Bringing Agenda 2030 to Life

SIERRA LEONE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Caritas Sierra Leone

In partnership with CAFOD and University College London

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

This report considers four principles which underpin the transformative aspirations of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda: 'leave no-one behind'; 'tackling inequalities'; 'integrating the environment and development' and 'participation and dialogue'. To explore these principles on the ground, the report considers six case studies that provide examples that participants in the 'Bringing 2030 Agenda to Life' research felt particularly illustrated good policies, projects or processes. These case studies help guide future work and promote forms of transferable learning across sectors. They integrate not only some of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals but the four principles themselves.

This report shows that the government of Sierra Leone's national development agenda places the principle 'leave no-one behind' as key for national cohesion and a transformed economy. Our research highlights that this requires civil society and government to work together, in collecting accurate and relevant data, in providing multi-sectoral approaches and in helping vulnerable individuals and groups become aware of and claim their rights and increase accountability and reduce corruption.

The principle of 'tackling inequalities' builds on leaving no-one behind. Our research highlights the importance of systems-level thinking that requires political will and courage, with a commitment from those who hold the power to engage in serious action and change. The case study highlights that inequalities are not just economic but social, and cut across multiple domains that include gender, spatial inequalities, and disability. Tackling inequalities can have benefits across sectors, speaking to multiple sustainable development goals focused on food security, health, education and gender at the same time.

Our research highlights that integrating the environment and development is also seen as a pressing priority for the Government of Sierra Leone. This principle requires collective responsibility and action, with examples of national policies making clear the value of partnership between government, civil society and communities themselves to ensure, through civic education, that work to protect our natural resources is sustained. Integrating the environment and development can have particular benefits for those who are most vulnerable, as disasters and health shocks compound social and economic disadvantage.

The fourth principle of participation and dialogue was seen by our research participants as embedded in power that cut across inclusion of vulnerable groups and inequalities. Extensive consultations to both set out and prioritise development exemplified by the most recent planning processes in Sierra Leone should be commended, but meaningful participation continues to require change in influence and decision-making and in the allocation of resources. Beneficiaries of policies and projects need to be included in decisions that affect them.

Photo by Annie Spratt

KEY FINDINGS

- **Civil society and government need to work together to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable in society –** projects are enhanced by progressive national policies (as in Case Study 1)

- **Leaving no-one behind requires participation and dialogue:** consultation to design appropriate budgets and policies according to vulnerable groups own priorities will ensure their sustainability (as in Case Study 2)

- **Policies need to be popularised,** through training for those who implement them and community-level sensitisation, so that their implementation is monitored

- **Data and sensitive analysis is central to understanding who is at risk of being left behind** – it needs to be accurate, timely, and disaggregated by multiple dimensions

- **Tackling inequalities is a challenge that requires political will and courage** with a commitment from those who hold the power to engage in serious action and change

- **Income-based inequalities cut across multiple SDGs:** food security, health, education and gender – tackling inequalities can have benefits in multiple sectors simultaneously (as in Case Study 3)

- **Representation can bring about change** – affirmative action policies such as 30% representation of women in parliament can help not only to shift power in decision-making and influence, but also in attitudes and discrimination

- **Integrating the environment and development requires collective action and collective responsibility,** with partnerships between government and local communities (as in Case Study 4)

- **Protecting the environment can meet other SDG goals at the same time,** for example by providing work to the unemployed, enhancing food security or improving sanitation and health outcomes (as in Case Study 5)

- **For groups that are left behind, inclusion in participation and dialogue requires targeted and additional efforts** to build capacity, reach remote locations, engage through civic education or communicate in local languages

- **Dialogue can happen in multiple spaces,** including face-to-face or through media, but needs decision-makers to engage (as in Case Study 6)

INTRODUCTION:
'Bringing Agenda 2030 to Life'

2015 marked a huge shift in development thinking, as the global focus moved on from the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their 169 targets. This shift represented many years of collective thinking and inclusive conversations within the international community about the priorities of international development. It resulted in an ambitious agenda with an aspirational preamble and declaration: 'Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'.

This report, and the research behind it, seeks to bring that ambitious agenda to life. It aims to move beyond attention solely to individual goals and targets and to look more closely at the transformative principles that cut across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 'Bringing Agenda 2030 to life', we have focused on four key principles that we believe have the potential to shape how we do and think about development differently:

A commitment to **leave no-one behind:** ensuring that everyone reaches minimum standards; putting the most vulnerable groups at the centre of policy making and tackling the discrimination that different individuals and groups face.

Integrating the environment and development: encouraging development processes that support and restore our common home so that it can provide for the needs of both present and future generations.

Promoting people's participation and dialogue: ensuring that women and men are able to participate in ongoing dialogue and contribute to decision-making around development priorities, policies and programmes.

An emphasis on **tackling inequalities:** challenging inequalities in societies around how wealth, power, and opportunities are distributed, and addressing discrimination faced by certain groups.

These four principles cut across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but they are also strongly supported by Catholic Social teaching, giving Catholic organisations a strong mandate to engage. Soon before the agenda was agreed, Pope Francis published his Encyclical 'Laudato Si' – On care for our common home'. Laudato Si' questions the current model of development, and invites the global population to engage in a dialogue that re-defines progress and promotes development in ways that benefit all – particularly the poorest and most vulnerable – at the same time as respecting the environment and the earth's natural resources. This report discusses the ways in which Laudato Si' both affirms and challenges the 2030 Agenda, drawing on analysis already conducted by a group of Catholic development agencies.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development places a strong emphasis on adaptation to the diversity of national contexts. Therefore, this report explores local voices in bringing these four transformative principles to life. This report is part of an advocacy-focused research partnership in four sub-Saharan African countries: Liberia, Sierra Leone, Kenya and Zambia. In each of these four countries, twenty-five women and men were interviewed about their knowledge and experience of development, bringing together participants from different sectors: government, parliament, civil society, academia, national and international NGOs. The research aimed to gather a diversity of views to explore how these different people understand the four principles, and to discuss examples from each country that demonstrate what each principle means in practice. These twenty-five women and men indicate a cross-section of some of the views on the ground of how the 2030 Agenda can be translated at national and local levels.

