Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) demands as a priority to put an end to poverty.

What do the SDGs call for?

The SDGs ask for special efforts to support vulnerable groups, such as women and children and indigenous peoples.

- They need access to educational facilities, to social and financial services and social protection systems, to ownership and control over land and other property and inheritance rights.
- Vulnerable groups who are exposed to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks need special attention.
- Policies should ensure inclusion and equal opportunity for all, promote participation in decision-making and eliminate discrimination.
- The problem of highly indebted countries has to be addressed. (SGD 17.4)



Not mentioned, but important would be effective measures against tax evasion and tax havens.

What can we do?

From the beginning religious working in Africa were engaged in the struggle against poverty in various ways. They helped poor people in their various needs and initiated educational programmes. Through the Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) they were involved in actions for debt relief of the highly indebted poor countries, against land grabbing and unfair trade agreements like EPAs and the TTIP negotiations because they disadvantage developing countries. Today we must ask ourselves what we can do against new forms of poverty and exclusion.

Words to challenge us

- Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? (Is 58:6-7)
- If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (Jak. 2:16-17)
- We have a sort of 'super development' of a wasteful and consumerist kind. This forms an unacceptable situations of dehumanizing deprivation. We are all too slow in developing economic institutions to undertake social initiatives which can give the poor regular access to basic resources. (LS 109)
- Helping the poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work. (LS 128)
- Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society. This demands that we be docile and attentive to the cry of the poor and come to their aid.

(Evangelii Gaudium 187)



End hunger – protect ecosystems

Hunger is the greatest scandal of our times. Dying of hunger means an agonizing slow death. Although there is enough food for all, 3 million children die every year of malnutrition. 870 million people suffer hunger while in the rich countries an increasing number of people have a problem of overweight. World hunger is in the first place a problem of unfair distribution, heavy harvest losses and the scandalous wastage of food. Other causes are wars and climate change, land grabbing and poverty, European agricultural and trade policies as well as speculation on food commodities und unsustainable extraction of resources. Surprisingly, the majority of malnourished persons live in rural areas. That is why an important Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) is to help subsistence farmers to improve their livelihood.

What does the SDG call for?

Food is a basic human right. The SDGs call not only for a reduction but for an end to poverty and hunger everywhere and in all its forms. Some of the means proposed to achieve this goal are:

- to double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers and to assure them access to land, technical knowledge, financial services and markets
- to ensure sustainable food production systems; to strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change; to improve land and soil quality; to maintain the genetic diversity of seeds; to ensure sustainable use of ecosystems; to eliminate all forms of agricultural export subsidies
- to invest in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services

Hardly mentioned, but important would be: regulation on speculation in food commodities and trade policies which do harm to local producers in Africa.



What can we do?

Religious working in Africa have from the beginning been engaged in the struggle against poverty and hunger. The Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) has been campaigning for many years for the rights and promotion of small farmers, demanding the discontinuation of the EU bio-fuel targets which encourage land grabbing, pushing the implementation of the FAO guidelines on the responsible tenure of land and promoting the idea of food sovereignty.

We can have an impact on the problem of poverty and hunger in the world by a simple life-style and through our daily consumer choices if we buy preferably regionally and sustainably produced food stuffs, when possible fair trade products, if we diminish our consumption of meat, avoid wasting food, maybe even growing food ourselves and supporting food councils.

Words to challenge us

- **Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food... Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.** (Mt 25:35.40)
- **We know that approximately a third of all food produced is discarded, and ‘whenever food is thrown out it is as if it were stolen from the table of the poor.** (Laudato Si’ 50)
- **It is painful to see that the fight against hunger and malnutrition is hindered by “market priorities” and the “primacy of profit”, which has reduced foodstuffs to a commodity like any other; subject to speculation that is also of a financial nature. And while we speak of new rights, the hungry are waiting at the street corner asking for the right to citizenship; asking for due consideration of their status to receive a healthy, basic diet. They ask for dignity, not for alms. There is food for everyone, but not everyone can eat, while waste, excessive consumption and the use of food for other purposes is visible before our very eyes.** (Papst Franziskus, Rede vor der FAO)
- **Those whose usurious and avaricious dealings lead to the hunger and death of their brethren in the human family indirectly commit homicide.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2269)

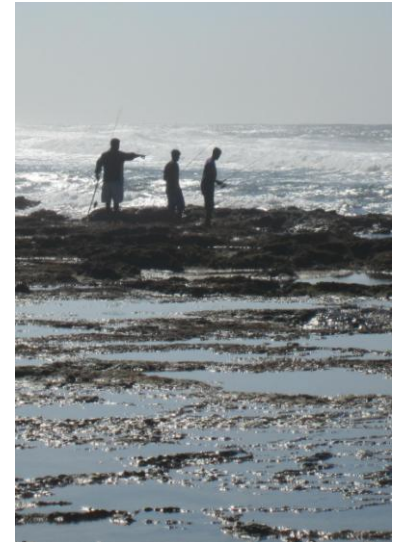
Sustainable use of water, oceans and marine resources

