



Our Common Home

Our vision of progress
Our agenda for change

April 2024



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We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combatting poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.

Pope Francis, Laudato Si' #139

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Suchitra lives by the Pwashur river. Working with Bangladesh Association for Sustainable Development - BASD on sustainable and self-sufficient permaculture has provided enough food for her family to live comfortably. Eco Villages, Bangladesh

Picture credits: CAFOD, Caritas Lebanon, CENDA, Thom Flint, Goma Notre Maison Commune, Kezia Lavan, Louise Norton, Amit Rudro, Olusoji Seye, Barnaby Jaco Skinner/Trocaire

Picture on the front page: Shukla, 25, lives in Bangladesh in an eco-village – a community of people working together to produce food and earn a living while caring for and protecting their natural environment.

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Our Common Home

In 2020, we launched our strategic framework 'Our Common Home', which takes its name from Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si'* - On Care for Our Common Home. Three years later, we reflected on our progress, shared our challenges and lessons learned, celebrated our successes, and considered events in the wider world.

The launch of our strategy coincided with the beginning of the COVID pandemic – a global tragedy that impacted us all and reinforced our understanding of progress: that everything is connected, those who experience poverty, vulnerability, and exclusion suffer most, and collective action is vital, and possible, to achieve global solutions.

Since 2020, climate chaos has continued to destroy lives, reminding us of the ever more urgent need for action. We have witnessed populist rhetoric and political failures, and suffered conflicts, old and new. We have been disheartened by the indifference, and even hostility, shown towards migrants, people of other faiths, people of colour, women, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and those who experience poverty.

Yet amid these challenges, we have been inspired by the bravery of activists, those who defend human rights, seek to build peace, and stand up to protect the environment in the face of injustice and oppression – their bravery serves as a beacon of hope and fuels our determination. And Pope Francis continues to inspire, with the publication of *Fratelli Tutti* (2020) and *Laudate Deum* (2023), which provide further critique of dominant social, economic, and political systems and structures.

Our reflections and experiences re-affirm the need for a radical global re-think. They have prompted us to evolve Our Common Home, hone our focus, and sharpen our ambition to better guide practical action. We will continue to build on the best of what we do. We will continue to work with the Catholic Community in England and Wales, in collaboration with local experts, organisations, and social movements, alongside the global Catholic community and other partners. Together, we are devoted to achieving transformative change so that every person, community, and our common home, may flourish.



Christine Allen, Director



Local young farmers in Tawuya, Kambia district, Sierra Leone with their harvest of tomatoes and peppers. The farm is run by and for local unemployed and underemployed young people.



Tamara, Nana, Fr Tim, Mike, and Jane, raising awareness of CAFOD's 2023 Lent appeal, during the Lent Family Fast Day, at Our Lady of Mount Carmel & St George Parish, Enfield, Westminster Diocese.

Our choice

What kind of world do we want to leave to our children and future generations?

Our world is enduring an interconnected social and environmental crisis. Everyone is at risk, yet those who experience poverty and are most vulnerable and excluded, especially women and girls, are being hit first and hardest.

Pope Francis draws our attention to how climate chaos, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss are intertwined with social issues including the disproportionate and unruly growth of many cities, a decline in the quality of human life, water and food poverty, persistent injustice (including gender and racial injustice), social breakdown, and mass displacement of people.

He encourages us to recognise that the deepest roots of this crisis lie in our broken relationships – with ourselves, our neighbours, the earth, and all living things – which fuel the broken global economic and political systems that maximise profit over social or environmental considerations. These systems treat the earth's resources as infinite, encourage a throwaway culture, promote the short-sighted use of technology, and create a disconnect between our daily lives and the suffering of others. This has caused enormous, irreversible damage to our common home, its people, and all living things. Immediate action is imperative to prevent even greater harm. Yet global responses have been inadequate, with weak political commitment and a lack of leadership. We risk being trapped in the mindset of papering over the cracks, while continuing to contribute to the deterioration of our common home. We cannot rely on superficial actions or wait for new technologies to rescue us. A profound transformation is necessary. Our generation can choose to act so that our children and future generations may flourish.

As people of faith and hope, we can choose to redefine our understanding of 'progress' and to change the way we live to better serve the common good and protect our common home. As an organisation, we embrace this urgent challenge, as the official international aid agency of the Catholic Church of England and Wales and member of Caritas Internationalis and CIDSE.