The analysis in this report and the examples of good practice and policies already happening in Sierra Leone comes from both the interviews and from the collective engagement of participants in a two-day participatory workshop. The findings of this research were analysed and compared with recent national development plans in each of the four

countries, understanding how diverse perspectives could together contribute to the localisation of the 2030 Agenda. An important objective of this research process was to foster dialogue around the implementation of sustainable development in each country. This took place through a two-day participatory workshop delivered in each country. The dialogue is reflected in this report.

The examples presented in this report cut across both the individual SDGs and the four transformative principles. They represent forms of policies, practice or processes that are transferable, and that can provide learning across sectors, as Agenda 2030 encourages us to do. They can help to guide future directions for sustainable development, by building on the work that has already been done. These examples were identified by research participants and discussed during the workshop; the case studies presented here are those chosen by these participatory processes.

While participants felt that we could learn from these examples, they can also have problematic aspects and are not intended to be understood as 'ideal' or perfect examples. Moreover, we are not suggesting that these case studies are the only way in which the transformative principles could be translated into practice. What the case studies do reveal, however, are some specific forms of intentional actions that we can learn from. They offer integrated approaches that cut across different principles and different goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development simultaneously.

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[1] CAFOD (2018) Engaging in the 2030 Agenda through the lens of Laudato Si'

[2] While most inputs from participants in this report have been analysed and presented in a synthesised manner, the report contains some quotations which have been anonymised. We simply state whether the interviewee is female or male and which sector they represent.

The Sustainable Development Goals

Case Study Table: Connections Across Transformative Principles and SDGs

Case Study	Principles	SDGs
Case Study 1: Windows for Widows - Supporting Livelihoods of Ebola Survivors	• Leave No-One Behind • Tackling Inequalities • Participation and Dialogue	**SDG 1; SDG 3; SDG 4; SDG 5; SDG 8; SDG 10;**
Case Study 2: Disability and Education for All - "Nothing About Us Without Us"	• Leave No-One Behind • Tackling Inequalities • Participation and Dialogue	**SDG 1; SDG 2; SDG 5**
Case Study 3: Social Safety Nets - Tackling Inequalities by Leaving No-One Behind	• Leave No-One Behind • Tackling Inequalities	**SDG 1; SDG 2; SDG 3; SDG 4; SDG 5;**
Case Study 4: Mitigating Flooding - Sensitising Communities & Working with Youth	• Integrating Environment and Development • Tackling Inequalities • Leave No-One Behind	**SDG 5; SDG 11**
Case Study 5: Implementing the National Land Policy (2017) – Inclusion through new technology	• Tackling Inequalities • Integrating Environment and Development	**SDG 2; SDG 10; SDG 15**
Case Study 6: Women's Priority Policy Issues in the Constitutional Review - "Many Messages, One Voice"	• Participation and Dialogue • Leave No-One Behind • Tackling Inequalities	**SDG 5; SDG 16**

Photo by Avel Chuklanov on Unsplash

PRINCIPLE 1:
Leave No-One Behind

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development builds on the Millennium Development Goals by aiming to complete what they did not achieve. Reaching the most marginalised or the 'furthest behind' is a key dimension to this work: none of the seventeen SDG goals or targets will be met unless they are met for each and every person. This represents a shift in previous ways of measuring development that tended to use national averages to suggest success. The specific focus on 'leaving no-one behind' reframes the values that shape how we do and measure development.

In his Encyclical Laudato Si', the Pope affirms this focus in the 2030 Agenda on leaving no-one behind by emphasising that preferential treatment for the poorest is an ethical imperative. Prioritising the most vulnerable members of society becomes the indicator of progress. For the Pope, this involves dialogue and a broad process that sees the poor not as victims, but as agents of change.

Understanding Leave No-One Behind: Sierra Leone perspectives

Sierra Leone's most recent development agenda, the Medium-term National Development Plan (2019-2023), is closely aligned with the principle leave no-one behind. It aims towards 'achieving middle-income status for the country by 2039 through inclusive growth that is sustainable'. As the Sierra Leone National Development Plan states, 57% of Sierra Leone's inhabitants live below the poverty line and food insecurity plagues almost half (49.8%) of the country. Life expectancy is low at 42 years, and only 37% of the population is literate, with even lower rates (25%) for women. For the government of Sierra Leone, the principle leave no-one behind is central to national cohesion and a transformed economy, with access to free education, job opportunities, and the protection of the rule of law.

This close alignment of the National Development Plan with the 2030 Agenda was reflected in our research, which highlighted how social and economic forms of marginalisation interacted to leave particular groups behind. For our research participants, this included: people with disabilities, those suffering from HIV/AIDS and other diseases, and some young people, particularly male youth who were displaced by the war or susceptible to gangs. There were also relational understandings of leave no-one behind which understood marginalisation as a result of different forms of inequality: the spatial dimensions for those who live in rural areas or work in agriculture; employment-based dimensions, such as market-place traders or bike-riders who work in informal or unregulated sectors; or the gendered dimensions of leave no-one behind, for specific groups of women that included single mothers, women who experience gender-based violence, women in forced marriages, or women living in more marginalised areas such as remote rural areas or the urban slums.

"We have recognized that bringing the most vulnerable to above the poverty line is not enough. We have to keep them above the poverty line and we will also have to ensure that others do not fall below the poverty line. And that can happen through financial shocks, environmental shocks or disasters."

Female, National NGO

While some of these categories of people are marginalised as a result of historical and entrenched inequalities, the situation of some groups has become more unbearable because of the overlapping of more recent exclusionary processes, for example the survivors of the 2014 Ebola outbreak, in which approximately four thousand people died. Our research participants emphasised ways in which shocks (whether health-based or economic) can suddenly destroy lives and livelihoods, compounding pre-existing vulnerabilities.

Case Study 1:

Windows for Widows - Supporting livelihoods of Ebola survivors

SDG 1; SDG 3; SDG 4; SDG 5; SDG 8; SDG 10 // Leave No-One Behind; Tackling Inequalities;

Participation and Dialogue

Windows for Widows is a project run by Caritas Freetown, with support from their Spanish partner Manos Unidas, to provide assistance to 100 widows who lost their husbands to the Ebola virus in five communities in the Western Area district of Sierra Leone. These women were targeted for the project using the UNDP vulnerability criteria for Ebola survivors, through a database of registered Ebola widows developed by the Sierra Leone Association for Ebola Survivors. This vulnerability criteria helped to identify the Ebola widows who experienced the highest levels of poverty, and who lived in remote and slum areas that left them at most need of support. Women who have lost their husbands in these spaces are at particular risk of being left behind in Sierra Leone because of their economic vulnerability after the loss of the family breadwinner, compounded by the social stigma of both being a widow and an Ebola survivor, leaving them to carry the sole burden of care for providing for themselves and for their families. A number of these women further suffered high levels of trauma and stress after their experiences during the Ebola crisis which left them even less able to cope with these multiple burdens.

