

A Salesian Response to the 2030 Agenda

As the process for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we, the Salesians of Don Bosco, working to create enabling environments to empower young people in over 130 countries, welcome the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Salesians participated in the Open Working Group process through its ECOSOC representation in New York and through grassroots activism and consultation through Don Bosco Network, Don Bosco International, the Nine is Mine Campaign and the formation of Human Rights Clubs in many parts of India.

Committed to the advancement of “poor and abandoned youth” since our founding in 1859, the Salesians of Don Bosco welcome the pledge of the Member States to leave no one behind as the Governments, Civil Society, Religious Organizations and the Private Sector collaborate to effect the 2030 Agenda. Recognizing the common but differentiated responsibilities of all the stakeholders, we believe that the transformative and progressive agenda outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals will only be achieved if all stakeholders are united in their efforts in implementation.

Human Rights and the Common Good

Believing in the intrinsic worth and dignity of all people, and committed to promoting the common good, we welcome the explicit naming of human rights as a core principle articulated in the Preamble and Declaration of the Outcome Document, as well as the centrality of respect for human rights, as well as for the protection and promotion of them in the framing of the Sustainable Development Goals.¹ We believe that the human rights lens must continue to guide the discourse about and realization of the 2030 Agenda.

Human rights are protected and guaranteed when there is participation. For the Salesians, this must include the participation of youth, who are not merely the recipients of benefits from membership in societies but also agents in the formation of their societies. As noted by the UN Security Council, “Youth should actively be engaged in shaping lasting peace and contributing to justice and reconciliation”²: their zeal, creativity and passion must be included in the creation of the world we all want. Our experience in facilitating Children’s and People’s Parliaments and similar grassroots organizations has made the need to include the voice of the young eminently clear to us. Leaving out the voice of major stakeholders, especially the young, diminishes us all.

¹ Paragraph 19, Declaration: “We reaffirm the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as other international instruments relating to human rights and international law. We emphasize the responsibilities of all States in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status.”

² S/RES/2250 (2015), United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2250 (2015), 9 December 2015.

High Quality Education is Key: Advocating for Goal 4

The Salesians of Don Bosco have ministries and projects that address many of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, we would like to call special attention to Goal 4 on Education. We believe that high quality education is both a right and a need for young people. It forms the foundation of a society that seeks to enhance the lives and well-being of its members. Quality education is the fundamental element of human development and is the prime stimulus to the creation of a better world.

Education assists young people in realizing their full potential intellectually, socially, and spiritually while developing their character, moral decision making skills and commitment to striving for advancement. We Salesians of Don Bosco, accompany young people in this journey of self-discovery through many educational initiatives, both in the formal and non-formal sectors. Our preferential option for the young, especially for those most in need leads us to work with them “where they are”, in the conditions in which they are living, listening attentively to their questions and aspirations, and assisting them to see and realize new possibilities for their lives.

Our diverse educational system presently serves over 1.2 million students in nearly 4,000 schools from pre-school through university level. Additionally, we serve an equal number of children and youths through a diversity of youth clubs, youth centres, voluntary-based youth organizations and leisure time associations. We provide technical and academic training, both in formal and non-formal contexts, that is holistic, dedicated to the integral formation of the young so that they can be upright individuals who contribute their time and talents to the strengthening of families and communities. The essential role of ethical formation and the development of all the artistic and athletic talents of the young in a joyful, welcoming and safe environment is stressed. Additionally, we provide literacy programs, social integration courses, skills training, human rights education and autonomous living training for those living with disabilities.

Salesians emphasize the importance of educating and guiding children, youth and adults in global citizenship. We provide young people with the skills that enable them to actively contribute to a just, inclusive and sustainable world, in accord with Sustainable Development Goal 8. The global citizen we educate is characterized by qualities the educational project of Don Bosco engenders in the young: critical thinking, engaged learning and solidarity with others. This leads to a growth in liberty, responsibility and collaboration.

The Salesians accentuate the importance of providing all young people with high level technical skills, in an inclusive manner, to prepare them for the world of work. The young are accompanied throughout their training and the early phases of their involvement in the field of labour. Our long term relationship with private enterprises and industries in many countries has enabled us to establish apprenticeships and internships under just, non-exploitative conditions. These partnerships have often facilitated a transition to full time employment for the young.

Committed to “the importance of education in the promotion of tolerance, which involves the acceptance by the public of and its respect for diversity, including with regard to religious expression”³, we strongly believe that durable and effective partnerships involving all stakeholders, inter alia, governments, CSOs, NGOs, faith communities, the private sector, and grassroots organizations, are essential to the achievement of Goal 4 of the SDGs and call on the Member States to ensure their formation. We strongly encourage the full participation of the young in this process.