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I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.

Deuteronomy 30:19 NRSV

Our vision

Our common home is transformed to reflect the Kingdom of God, with social, economic, political and cultural systems and structures that put 'the last' first, so that all people, communities, and the earth may flourish.

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So the last will be first, and the first last.

Matthew 20:16 ESV

Our mission

Inspired by Gospel values and as part of the Catholic community in England and Wales, we come together in partnership with others, locally and globally:

- To support people, communities, and our local partners to be artisans of their own destiny.
- To prioritise and work with those who experience poverty and are most vulnerable and excluded, to provide lifesaving support, relieve suffering, and strengthen resilience, in ways that protect and regenerate the environment.
- To challenge and transform the structures and behaviours that drive poverty, vulnerability, inequality, injustice and exclusion, and harm the environment.
- To educate, enable and inspire the diverse Catholic community in England and Wales to act in solidarity for the common good.

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But those who hope in God renew their strength, they put out wings like eagles. They run and do not grow weary, walk and never tire.

Isaiah 40:31 JB



Quechua and Mayan indigenous communities working towards human development and resilience in the context of climate change.

Our values

Our four organisational values, rooted in the Gospel, underpin our day-to-day behaviours, and guide our decision-making.

Hope

Hope transforms despair, feeds love and fuels our work. We are profoundly hopeful, inspired by Scripture, Catholic Social Teaching and the resourcefulness and strength of our supporters, volunteers, local partners and the people and communities we seek to serve. It joins us in confidence with others to act for the common good.

Dignity

The glory of God is reflected in the intrinsic dignity and worth of every person and our collective diversity, yet our world is blighted by poverty, discrimination, and injustice. Together, we seek inclusion and justice for all. We work with people regardless of gender, race, disability, age, ethnicity, nationality, culture, sexual orientation, political or religious belief, recognising the overlapping and interdependent nature (intersectionality) of these social categorisations.

Compassion

Our compassion at the cries of 'the poor' and 'the Earth' is rooted in love and empathy. It compels us to act, to draw near to those in need, and to stand with them as equals. We refuse to accept the suffering of our brothers and sisters or our common home.

Solidarity

We believe in community. We strive to walk alongside others, with a 'preferential option' for 'the poor' and oppressed, making their cause our own. We invite others to act in solidarity. We seek to unite in prayer and action for the common good so everyone can be part of and contribute to building their local and global community.

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Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope.

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* #161

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It is not God's will that some people have everything, and others have nothing.

St Oscar Romero

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We cannot all do great things, but we can do small things with great love.

Saint Mother Teresa

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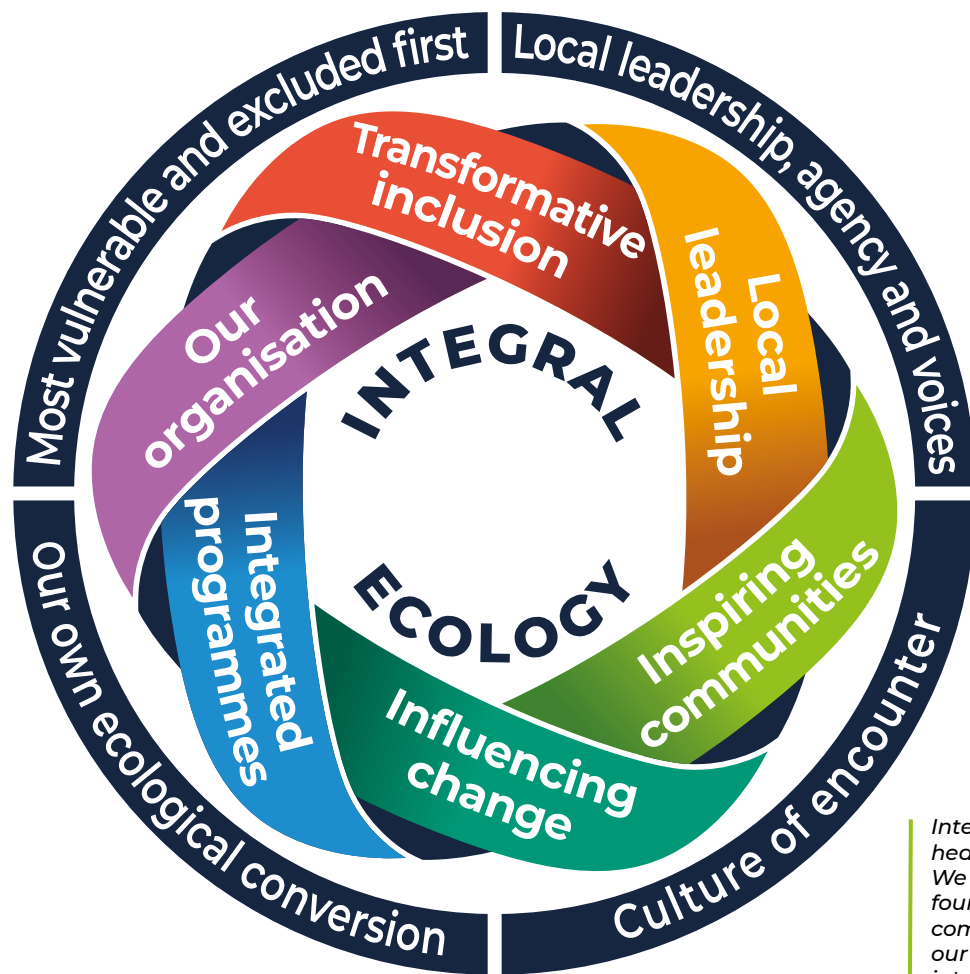
Solidarity... is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good... to the good of all and of each individual.