The goal of the Windows for Widows project was to enhance the economic capacity of Ebola affected widows, and to support them to live in good physical and mental health, with dignity and respect. These women were provided with psycho-social counselling and follow-up support to help address their trauma. They were also trained in public speaking, to support them to voice their concerns during community meetings and other public engagements. To help them develop their livelihoods, they were provided with mentorship to assist them to identify potential business opportunities in the local area. They were trained in basic business management skills, and organized into cooperative groups of between five and ten members. Finally, they were given supplies of non-perishable goods and commodities to sell in their

communities, to improve their livelihoods and provide start-up capital for their businesses.

A Beneficiary of the Livelihood support at her market stall

In addition to supporting the widows themselves, Caritas Freetown provided further support for their dependents, providing them with materials for school to enable their continued enrolment. Since this initiative started over three years ago, these vulnerable children have remained in school, with opportunities for education further enhanced by the new Free Quality Initiative launched in 2018 by the Sierra Leone government, which has removed the payment of tuition and associated schooling fees for children from pre-primary to senior-secondary. One of the women in this programme was able to raise enough funds to support her son through college from the proceeds of her business.

Other women reported that their business activities were still continuing, and that they had used the proceeds to support the livelihood of their families.

Windows for Widows Case Study: What can we learn?

- *Targeting vulnerable groups can have multiplier effects beyond the original beneficiaries, tackling inter-generational inequalities while leaving no-one behind*

- *Leaving no-one behind is social as well as economic: multiple forms of support are needed*

- *Treating those at risk of being left behind as partners in their own development and recognising their agency will enhance their voice, promoting participation and dialogue*

School material support for Ebola orphans

The Windows for Widows case study highlights that the most vulnerable need multi-dimensional support (in this case capacity-building, financial, and psycho-social) to meet a range of complex needs that cut across a number of the SDG goals. In the preamble of the 2030 Agenda too, which sets out the vision behind the goals, 'equitable and universal access to quality education at all levels, to health care and social protection, where physical, mental and social well-being are assured' involves a particular focus on those who are the most vulnerable. In our research, participants emphasised that access to education, health and justice systems were all seen as ways that the vulnerability of individuals or groups could either be addressed or conversely perpetuated if they continued to be left behind. Illiteracy was seen as "tool for marginalisation" (Male, Parliament), while access

to education was seen as "a key tool for empowerment" (Male, Civil society). In particularly focusing on the role of education in processes of leaving no-one behind, our research reflects the focus of Sierra Leone's Medium-term National Development Plan (2019-2023), which has the sub-title 'Education for Development' and put a strong emphasis on the role of education.

Case Study 2:

Disability and Education for All - "Nothing about us without us"

SDG 4; SDG 10 // Leave No-One Behind; Tackling Inequalities; Participation and Dialogue

In 2011, Sierra Leone enshrined the Persons with Disabilities Act into law, with the result that persons with disabilities were entitled to equal access to services and opportunities, and to be treated with equal dignity. One of the key sites of implementation of this act was education for all. Members of the Education Network for Children with Disabilities (ECDN), initiated and chaired by Sightsavers and funded by the Global Partnership for Education, supported the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education to develop the Inclusive Education Policy. The ECDN includes multiple different actors, including out-of-school children and children with disabilities themselves, enacting the slogan of the disability movement "nothing about us without us", ensuring that children with disabilities are not left out of the dialogue and participation in decisions which affect them.

Children with disabilities, particularly girls, are faced with huge challenges in accessing quality education in Sierra Leone. In most parts of the country, children with disabilities can't go to school, and those who do face major logistical challenges such as the lack of transport, the risk of physical or sexual assault for girls walking long distances, or a lack of suitable furniture or equipment including inaccessibility of the learning environment. Teachers may lack adequate training and motivation, and the children often suffer discrimination at the hands of their classmates. Parents themselves may not understand the importance of education for their children.

In response to these challenges, and addressing the principle of leaving no-one behind, the 'Education for All' project in Sierra Leone has been supporting disability rights in the education sector through a range of activities. This has included supporting 824 children with disabilities (406 boys; 418 girls) to enrol in 45 schools in the districts of Bombali and Karene, after a baseline study identifying those with the most extreme and severe disabilities and coming from vulnerable backgrounds. These students have been supported with hygiene kits and teaching and learning materials, as well as individual accessibility support and school-based adaptation.

Supporting children with disabilities to attend school is not just about focusing on the students themselves, but addressing leaving no-one behind at a systems level that moves beyond the access criteria of the MDGs and into questions of education quality that characterise SDG 4. 180 teachers from these 45 project schools have been trained as Inclusion Champions, and 80 Head teachers and their deputies have also been trained in Inclusive and Special Needs Education. At the national level, the teacher-training curriculum is also being reviewed to include Disability and Inclusion components for pre-service training of all teachers. Education for All has also conducted community sensitisation and advocacy, leading in changes in perceptions, beliefs and practices about disability issues. The work of Education for All has helped to reinforce the critical role of women in development issues – where traditional rulers and chiefs failed to bring out children with disabilities, women did. Inclusivity in this project is defined in terms of access and quality, but also in terms of no discrimination, ensuring that children with disabilities are treated with dignity.

Disability and Education for All Case Study: What can we learn?

- *In order to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, a range of measures need to be in place that include specific forms of financial and infrastructure support, but that also draw on progressive legislation, systems-level training and community-based sensitisation*

- *"nothing about us without us" highlights the importance of consultation to reach left behind individuals and groups, in order to design appropriate budgets, policy and legislative approaches*

As our research participants discussed, what we can learn from the Disability and Education for All case study extends to groups beyond persons with disabilities – particular laws such as the domestic violence act, devolution of estate act and the sexual offenses act were all passed to make sure that women are protected under the law, but need to be supported by work that challenges gender discrimination and gender-based violence.