No Life without water. Even more than food we need it to survive. That is why access to water is a basic human right. Yet, some 663 Million people do not have access to clean water. About a third of the world's population lacks basic sanitary services. Polluted water and lack of hygiene are the causes of many sicknesses. The oceans, too, are polluted by plastic materials and industrial and agricultural toxic wastes which harm fish populations and destroy corral riffs and marine ecosystems. Already now climate change means for many regions of the African continent less rainfall, lower ground water levels and lack of drinking water. The struggle for diminishing water supplies is likely to cause major conflicts in the future. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for the conservation and fair and effective management of all water resources.

What do the SDG call for?

The SDGs demand that all people have access to clean drinking water and adequate sanitation. Means suggested to achieve this aim are:

- reducing chemical pollution; improving wastewater treatment and recycling and reusing water
- protecting and restoring water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes
- sustainably managing, protecting and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems
- minimizing and addressing the impacts of ocean acidification; regulating harvesting and ending over fishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices



What can we do?

Especially, in the drought areas of Africa religious have provided the population with access to clean water by building wells, drilling boreholes and constructing simple water reservoirs.

The local branches of the Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) have advocated for many years the right to water as a basic human right.

We can all contribute to avoid the pollution of water resources and of oceans by reducing our use of chemicals and by avoiding as much as possible plastic bags and packing. We can get information about concrete water problems and current campaigns from the [Ecumenical Water Network](#). It publishes during the seven weeks of Lent theological reflections and other [liturgical materials](#) on the theme of water. Also take note of World Water Day 22nd March.

Words to challenge us

- For human beings to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation; for human beings to degrade the integrity of the earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the earth of its natural forests or destroying its wetlands; for human beings to contaminate the earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life - these are sins. For to commit a crime against the natural world is a sin against ourselves and a sin against God. (Patriarch Bartholomew, quoted in *Laudato Si'* 8)
- One particularly serious problem is the quality of water available to the poor. Every day, unsafe water results in many deaths and the spread of water-related diseases. ... Even as the quality of available water is constantly diminishing, in some places there is a growing tendency, despite its scarcity, to privatize this resource, turning it into a commodity subject to the laws of the market. Yet access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. (LS 29.30)
- An acute water shortage may occur within a few decades unless urgent action is taken. The environmental repercussions could affect billions of people; it is also conceivable that the control of water by large multinational businesses may become a major source of conflict in this century. (LS 31)



Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

If all countries in the world would adopt the lifestyle and the consumption patterns of the western world, an ecological disaster would be inevitable. Already now we use more resources than our planet can renew. "Overshoot day" the date of the year when we have used what we are entitled to, fell 2015 on the 13th of August. For the rest of the year we lived off the substance at the expense of the future generations. "Green technology" alone will not solve this problem. To survive in the long run we have to change radically our wasteful ways of producing and consuming what we need for life and develop sustainable consumption and production methods. This can only succeed if we live out of a spirituality of simplicity and frugality to which Pope Francis invites us in his encyclical 'Laudato Si'.

What do the SDG call for?

Developing countries have still to assure the basic needs of their people. That is why rich countries are the first to change their wasteful lifestyles by:

- achieving sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources
- halving per capita food waste and reducing food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses
- substantially reducing waste generation through recycling and reuse
- ensuring that people get the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature
- phasing out harmful subsidies to reflect their environmental impacts ...



What can we do?

Through their vow of poverty religious are called to a simple lifestyle. Many religious communities have deeply reflected about their procurement practises, consumer habits and ethical investment of their funds. The Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) has often reminded members of the necessity of a fundamental transformation of our economic and financial system and encouraged socially responsible shopping.

As the market and its actors are constantly changing it is important to stay informed through websites like www.ethicalconsumer.org. We can support regional producers by buying from "Farmers Markets".

Words to challenge us

- Purchasing is always a moral - and not simply economic - act... Today, in a word, the issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle. (Laudato Si' 206)
- Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices. All of these reflect a generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in human beings. (LS 211)
- It is my hope that our seminaries and houses of formation will provide an education in responsible simplicity of life, in grateful contemplation of God's world, and in concern for the needs of the poor and the protection of the environment... Such sobriety, when lived freely and consciously, is liberating. It is not a lesser life or one lived with less intensity. On the contrary, it is a way of living life to the full. (LS 214,223)
- When people become self-centred and self-enclosed, their greed increases. The emptier a person's heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume... Obsession with a consumerist lifestyle, above all when few people are capable of maintaining it, can only lead to violence and mutual destruction. (LS 204)
- We are able to take an honest look at ourselves, to acknowledge our deep dissatisfaction, and to embark on new paths to authentic freedom. (LS 205)