St John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* #38



Pastoralists and agro-pastoralists - Borena zone, southern Ethiopia. Mortikana, 70, is a community representative to the Oromia Pastoralist Association.

Integral ecology: our new way to view the world



Integral ecology is at the heart of everything we do. We articulate this through four inter-connected commitments and express our ambition through six inter-dependent goals.

We believe that integral ecology offers a way to heal our broken world and respond to the inseparable Cries of the Poor and the Earth. This is grounded in the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, including the 'common good', the 'universal destination of goods', the 'preferential option for the poor', 'subsidiarity', and the intrinsic value of all Creation.

Integral ecology recognises that everything is connected and provides a lens through which to see those connections. It helps us to understand that the good of people and the good of the earth are inseparable. That caring for the earth is integral to tackling the scandal of global poverty, vulnerability, inequality, injustice, and exclusion. That ultimately, no one can truly flourish if another person is hungry, lost or abandoned, nor can humanity flourish while our common home is degraded and exploited for the good of the few.

Integral ecology can inspire our individual and collective transformation (our 'ecological conversion'). To think of ourselves differently, in a humbler, more fruitful way. To have the courage to make radical changes. To become vital agents of change.

Integral ecology can inspire individual and collective action to address the *symptoms* of the social and environmental crisis, and more critically, its *causes* – to transform the world's broken social, economic, political, and cultural systems, structures, and behaviours, with power held in ways that serve the common good. This requires a long-term perspective and a renewed sense of solidarity and justice within and between generations, and between local, national, and global communities. It will involve profound changes to our lifestyles, to how and what we produce, consume and discard.



We must dare to be different, to point to ideals other than those of this world, testifying to the beauty of generosity, service, purity, perseverance, forgiveness, fidelity to our personal vocation, prayer, the pursuit of justice and the common good, love for the poor, and social friendship.

Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, #36

The nature of integral ecology is profoundly political,

calling on all people to serve the common good. Integral ecology can help us visualise a future where we all live in right relationships with ourselves, our neighbours, the earth, and all living things.

Where every woman, man and child are safe. No one is discriminated against, marginalised, or excluded because of their gender, race, or other social categorisation. Citizens are at the centre of power. Civil society is valued, protected, vibrant, and diverse, with local leadership, agency and voices celebrated and prioritised.

Where all communities have access to appropriate public services, adequate nutritious food and safe drinking water, sustainable livelihoods, and green employment. Communities are prepared for, resilient to, and able to recover from shocks and humanitarian emergencies, with their needs, capacities, and solutions prioritised.

Where the world's institutions, models of production, consumption, and work recognise the diverse and distinctive contributions of women and girls and the distinct obstacles they face. All women and girls live free from violence, fear and discrimination, experience just power relationships with men and boys, and have equal opportunities to participate, influence and lead in all aspects of life.

Where the environment is protected, with the gravest effects of the climate crisis averted, degraded environments regenerated, and biodiversity strengthened. The finite nature of the earth's resources is reflected in public policies, business practices, and consumer behaviours. Its fruits nurtured for all, with the reduced use of resources in some parts of the world so that all people and the environment may flourish.