Leaving No-One Behind in Sierra Leone: Summing Up

Both of these case studies highlight ways in which the work of civil society and government together can contribute to improved outcomes for the most vulnerable in society. They illuminate the value of the kinds of multi-sector approaches outlined in the government's Medium-term National Development Plan, as well as the importance of popularising policies and ensuring their implementation to fully address those left behind – it is not enough to have things solely 'on the books' as our research participants emphasised. Awareness raising of particular policies such as free education or health care at both national and community levels helps to reduce corruption, and ensure transparent and robust systems that cater for all.

In both case studies – through the use of the vulnerability

criteria and the database of the Sierra Leone Association for Ebola Survivors, or the baseline survey in the Education for All project - data was central to the ways in which left behind groups could be reached. For governments, tracking which individuals and groups were being left behind was seen as a key, through the collection of accurate and disaggregated data along multiple domains, with regular reviews as the 2030 Agenda encourages. As one male academic asked in our research, 'if you don't have the data, how can you cater for them?' This highlights the importance of disaggregated statistics which capture disability, which was missing from the last national census in Sierra Leone.

Photo by Annie Spratt

PRINCIPLE 2:

Tackling Inequalities

In the 2030 Agenda, tackling inequalities is both a cross-cutting principle and a specific goal (SDG 10). In a world in which inequalities both within and among countries are rising, and wealth, power and opportunities are not equally shared, tackling inequalities is a particularly pressing issue. In the 2030 Agenda, gender inequality 'remains a key challenge', requiring the removal of all barriers to equality between women and men, and for equal access to economic opportunities, political participation and decision-making and justice. Efforts on this key issue should be informed by data which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

Laudato Si' goes further to argue that these inequalities cannot be tackled without addressing the structural drivers of inequality, and the concentration of power in the hands of the most powerful. Making links to the principle of leave no-one behind, both Agenda 2030 and Laudato Si' emphasise that inequality affects us all, but affects the poorest and most vulnerable most severely.

Understanding Tackling Inequalities: Sierra Leone Perspectives

Sierra Leone's Medium-term National Development Plan is closely aligned to the 2030 Agenda in that it recognises the significance of income inequality in Sierra Leone, and the need for future economic growth to be both inclusive and sustainable. Our research participants also were concerned that Sierra Leone has high levels of wealth and income inequalities, but further made links to the ways in which wealth and power are closely related. Inequality in our research was associated with an unstable middle class, and corruption and nepotism that meant that funds were not allocated to where they were most useful or necessarily reaching their intended beneficiaries. Tackling inequality was seen as something that explicitly required political will, but would lead to a range of positive outcomes that included increased social cohesion and reduction of tensions and violence. traditions and aspirations for the benefit of all.'

"If we the actors are committed, if we are convinced and have the will to do and can put commitment to that, it will certainly... it will happen, because what we have seen is an expression of serious commitment. Real commitment and backing it with courage to take the necessary action."

Male, Government

As with the 2030 Agenda, gender inequalities are seen by Sierra Leone's government as a key dimension of national inequalities. The Medium-Term National Development Plan emphasises the challenges of the entrenched discrimination from the household and community to national levels, and acknowledges how discrimination and gendered stereotypes limit equitable relationships between men and women, as well as access to resources. Inequality was seen as something that affected people's confidence and sense of self-worth, in ways that inhibited them and made it difficult to realise their full potential.

"Even with my work, especially working in a male dominated environment, there is a tendency for me to be overlooked. That is something that is very inherent when you look at the male–female relationship especially in relation to our culture here as well. So that one is going to be a little bit difficult to manage because of our cultural values, the respect that has been imbibed in us, that women are the weaker sex or have to be more docile, so on that level you have the inequality.."

Female, Government

Our research participants particularly stressed that inequalities are based on power dynamics, and that tackling

inequalities required laws such as the Gender Laws of 2007 or the calls for 30% representation of women in parliament to be implemented as recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. But our research participants emphasised that tackling inequalities also required shifts in attitudes and behaviours that would take time and need a range of different interventions. The value of representation, through the visibility of women and other marginalised groups in positions of power or decision-making, such as female lawyers or parliamentarians, was seen as one of the ways in which changes could come about. These concerns spoke to national agendas, in which the Medium-term National Development Plan emphasised that effective enforcement of national laws due to deeply held traditional practices and socio-cultural norms is one of the main barriers to tackling inequalities.

"The biggest inequality we see is poverty. There is vast difference between the rich and the poor in our society today. Those who have access to resources have much more than they need, whilst those that do not are really struggling to get the very little they do get. So in some cases they have nothing absolutely. Thus the gap between these groups is very wide and increasing. As long as this status is maintained, that is when the abuse and violence comes in."

Male, Civil society

Finally, in understanding the relationship between inequality and the environmental concerns of the 2030 Agenda, our research participants echoed the argument of the Pope's encyclical that inequality leads to environmental damage, in particular by reflecting on the ways in which the civil conflict, the Ebola outbreak of 2014 and the 2017 mudslide in Freetown all revealed problems at a system-level associated with inequality in Sierra Leone.

" To start with health, if the Ebola would have started in Freetown, it would not have been as disastrous as it was because here people have access to medical facilities and would have tackled it. But because it started way down in the interior in Kailahun where the health facilities people are exposed to for health are almost not

there, people were treating the scourge of Ebola using traditional means and as such it started multiplying until it got to the point where it was uncontrollable. That is just one major inequality. People in the urban areas have access to health facilities more than people in the rural areas."

Male, Government

Our research participants emphasised that these types of relational inequalities need systems level approaches, such as incentives for doctors and teachers to work in the rural areas. They also require attention to those who are particularly left behind, to ensure that minimum standards are reached throughout the country.

Case Study 3:

Social Safety Nets - Tackling inequalities by leaving no-one behind

SDG 1; SDG 2; SDG 3; SDG 4; SDG 5 // Tackling Inequalities; Leave No-One Behind

In 2014, Sierra Leone launched a programme to provide social safety nets through unconditional cash transfers (Ep Fet Po) that aim to change the lives of extreme poor and vulnerable families in Sierra Leone. These social safety nets tackle inequalities in income, but also address questions of gender inequality through the specific targeting of women as beneficiaries. The intervention targets extremely poor households as they are the most food insecure, and likely to have the highest risks of malnutrition and poor maternal health. The programme is implemented by the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) with support from partners such as The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), The Anti-Corruption Commission and Ministry of Health & Sanitation, and funded by the World Bank with counterpart contributions from the Government of Sierra Leone.