Implementation, Monitoring and Follow-up: Clear Guidelines and a Participatory Approach is Needed

The follow up and review mechanism outlined in the document places a heavy emphasis on the voluntary nature of this review. It lacks clear timelines and mechanisms to evaluate progress in the achieving of the Goals and Targets and does not outline how civil society can participate in this evaluation process. We would like to have clear guidelines articulated to ensure the participation of those directly affected by the implementation of the Goals, including the young. All stakeholders should have a role in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policies and programs initiated to implement the SDGs. Participatory Monitoring is essential for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

As the process of determining indicators is concluding, we note the willingness to continue to refine indicators to adapt to and incorporate new perceptions about what should be measured as the implementation process of the SDGs. We encourage the inclusion of qualitative research and the voices of those directly affected by the policies in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the programs. As is often noted, **not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.**

Our call: Leave no one behind

Acknowledging the dedicated hard work of all the representatives of the Member States and the expert co-facilitating of the negotiations by Ambassadors Macharia Kamau and David Donoghue in achieving a consensus outcome document that is universal in its application, the Salesians of Don Bosco want to encourage all stakeholders to commit themselves to fully implementing this ambitious agenda. **As a faith inspired Civil Society Organization, the protection and promotion of human life and dignity from the moment of conception is key to this implementation. Anything that is contrary to this must be avoided.**

As Salesians of Don Bosco we are committed to the implementation of the SDGs and to mobilizing young people in assisting in this process. Our starting point is the young person him/herself. Through education we assist young people in developing an autonomous life in their local communities. Within this context, we strive to provide quality education that includes raising the consciousness of the young so they deepen their understanding of their global citizenship and the rights and duties associated with this citizenship. Supporting youth in understanding and claiming their human rights and engaging them in local efforts to

³ A/HRC/RES/28/18, United Nations, Human Rights Council, Resolution 28/18 on “Freedom of religion and belief”, 7 April 2015.

mobilize their communities to create a more just, equitable and inclusive society is essential to our educational method: the “preventive system”.⁴ Given the need to ensure quality, holistic and inclusive education for all and to heed the call to leave no one behind, we call for the following:

- Guaranteeing quality formal, non-formal and vocational education for ALL young people at local, national, regional and international levels. This should be gender sensitive, inclusive and accessible for people with disabilities.
- Ensuring access to education including in rural or isolated regions. Where necessary, providing needed transportation to and from school.
- Providing for all the necessary resources to fully equip schools and non-formal settings to ensure that the strongest possible educational environment can be created to strengthen capacity building.
- Supporting the complementary role of non-formal education providers in the education of young people, especially those with less access to formal education.
- Forming public private partnerships that will facilitate the entry of those students following a technological curriculum, irrespective of their gender identities, ethnicities, religious, social, cultural, economic background or disabilities both in rural and urban areas, to enter the world of work.
- Reviewing education curricula at all levels, in consultation with young people, and making sure that Human Rights Education and formation in sustainability in all aspects of education, transversally to all courses, subjects and non-formal learning programmes.
- Giving special attention to developing a holistic teaching and learning environment that addresses the needs of marginalized youth and those with different learning abilities.
- Providing for educational opportunities for migrants and refugees, those in crisis or emergency situations.
- Assuring access to quality education for both boys and girls through the elimination of financial barriers and ensuring safe school environments.
- Overcoming gender discrimination through the inclusion of a gender inclusive perspective throughout the school curriculum, in teacher training, teaching materials and in the organization and provision of education.
- Addressing the issue of the exploitation of children, whether sexually or in the labour force. There needs to be a firm commitment to freeing children from these modern day forms of slavery so that they can further their education.
- Qualifying teachers and enhancing the capacities of school management and teachers through the provision of ongoing professional and pedagogical training and mentoring.
- Ensuring the participation of parents in the educational process and forming strong partnerships with families.

⁴ This approach tries to foresee problems and create an environment to prevent negative consequences from actions. It is a systematic social intervention rather than short-lived assistance. It remedies exclusion by addressing its causes. It creates a social mentality at a cultural and political level to promote the common good and human rights.

With and for the Young: Forming Youth Leaders to Combat Poverty through Education

Poverty compromises the education and development of young people. It denies them access to the essential skills and knowledge that they need to fully participate in an increasingly globalized world. We believe that education is the key to defeating poverty in all its forms, everywhere. It is essential to promoting and ensuring the common good. As Salesians we are dedicated to the social inclusion of all peoples and consistently work to eliminate any structural barriers that would impede this. It is imperative that we have systematic collaboration among the various stake holders, including educational institutions and programmes, in confronting systemic poverty and exclusion.

As Salesians of Don Bosco, we are committed to partnering with young people to assist them in developing all their talents and competencies. Through collaboration with local businesses, civil society organizations and governments we have prepared many young people to become skilled laborers and professionals, upright citizens and active members of their local societies. Together with the young we will continue to strive for the more just, equitable and inclusive world that the 2030 Agenda proposes and the Member States have committed themselves to achieve.

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