As an organisation, integral ecology inspires us to challenge conventional notions of 'progress', drives us to act with urgency and a profound sense of hope, and ensures we focus on why and how, not just on what we do.

We are not neutral: we are always on the side of those who experience poverty, are most vulnerable or excluded, and our fragile common home. We will not impose our own solutions. We will be bold and open to risk as appropriate.

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An integral ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good... the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment... The notion of the common good also extends to future generations.

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* #156 – 159



Mayori, 19, is a college student who lives with her parents, Narayan and Rina, in an eco-village in Banishanta, Bangladesh.



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We find ourselves faced with a call to change our way of relating to our sister-mother earth and all that she represents in terms of the diversity of the goods of creation, to a fundamental change in our relationship with each other, on the grounds that we have installed an unprecedented process of exploitation and accumulation... which has brought the planet to a state of intensive care and to the end of its limits.

Mauricio Lopez, Pan-Amazon Ecclesial Network, REPAM, General Secretary, 2019

Caritas Congo is supporting actions aimed at contributing to the promotion of ecological culture. Tree planting in the school courtyard with students from local primary and secondary schools, Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Our commitments

Integral ecology is relevant to everything that we do. All our actions must be undertaken in ways that reflect our four inter-connected commitments:

- Putting the most vulnerable and excluded first
- Prioritising local leadership, agency, and voices
- Promoting a culture of encounter for transformative change
- Transforming ourselves through our own ecological conversion



Putting the most vulnerable and excluded first

Integral ecology challenges us to put 'first', those who are often placed 'last' by society and broken economic and political systems. This includes the earth, maltreated, laid waste and abandoned.

The ancient Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew words used in the Bible, translated into English as 'the poor', refer to those who are not part of the elite but are called to fulfil God's promise of justice. These are people who may have lost everything, including their familial and social ties or other support networks, and are rendered to a level of helplessness, namelessness, or voicelessness. Jesus draws our attention to those whom society may prefer to ignore or consider undeserving. He amplifies their previously unheard voices, recognises their inherent dignity, and reveals 'the poor' to have faces and names. Similarly, in the original languages of Pope Francis' teachings, 'cry' does not suggest passive weeping, but evokes a powerful sense of collective shouting or clamouring.

Integral ecology rejects the attitudes and practices that view those who experience poverty, vulnerability, or exclusion as an undifferentiated group, blame them for their condition, marginalise, silence, or ignore them in favour of those with wealth or status, or treat them as passive objects of charitable endeavour.

Instead, the needs and priorities of those who experience the harshest realities should be elevated above those who are wealthy or powerful. Every person can give something of themselves through a 'culture of encounter'. All people and communities should be able to fulfil their potential and act for the common good. Political and economic policies and actions must be judged from the diverse perspectives of those who are most vulnerable and excluded, future generations, and indeed, the earth and all living things.

Integral ecology encourages us to identify and challenge the systems, structures and social norms that discriminate against those who experience poverty, women and girls, people of colour, and other excluded groups. No-one should dominate to the detriment of others or our planet. Our future must not be determined by powerful, and often unaccountable, elites. No decisions should be imposed on those with least power. No-one, including individuals, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), countries, multinational corporations, or supra-national institutions, should be allowed to impose their own solution on others.

As an organisation, we will seek to ensure the safety, accessibility, dignity and inclusion of all people and communities that we engage with, directly or indirectly. We will prioritise partnerships with those organisations and movements that work with, represent, or are focused on those who are most vulnerable and excluded, and those that seek to protect or regenerate the environment. Specifically, we will strengthen collaboration with women-centred organisations to work towards gender justice.



A member of Caritas Lebanon hands out a bag of essentials to an elderly lady in Beirut after a huge explosion resulted in the deaths of over 200 people and more than 300,000 others being made homeless.



This vision of 'might is right' has engendered immense inequality, injustice and acts of violence against the majority of humanity, since resources end up in the hands of the first comer or the most powerful: the winner takes all. Completely at odds with this model are the ideals of harmony, justice, fraternity and peace as proposed by Jesus.

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* #82

Prioritising local leadership, agency, and voices

Integral ecology embraces inclusion as the foundation for building positive change. It identifies those who experience poverty, vulnerability, and exclusion as critical agents of change (especially women, young people, and indigenous communities) and emphasises the importance of local organisations, movements, and networks. Only with their leadership, agency, and voices can progress be achieved.