Enrolment in the social safety net programme started in 2015, with a target of 12,000 households in four districts in the country. Each beneficiary household receives the Leones equivalent of 45 USD quarterly, combined with workshops that focus on encouraging beneficiary households to put the transfers towards investments in human capital and adopting good practices around health and early childhood development. Community Health Workers have been critical for the delivery of these workshops, as well as following-up and supporting

families to practise what they are taught.

Since the inception of the programme, over 30,500 households have benefitted from the quarterly cash transfers and complementary workshops. In a qualitative assessment of the programme conducted by NaCSA and Statistics Sierra Leone in 2018, with funds from the World Bank, several successes stories were recorded, some of which are highlighted below: Isata a single mother of four, in Konia Baoma, in the Bo District, has been able to send her children to school, and engage in oil palm trade. She first bought a five gallon palm oil and started selling by pint in the weekly market. Now she sells by drum and in large quantity at the bigger market in Bo.

In addition to food, education, health care and economic activities some beneficiaries have embarked on improving shelter for their families. Forty-five year old Jabu Forbie, who lives in Mokerewa Village, Fakunya Chiefdom, Moyamba District, has used the cash received from the SSN programme to replace the thatched leaking roof of their home with metal roofing sheets. She said, "The cold and sickness during the rains is now a thing of the past."

Two aspects of this programme particularly speak to the

principle of tackling inequalities. The first is the ways in which financial empowerment of the women in the programme and their engagement in financial activity has revealed shifts in male attitudes to decision-making, with women reporting now being called to community meetings and increased respect from their husbands. The second approach to tackling inequalities has been the work of the programme to ensure that data is meticulously recorded, and to include monitoring mechanisms from the Ant-Corruption Commission to ensure that resources reach the intended beneficiaries.

Social Safety Nets Case Study: What can we learn?

- *Tackling inequalities can work through top-down funding from government, but will be more effective if supported by forms of community-level support and follow-up*

- *Financial interventions need to be carefully monitored to ensure that funds are allocated without corruption or nepotism*

- *Income-based inequalities cut across multiple SDGs: food security, health, education and gender – tackling inequalities can have benefits in multiple sectors simultaneously*

Beneficiaries at training on Health, Nutrition and WASH at Ngombehun paypoint in Moyamba District

Tackling Inequalities in Sierra Leone : Summing Up

The learning from the Ebola outbreak and the positive example of the Social Safety Nets programme highlight that tackling inequalities needs to focus both on those left behind or suffering the results of inequalities, but also those with the power – male community and family members in the example of the Social Safety Nets were vital to enhancing the financial gains of the unconditional cash transfers through forms of social gains and participation in decision-making. Tackling inequalities is a challenge that requires political

will and courage, with a commitment from those who hold the power to engage in serious action and change. These kinds of approaches apply not only to the income and gender inequalities discussed here, but to other forms of inequality that include linguistic and ethnic divisions, all of which were highlighted by research participants.

PRINCIPLE 3:
Integrating the Environment and Development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for a new approach, where protecting the planet from degradation and tackling poverty and inequality must work together, balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development - social, economic and environmental. Agenda 2030 reaffirms that planet Earth and its ecosystems are our common home. The Pope describes this as 'integral ecology' and emphasises that everything is interconnected: 'we are faced with not two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental'. As Agenda 2030 argues, the complete range of development activities – including ending food security (SDG 2), access to water and sanitation (SDG 6), access to energy (SDG 7), building infrastructure (SDG 9), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), and responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) – need to be met by sustainably managing our natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that the planet can support the needs of both present and future generations. Agenda 2030 highlights the need for a world in which consumption and production patterns and use of all natural resources are sustainable – from rivers, lakes and aquifers to oceans and seas (SDG 14), and from air to land (SDG 15). In Laudato Si', this is understood as inter-generational justice: we need to recognise the impact of human activity on the planet, and protect the environment as our common good.

Within the 2030 Agenda, action on climate change (SDG 13) is singled out as an issue that demands decisive global action and the widest possible international cooperation. For the Pope, rich countries have an 'ecological debt' towards poor ones: climate change impacts the poorest communities the hardest. To act against climate change, we need greater political will, and to challenge powerful vested interests who work to conceal the impact of their activities.

Integrating the Environment and Development: Sierra Leone Perspectives

Sierra Leone's Medium-term Development Plan views protecting the environment as a cross-cutting issue, and mainstreams environmental protections across all policy clusters. The national context makes this a particular pressing concern: Sierra Leone is ranked as the third most vulnerable country in the world to climate change. The Medium-term National Development Plan highlights that recurring environmental disasters demand a re-think of public policy in relation to management of environmental and natural resources. This includes a focus on addressing vulnerability and building resilience through forest management and conservation of wetlands. At the same time, however, with attention to leaving no-one behind, our research participants made the case that for some of the most vulnerable communities who are dependent on natural resources, conservation needs to go hand in hand with a commitment to the provision of alternative livelihoods.

While climate change represents an external threat, that requires attention both inside and outside of national borders, this external threat was seen in our research as compounded by threats internal to Sierra Leone that included population dynamics and demographic realities. Many of our research participants commented on the damage that urbanisation without attention to the environment can do, and noted how these processes had led to the huge impact of the 2017 mudslide which killed over a thousand inhabitants and left more than three thousand homeless. Housing built in areas of environmental risk links inequalities with environmental concerns, as deprived populations' vulnerability is increased through cycles of natural disasters.

"No one segment of the society is forever protected. You could be better off today and tomorrow you are vulnerable, and that is where fragility comes in. In fragile states, a case in point is the mudslide. The mudslide affected people who were protected and insulated and alright and so on. But we saw their vulnerability in their exposure to the environmental and human activity which resulted to the mudslide."