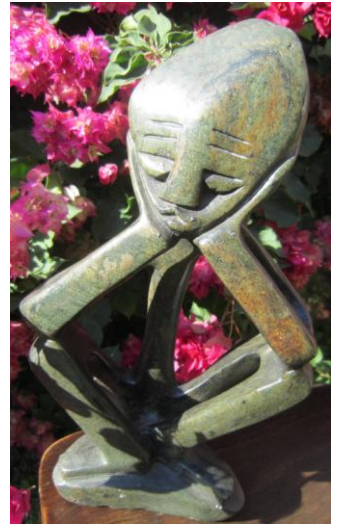
Promote peaceful societies, justice for all and inclusive institutions

The end of the cold war between East and West looked like a promise for a more peaceful world. Yet 25 years later parts of the world are in chaos and humanity is threatened by new conflicts which have created a massive movement of refugees and migrants. Major causes of wars and violent conflicts are the growing inequality between rich and poor and militant religious ideologies which vie for world domination. A rise of nationalism blocks efforts to find global solutions. At the same time the interdependence of all countries cries out for efficient global institutions capable of giving global solutions to global problems. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can only succeed under conditions of justice and peace.

What do the SDGs call for?

The rule of law, good governance and functioning institutions are conditions for sustainable development. The SDGs suggest different means:

- Significantly reduce all forms of violence; end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children
- Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all
- Reduce illicit financial and arms flows; fight corruption and bribery
- Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels
- Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance



What can we do?

In colonial times missionaries rarely denounced the injustices of the colonial powers. But they made a remarkable contribution to the emancipation of women, to the emergence of a democratic culture and to sustainable and holistic development.

Through the Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) religious congregations have participated in campaigns against arms trade, child soldiers, human trafficking, land grabbing and other injustices.

An Important future orientation should be centred on climate change and its effects on Africa and the transformation of our economic system so that is ecologically sustainable, socially more just and respecting the global common good.

Words to challenge us

- Sin is manifest in all its destructive power in wars, the various forms of violence and abuse, the abandonment of the most vulnerable, and attacks on nature. (Laudato Si' 66)
- The natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone. If we make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all. (LS 95)
- An interdependent world not only makes us more conscious of the negative effects of certain lifestyles and models of production and consumption which affect us all; more importantly, it motivates us to ensure that solutions are proposed from a global perspective, and not simply to defend the interests of a few countries. Interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan. (LS 164)
- What is needed is a politics which is far-sighted and capable of a new, integral and interdisciplinary approach to handling the different aspects of the crisis... A strategy for real change calls for rethinking processes in their entirety, for it is not enough to include a few superficial ecological considerations while failing to question the logic which underlies present-day culture. (LS 197)
- The economic and financial sectors, being transnational, tends to prevail over the political. Given this situation, it is essential to devise stronger and more efficiently organized international institutions, with functionaries who are appointed fairly by agreement among national governments, and empowered to impose sanctions. (LS 175)



Strengthen the means of implementation and global partnership

That the world community could agree together on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was surely an important step ahead. But the true challenge will be to implement them. To do this presupposes a deep commitment for the global common good beyond national interests, a strong political will and sufficient financial means. World summits tend to produce impressive papers, but often fail to provide the needed means to realise the proposals. The financial needs of developing countries for development of infrastructure and effective institutions, for education and health services, are enormous, not to mention the huge cost of adapting to climate change. Only if the richer countries are ready to live more frugally and to share from their abundance can the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 be realised over the next 15 years.

What do the SDGs call for?

The last SDG looks at the implementation of all others goals. It will be necessary to provide the requisite financial means and create effective structures and institutions. The SDGs suggest various means:

- Fulfil the promised target of devoting 0.7% of the Gross National income to development
- Address the external debt of highly indebted poor countries to reduce debt distress
- Promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries
- Promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system
- Enhance global macro-economic stability and policy coherence



What can we do?

Religious congregations have from the beginning contributed to a transfer of knowledge and technology through the educational and health facilities as well as through building and agricultural projects. The numerous partnerships between parishes and dioceses in Europe and Africa promote social projects and cultural exchange.

The Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) is engaged in a regular exchange of information and experiences with members and partners in Africa. In joined actions we have campaigned for the 0.7 % target of development aid, for debt relief and an international debt frame work for sovereign states, and for the Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) to be used for development and climate projects.

Words to challenge us

- Although the post-industrial period may well be remembered as one of the most irresponsible in history, nonetheless there is reason to hope that humanity at the dawn of the twenty-first century will be remembered for having generously shouldered its grave responsibilities. (Laudato Si' 165)
- I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us. (LS 14)
- 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. We have had enough of immorality and the mockery of ethics, goodness, faith and honesty. It is time to acknowledge that light-hearted superficiality has done us no good. When the foundations of social life are corroded, what ensues are battles over conflicting interests, new forms of violence and brutality, and obstacles to the growth of a genuine culture of care for the environment. (LS 229)