Too often, however, those with power or status dominate, exclude, and disadvantage those without, regardless of intent. Social, economic, and political inequalities limit people's power, resources, and capacity – it hinders their leadership, constrains their agency, and silences their voices.

Integral ecology encourages us to recognise these power inequalities, remove barriers to inclusion, and prioritise the perspectives and needs of the most vulnerable and excluded. Inclusion must be on *their* terms, not at the direction or discretion of those with power.

We know that local people, communities, and organisations are best placed to understand their context and lead the initiatives that affect them. Yet, their visibility, access to resources, and ability to influence is often unequal. This is exacerbated by shrinking civil society space, governments who legislate against humanitarian aid, and the persecution of human rights defenders and environmental activists. Actions that are often prompted by corporate interests colluding with political powers to uphold the privileges of a select few.

We know that the role of local environmental activists, human rights defenders, peacebuilders, and wider civil society is vital. Activists from very different countries can help and support one another, pressure the sources of power, and collectively transform society from the ground up. Together, civil society can help resolve the failings of our current national and global systems, structures, and institutions.

As a British, faith-based international NGO, we want to reflect on our power, and recognise our capacity to perpetuate, sustain or challenge injustice. We want to use our power and capacity to challenge gender and racial injustice and other inequalities and promote justice for all. This drives our determination to be an anti-racist organisation and to work with others to shape a more just and equitable future. We will drive positive change within our organisation and through our relationships and programmes. This will require an ability to tolerate discomfort and a willingness to relinquish power and control when necessary. We will identify and dismantle any discrimination that perpetuates inequalities in our operating models, ways of working, funding models, and communications. We will support local leadership, agency, and voices. We will only speak on behalf of others when it is right to do so.

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The greatest figures of prophecy and sanctity step forth out of the darkest night... Certainly the most decisive turning points in world history are substantially co-determined by souls whom no history book ever mentions.

St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)
Verborgenes Leben und Epiphanie: GW XI, 145



Hadoya lives in drought-affected Borena, southern Ethiopia. Hadoya is being trained by Agri-Service Ethiopia to ringfence land to grow grass and ensure fodder for her cattle through periods of drought.

Promoting a culture of encounter for transformative change

Integral ecology encourages a culture of encounter to heal the broken relationships at the heart of the social and environmental crisis. It calls for dialogue between *all* people on care for our common home. It emphasises the involvement of government, civil society, religions, and citizens from across diverse social groups. This dialogue should span local to global levels and address issues of politics, economics, society, culture, governance, decision-making and lifestyle. Inclusion is paramount: those voices that are often marginalised, ignored, or silenced, should be prioritised and heard.

By truly listening to the harsh realities of those who suffer most, we accept the 'Other' as a person and see the world from their perspective. We must do this as active participants, not passive observers. By opening ourselves to change, we strengthen our compassion and solidarity. By coming together as individuals, families, communities, organisations, and nations, we can expose the fault lines that drive social and environmental harm. Collectively, we can find genuine solutions to transform social, economic, political and cultural systems and structures to serve the common good.

As an organisation, we know that fostering a culture of encounter is not easy and may be painful. It requires specific behaviours to nurture right relationships. We aim to practice patience and move beyond short-term or rigid outcomes to allow time for genuine dialogue and the development of shared understanding. We will be honest, transparent, empathetic, and aim to build trust. We will seek diverse perspectives, remove barriers that limit the agency or leadership of others, listen actively, and encourage mutual learning. We will go beyond our traditional partnerships and alliances, encourage new multilateral relationships, participate in wider social movements, and be open to engaging in processes that we do not control. We will have the courage to engage in challenging conversations and navigate uncomfortable situations. We will seek points of agreement even amid conflict: this requires self-discipline, bravery, and negotiation.

We have a special opportunity for dialogue and influence as part of the Church, the diverse Catholic community in England and Wales, and the international development and humanitarian sector.



Be servants... of the culture of encounter! I would like you to be almost obsessed about this. Be so without being presumptuous, imposing 'our truths', but rather be guided by the humble yet joyful certainty of those who have been found, touched and transformed by the Truth who is Christ, ever to be proclaimed.

Pope Francis, World Youth Day, July 2013



Elders meeting with Isacko Jirma Molu, Caritas Marsabit Director in Northern Kenya.