Male, iNGO

With proper planning, however, our research participants emphasised some of the ways in which protecting the environment and forms of development align. For example, preventing deforestation through timber logging and charcoal burning leads to better soil quality and the ability to grow particular crops such as peppers. But at times protecting the environment might be in tension with development concerns: for example, the need for clean water (SDG 6) in Sierra Leone currently leads to a huge build-up of single-use plastics, and different, more creative approaches are needed. As a woman from government commented, "unfortunately we have not got to the stage where producers are involved in the waste management chain…. Because of this seemingly convenient technology we are kind of losing out on some of the most sustainable ways of preserving our environment." Ensuring that waste is properly disposed of was seen as a challenge that required action at multiple different levels and by many different actors. This approach was evident in the policy of 'Cleaning Saturday' which was seen as working because it was a partnership between central and local government and communities themselves, with the provision of trucks from government a clear indication of a financial commitment, that in turn helped communities to shift their habits and attitudes. The responsibility for successful management of Sierra Leone's environment and resources was seen in both the national development plan and in our research as a collective responsibility.

Case Study 4:

Mitigating Flooding - Sensitising communities & working with youth

SDG 5; SDG 11 // Integrating the Environment and Development; Leave No-One Behind; Participation and Dialogue

The rainy season brings increased threats to economic livelihoods and health in Freetown and puts the lives of some of the poorest residents of the city at risk. In 2019, Freetown City Council (FCC) initiated a Flood Mitigation project focused on clearing 35 of the most severely affected flash-flood points of the city, and in turn reducing the spread of malaria, cholera, and other water-borne diseases. To carry out this work, Freetown City Council (FCC) in partnership with Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces and Sierra Leone Roads Authority partnered with community volunteers of unemployed youth for cleaning of the waterways and gutters. These youth were provided with food donated by World Food Programme and AfriGas, partnering between the public and private sectors. Many youths were eager to participate in the cleaning exercise and took pride in being recognised by their councillors for their work. From this, FCC and RSLAF learned that moving forward unemployed youth would be a key set of stakeholders to actively take ownership of cleaning and de-silting waterways, with some kind of incentive model like the food-for-work being applied to ensure sustainability. The majority of these youth, however, were male, with a few young women working to prepare and serve food.

In parallel to the clearing and de-silting work, there was also a public engagement media campaign via radio and other social media platforms. The focus of this campaign was to ensure the long-term sustainability of flood mitigation in these communities, through community monitoring of the cleared gutters, culverts and waterways.

Flood mitigation: Phase 1 and 2 Impact

23 wards covered

39 waterways cleaned

20 bridges cleaned

35 culverts desilted

6.24k meters of gutters excavated

In addition, communities were discouraged from illegal dumping and fly-tipping of garbage along the roads and near waterways, compounding the risk of flooding in and around the affected areas. Education and public awareness were seen as key to ensure sustained behavioural change in communities.

Mitigating Flooding Case Study: What can we learn?

- *Youth unemployment can be harnessed to address environmental concerns, providing work opportunities and supporting transitions into fuller employment*
- *Voluntary roles, as many youth took up in monitoring their communities, can have a key role to play in raising the profile of youth and supporting the sustainability of projects*
- *Involving local communities and working through local governance structures can help to ensure that environmental interventions are sustainable*

Kissy Brook Bridge before the FCC clean up

Kissy Brook Bridge after the FCC clean up

Some of the activities most clearly in tension with the environment are those associated with illegal processes such as logging or mining practices which do not meet international standards. Our research participants also highlighted the importance of reviewing laws and their enforcement to ensure that activities that promoted growth did not take place in ways that deplete natural resources without regulation.

Case Study 5:

Implementing the National Land Policy (2017) – Inclusion through new Technology

SDG 2; SDG 10; SDG 15 // Integrating the Environment and Development; Tackling Inequalities

The land sector in Sierra Leone is plagued with serious challenges, including environmental issues. Development activities in recent times have promoted large-scale land acquisition to support mainly agriculture and mining activities in the provinces, which constitute nearly 95% of the land territory of Sierra Leone. Large-scale land acquisition in Sierra Leone has been mainly characterized by lack of a systematic inventory of concessions and leasing arrangements administered under Customary Law (the leasehold system). It is estimated that a total of about 800,000 hectares are under contract by foreign investors, amounting to 1.43 percent of the total arable land in the country. The outdated and inaccurate cadastre and registry system have contributed to an environment where land conflicts are common, collection of taxes remains difficult, land markets are distorted, and urban planning and the associated disaster risk management is undermined.

Critical to environmental sustainability is effective and efficient land management system and optimal land use planning. To that end, the Government of Sierra Leone launched a comprehensive right-based National Land Policy in 2017 with the aspiration of ensuring land tenure security, stimulating responsible land investment and enhancing environmental sustainability of land-based natural resources. To further improve land tenure governance, the Government adopted the Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests within the Context of National Food Security (VGGT), which promotes secure tenure rights and equitable access to land and natural resources as a means of eradicating hunger and poverty, supporting sustainable development and environmental sustainability,

and strengthening mitigation and adaptation strategies to prevent and respond to the effects of climate change.

This National Land Policy identifies the need to collect updated and realistic land data to protect legitimate tenure rights, inform decision making in the allocation and distribution of resources and to improve land sector services. In response to the implementation plan of the policy, the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment (MLHE) with support from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation and UNDP, has developed new software to digitally map and record all land records, including customary community land rights. Mapping and recording of customary land parcels has been conducted in 39 villages in 8 Chiefdoms in the different districts, amounting to a total of 12,000 acres of customary land systematically mapped and recorded in a participatory and inclusive community approach. Communities were involved in identify land boundaries, allowed to use traditional conflict resolution mechanisms to address conflicts regarding land boundaries among themselves. Heightened training and sensitization of communities during the pilot exercise has changed traditional attitudes towards women's land rights protection and environmental protection.

Implementing the National Land Policy Case Study: What can we learn?

- *Environmental protection needs careful monitoring of resources that is centralised but that involves local communities in ways that respect their customary*

rights and contributes to tackling regional and gender inequalities

- *Developing new forms of technology is useful in facing the new challenges that climate change brings*

Combined team of MLHE technical staff and community members conducting a mapping exercise

Integrating the Environment and Development in Sierra Leone: Summing Up

As both case studies reveal, and as our research participants and the broader national and international agendas emphasised, responding to environmental degradation requires collective action, and collective responsibility. Cleaning Saturday and the mitigating flooding case make clear that without community-level sensitisation that shifts attitudes and habits, interventions to challenge environmental degradation will not be sustainable. As the National Land Policy case highlights, this requires creative solutions, including new technologies, but at the same time respecting local communities to ensure that they are not disenfranchised or further disadvantaged. Focusing on ways in which the environment is a cross-cutting issue, as the National Development Plan does, helps to break cycles of socio-economic and environmental vulnerability – providing

work through green jobs, or changing the role of extractive industries in national development when their activities put both the environment and local livelihoods at risk – by working across the SDGs in connected ways, that draw together principles not only of environment and development, but working to reach the most marginalised and tackle inequality at the same time.

PRINCIPLE 4:
Participation and Dialogue

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is defined as a document 'of the people, by the people and for the people' (UN 2015, 52). It was developed in a way that promoted participation, in much more inclusive ways than the Millennium Development Goals, involving national dialogues and thematic working groups as well as engagements with civil society and other stakeholders in many countries across the world. In the Agenda, the UN encourages member states to conduct 'regular and inclusive reviews of national progress' (UN, 2015, p. 79) that draws on key stakeholders such as civil society or the private sector, but that also pays particular attention to the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable. The targets for SDG 16 facilitate these inclusive processes, by encouraging governments to 'develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions' (target 16.6) and 'ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making' (target 16.7). It is these participatory processes that are believed to ensure the success of this ambitious and transformative agenda, because sustainable development is both enriched by, and depends upon, diverse perspectives. In Laudato Si', the Pope affirmed this importance, calling for new forms of dialogue that are based on open encounters in which there is a willingness to change and no individual or group is left behind, especially those who are most affected.

Understanding Participation and Dialogue: Sierra Leone Perspectives

Sierra Leone's Medium-term National Development Plan (2019-2023) was developed through intensive and extensive consultations, with an estimate outreach to two million people in articulating and setting priorities through citizen's manifestos, and validation of the plan, closely aligned to the processes encouraged by Agenda 2030. For our research participants, this inclusive development was highly valued, and there was a sense that top-down processes had been minimised and that many multiple-stakeholder platforms existed. One woman from government described the development planning process as "a lesson", in which she learned the value of engaging with communities on their own development priorities, and allowing communities to add their own needs and strategies to the process.

At the same time, however, our research participants emphasised that there was a need for continued capacity building and civic education to ensure meaningful participation, and for both decision-making and the allocation of resources to continue to be decentralised, involving all 22 local councils and ward levels. As one woman from civil society asked, "the platforms are there, but are they influential?" Participation is not meaningful without a shift in decision-making power. There was a concern that despite gains in participation there was still a concentration of power and influence in the hands of elites.

> *"We know that Ministers and even the President have reached out to the general population to seek their views on development issues and concerns. Even the radio and television talk shows are open spaces for these dialogues."*
>
> Male, Government

Our research also highlighted other forms of public dialogue that were not linked to formal structures, and that spoke to the principle of tackling inequalities or leaving no-one behind, such as the 'Hands Off Our Girls' campaign championed by the First Lady of Sierra Leone in 2018, which aimed to challenge cultures of 'indifference' and 'impunity' around sexual violence, early marriage and teenage pregnancy. As a male academic noted, "if we look back it was taboo to talk about gender equality. Nowadays gender-based violence is being talked about all over the place...and now it has come to fruition as the law is there".

"One thing that probably in fact cuts across excluded and non-excluded groups is for us to be well informed and educated. Education is not just about the literacy and numeracy skills it's being educated about processes, which is where civic education comes in, lets understand how local council works, what they can or can't provide, and so we really understand what our rights and responsibilities are."

Female, Civil Society

"The disabled are most times left out due mainly to their disability and we need to bring them in so they can participate in society. And you can see also that some women are shy even the educated ones to speak in public or to talk about politics. So in effect we need to build the confidence of people through encouragement and capacity building for those that are less able to participate in decision making, due mainly to their vulnerability."

Female, Civil Society

For meaningful participation and dialogue, inclusion was understood through the categories of leave no-one behind, including across age, language, gender, disability, rurality or race, and was defined as equitable power relations at all levels, from household to the community and national levels. Particular efforts needed to be made to challenge those who experienced stigma – young people who were stereotyped as just being 'rash' or 'perpetrators of violence' were seen as an important group to reach out to, as were those with disabilities in ways that can build on the disability act and inclusive education policies..

Photo by Avel Chuklanov on Unsplash

Case Study 6:

Women's Priority Policy Issues in the Constitutional Review - "Many Messages, One Voice"

SDG 5; SDG 16 // Participation and Dialogue; Leave No-One Behind; Tackling Inequalities

In 2016 a Constitutional Review Committee was given the mandate to review Sierra Leone's 1991 constitution. They went around the country to conduct consultations, including with women's groups and local women in different areas. The expectation was that the first draft of the constitution would have integrated women's concerns, but women's policy priority issues were missing. In response to this absence, women self-mobilised around International Women's Day, engaging the president with their concerns that the first draft of the Constitution did not take forward recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission focused on women's empowerment, including the 30% quota for women's participation in politics and decision-making processes, and the removal of all discriminatory clauses.

The Campaign for Good Governance, with support from Trocraire, facilitated the gathering of over a hundred women from the fourteen districts of Sierra Leone to agree on a single document that would take forward their recommendations. Participants at the conference included community women, petty traders, representatives from government, CSO, CBOs, parliamentarians, representatives from women's groups and women's led institutions and international organizations. A female lawyer was hired to review the current document, and present to those gathered from which recommendations were developed into a 19-point resolution that addressed a decade of advocacy around inclusion in politics, decision-making and female empowerment, which was given the title 'Many Messages, One Voice'.

National Women's Conference, International Women's Day 2016

The women presented this to the late Chairman of the Review Committee, and popularised the 19-point resolution in all forms of media. When the White Paper came out from government that did not contain the priority issues contained in this 19-point resolution, press conferences were organised and the paper was withdrawn from parliament.

While in some regions of Sierra Leone it's a taboo for women to speak in public and to participate in dialogue and decision-making, this conference was able to challenge discriminatory gender norms in both legislation and processes of engagement. A final unified response of solidarity, owned by the women collectively, was able to ensure that the momentum of the conference was sustained, and that achievable minimum requirements for women's empowerment, speaking to the principle of leave no-one behind, were included in the 19-point resolution and the advocacy messages which resulted from this process.

Women's Priority Policy Issues in the Constitutional Review - "Many Messages, One Voice: What can we learn?