Transforming ourselves through our own ecological conversion

Integral ecology calls for a profound interior conversion, a radical conversion of the heart. It encourages a genuine change in our consciousness and behaviour to address the causes of the social and environmental crisis. As individuals, families, organisations, parishes, schools, communities, nations, and a global community, integral ecology calls on us to revolutionise our worldview, transform our ideas about our neighbours and the earth's resources, and understand that we are one family, living in one home, facing one uncertain future. This conversion will enable each of us to engage in long-term thinking and sustainable action to drive the desired social, economic, political, and cultural transformation so that all people, communities, and the earth may flourish.

The first step towards our own ecological conversion is to engage in personal and shared reflection on how we live, and how we relate to each other, and to nature. Integral ecology encourages and requires us to challenge our own attitudes, understanding, and behaviours, acknowledging that this transformation may be uncomfortable.

As an organisation, it is through our own ecological conversation that we will achieve our other commitments and collaborate most effectively with others to achieve our vision.

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Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2 NRSV



Year 9 students from All Saints School in Sheffield take part in a walk for CAFOD.

Our goals

Our ambition is presented in six, inter-dependent goals that reflect where we can make our best contribution to transformative change.

1 Transformative Inclusion

Our relationships and programmes remove barriers to inclusion and prioritise the perspectives and needs of the most vulnerable and excluded, with an emphasis on anti-racism and gender justice, as the foundation for building positive change.

2 Local Leadership

Our partners have the sustainable funding, organisational and programme capacities, and operational space to lead initiatives that meet the specific needs of their communities.

3 Inspiring Communities

The diverse Catholic community in England and Wales are inspired to lead, resource and make real our shared vision through sustained individual and collective action.

4 Influencing Change

Together with our partners, the communities that we serve, our supporters, and wider civil society, we participate in and influence political and economic power to drive systemic and structural change at local, national, and global levels.

5 Integrated Programmes

Our integrated programmes enable the most vulnerable and excluded communities to prepare for and recover from shocks and humanitarian emergencies, build peace, secure sustainable livelihoods, and achieve gender justice in ways that protect and regenerate the environment.

6 Our Organisation

Our operating models and ways of working are optimised, flexible and responsive to best reflect our goals and values, secure sustainable income, achieve our intended outcomes, and ensure accountability to those we serve, those who support and fund us, and other stakeholders.

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Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.

Ephesians 3:20 NLT



Jenneh with her baby Mohamed and family in Pendembu, Kailahun district, Sierra Leone: 'I want to say a very big thank you to the (Handmaid) Sisters for the way they take care of us when we go to attend the clinic. They give us lots of encouragement and when you go there with a child, they even give you gifts, medicines and they treat us very well'.

Our performance

Alongside *Our Common Home*, we have an accompanying *Performance Framework*. This presents, against each goal, our 3-to-5-year intermediate outcomes and our 1-to-3-year key actions, with reference to relevant indicators and means of verification to evidence our progress. This will be updated on a rolling annual basis. This process will ensure we make informed decisions and remain accountable to our stakeholders.

We approach our task with humility, recognising that both successes and failures are valuable teachers, and that some of what is most important cannot be easily measured.

We invest time and resources in the rigorous analysis and design of integrated, multi-year and multi-stakeholder programmes. We ensure safe and dignified programming through a unified system of programme quality, due diligence, compliance, and accountability. We invest time and resources in monitoring, evaluation and learning, to improve ourselves, our work, and our stewardship. Wherever our actions and use of resources are not contributing towards progress, we work collaboratively with our partners, volunteers, and others, to adjust course.

We account for our performance through evaluations, programme reflections, and regular monitoring of key performance indicators. Additionally, we engage in collective reflections on our commitments and values. This information is shared transparently with all colleagues through our internal communication channels. For external stakeholders, an annual summary of our performance is included in the Annual Trustee's report, published on our website.

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We need to reflect on our accountability before those who will have to endure the dire consequences.

Laudato Si' #161



Our partner SEMEANDO are supporting vulnerable communities in São Paulo Brazil to access safer housing, to live in dignity and protect our common home.



A prayer for our Earth

Margaret and Michael from Lostock Hall near Preston joined a march to Westminster in April 2023 calling for an end to UK government support for fossil fuels.

All powerful God, you are present in the universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with your peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned
and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty,
not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle,
for justice, love and peace.

'A prayer for our earth' was published
in Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*