- *Participation is closely linked to power: marginalised groups can self-mobilise, but they also need support for spaces to be created to engage with decision-makers*

- *Leveraging pre-existing mechanisms and processes, such as International Women's Day and the Constitutional Review process, can magnify focus and enhance dialogue*

- *Face-to-face participation can be supported by remote participation through media*

- *When organising groups to advocate for their needs, it is important to ensure that all different types of people in that group are represented, particularly those who are often left behind*

Participation and Dialogue in Sierra Leone: Summing Up

Our research provides evidence that participation needs to be meaningful: with influence and power in the hands not just of those who lead consultation processes but those who are invited to participate, leading to change on the ground including in the allocation of resources. For groups that left are behind, inclusion in these processes requires more efforts – for example, more time to reach their remote location, build their capacity to understand the process though civic education, and use local languages. The Sierra Leone's government's commitment to inclusive participation should be commended, and built upon, with more multi-stakeholder platforms and the continued use of media to ensure that policies are popularised and engaged with.

APPENDIX:
Research Participants

This list of participants is organised by date of participation in the study.

Name	Organisation and Role
Mohamed Deen Rogers	Deputy Director and Focal Person Parliamentary Committee on SDGs
Grace Efua	Foundation for Rural and Urban Transformation (FORUT)
Salieu Mansaray	Statistics Sierra Leone
Valnora Edwin	Sierra Leone War Trust for Children
Elke Scharfer	Coordinator, Civil Peace Service - AGEH
Fatu Clara Hanciles	Director, Legal Aid Board Sierra Leone
Shellac Davies	Sierra Leone Association of Non-Governmental Organizations
Joe Pemagbi	Country Representative OSIWA
Sahr Korteque	Executive Secretary, National Commission for Persons with Disability
Nancy Smart	Country Director, Sightsavers Sierra Leone
Macella Samba	Campaign for Good Governance
Agnes During	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
Bondu Manyeh	Young Women Christian Association
Dr Susan Roberts	National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA)
Momodu Woodie	National Youth Commission
Dr Sheka Bnagura	Ministry of Planning and Economic Development
Peter Sam Kpara	Development Secretary
Nabila Tunis	Minister of Planning and Economic Development
Gibrilla Kamara	Environmental Protection Agency
Hon. Alusine Kanneh	Chairman Parliamentary Committee on SDGs
Dr. Moikowa	UNICEF
Samuel Braima	University of Sierra Leone
Ishmael Alfred Charles	Caritas Freetown
Anita Bangura	Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities
Aminata Lamin	Policy and Advocacy Manager, Action Aid Sierra Leone
Sahr Kandema	Campaign for Good Governance
Grace Jones	Caritas Freetown
Alhaji Gillen	Civil Society Movement
Sibylle Dirren	Civil Peace Service - AGEH
Sudie Austina Sellu	Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre
Victor Tutu Koroma	Legal Aid Board SL
Dr Alphajoh Cham	Ministry of Lands, Country Planning and the Environment

Organisations Involved

Caritas Sierra Leone (CSL) is the Relief and Development Agency of the Catholic Church in Sierra Leone that was established in 1975 and registered with the Government of Sierra Leone in 1980. It operates in all regions of the country, through its four Diocesan Caritas offices in the Archdiocese of Freetown, Diocese of Bo, Kenema and Makeni working to build a better world, especially for the poor and oppressed. CSL attends to the poor and needy, responding to disasters, providing social services, promoting integral human development, speaking out against the causes of poverty and violence.

CAFOD. The Catholic Agency for Overseas Development is the official aid agency for the Catholic Church in England and Wales. CAFOD reaches out to people living in hard-to-reach places, in war zones and those who are discriminated against. CAFOD believes that if one of us is hurt, hungry or abandoned, we all are hurt, hungry and abandoned. No one should be beyond the love and support they need to live a dignified life. We are part of a global Church network with a local presence in 165 countries and territories. Together we make up one of the largest aid networks in the world. Because of our global reach and local presence, we have the potential to reach everyone.

The Bartlett Development Planning Unit (DPU) conducts world-leading research and postgraduate teaching that helps to build the capacity of national governments, local authorities, NGOs, aid agencies and businesses working towards socially just and sustainable development in the global south. We are part of The Bartlett faculty, ranked the world's top institution for built environment subjects in the renowned QS World Ranking. The DPU has over 65 years of experience in academic teaching, research, policy advice and capacity building in the field of international development.

As part of its mission to build the capacity of professionals and institutions, the DPU undertakes a range of action-oriented work with partners in different parts of the world. Regular contact with policy and planning practice through capacity building and advisory work is viewed as an important part of challenging and developing the theoretical and methodological debates pursued in our teaching and research.

University College London. UCL is London's leading multidisciplinary university, with more than 13,000 staff and 42,000 students from 150 different countries. Founded in 1826 in the heart of London, UCL was founded to open up education to those who had previously been excluded from it. UCL's founding principles of academic excellence and research aimed at addressing real-world problems continue to inform our ethos to this day. UCL is consistently ranked amongst the top 10 universities in the world.

Research Team

Edward Lansana Massaquoi holds a Master's degree in Development Studies and has served as Programme Manager of Caritas Sierra Leone since 2012. Edward led the national Sustainable Development Goal consultation and dialogue in Sierra Leone in 2016 with support from Action for Sustainable Development (A4SD), and was the focal point and lead researcher for the SDG research project.

Dr Charlotte Nussey was awarded her PhD at the Institute of Education, University College London in April 2019. She has worked as an international development researcher and advisor in several countries, with particular expertise in sub-Saharan Africa. Her current research interests include gender, education, violence and interconnected forms of development that cut across the sectors of the SDG goals.

Dr Andrea Rigon is a Lecturer at The Bartlett Development Planning Unit of University College London with a background in development studies and research, consultancy and project management experience in several countries. His research work focuses on how power relations affect the participation of different people and social groups in decision making processes that have an impact on their lives. Andrea is a co-founder of the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre, and is also the Chair of the Board of Catalytic Action, an NGO which creates learning and play spaces for women, men and children affected by conflict or disaster.

Diego Martinez-Schütt is Policy Analyst at the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development based in London. He leads CAFOD's international policy and advocacy work on SDGs, providing support to CAFOD partners in designing and implementing SDG strategies globally with particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa. Diego has a background in environmental and climate research and is the co-founder and Vice-chair of Carbon Market Watch, an NGO providing policy expertise on carbon policies across the world.

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