

## Policy on Climate Change

*Take good care of our common home. Human beings can forgive, but nature never will.*

*If we do not care for our environment, there is no other alternative.*

Pope Francis

### 1. Why a policy on climate change?

The natural environment is the foundation of our civilisation. It provides the resources we need to survive and to prosper. These resources must be managed in a sustainable way to avoid damaging effects on natural environments and societies. Climate change is the greatest challenge of our time, as it threatens both our natural environment and our civilisation. The effects of climate change are already apparent through more extreme weather all over the planet. Storms, flooding and droughts have impact on all continents, but it is the poor and most marginalised communities that suffer the most and have the least resources to recover and adapt. There is an increasing number of people displaced due to climate change-related crises, and climate change is itself becoming the cause of conflicts and hunger. The need for environmental justice is an important reason for Caritas' engagement in this field, on all levels of operations, from programmes in affected communities to international climate negotiations. Many countries that have done the least to cause and exacerbate climate change are now facing its worst effects, with few means to mitigate them. The rich countries that have benefitted from emissions of greenhouse gases must assume their historical responsibility. This cross-cutting policy will guide all the work related to climate change undertaken by the organisation and the implementing partners, in line with Caritas Internationalis Guidelines on Environmental Justice.

### 2. Terms and definitions

#### *Climate change*

This policy document refers to the man-made climate changes caused by emissions of greenhouse gasses. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has in its reports given a scientific explanation of how the increased emission of greenhouse gases through human activity has led to an increase in the global temperature and climate change. The effects of climate change are evident in extreme weather patterns observed in different parts of the world. Storms, flooding and droughts are damaging livelihoods, taking lives and threatening millions of people, especially in the Global South.

#### *Climate-change adaptation*

In human systems, climate-change adaptation refers to the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate change and its effects, in order to moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities<sup>1</sup>. The adaptation strategies most relevant to our programmes rely on building resilient

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<sup>1</sup> IPCC, *Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation. A Special Report of Working Groups I and II of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, and New York, NY, USA, 2012, p. 556.

local communities. This includes construction of houses that can withstand extreme weather and flooding, agricultural practices adapted to handle droughts and floods caused by climate change, as well as access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and safe energy services.

#### *Climate-change mitigation*

Mitigation refers to actions taken to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gasses. Switching from fossil fuel to renewable energy is one example of mitigation. Advancing resilient, pro-poor development through supporting access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and safe energy services is a 'win-win' solution from the climate-change and poverty-reduction perspectives, given that 84 percent of the energy-poor globally live in rural areas, and the majority (70 percent according to the International Energy Agency, IEA) will be reached in the fastest and most cost-efficient way through decentralised renewable energy systems. Adaptation strategies often include aspects of mitigation, and focus on reducing both the emissions of greenhouse gasses and the risk of loss and damage related to climate change.

### **3. Climate change and the Catholic Social Teaching**

Care for the environment as our common home is an important element of the Catholic Social Teaching. Pope Francis has been very involved in this field, and in 2015 he published the encyclical *Laudato Si'* to enlighten the religious discourse about the need to care for our common home and to stop the path towards climate change that can threaten human civilisation. This was a strong call to action addressed not only to Catholics around the world, but also to the entire human population. It gave rise to the Global Catholic Climate Movement, a network of over 400 organisations active in mobilising communities all over the world and advocating for stronger commitments and emissions reduction goals in the international climate negotiations.

### **4. Caritas Norway's approach**

Caritas Norway's work focuses on long-term, participatory development in the world's poorest communities. In the face of climate change, our vision for development incorporates targeted programmes that enhance vulnerable communities' capacity to adapt to changing conditions, as well as promotion of mitigation initiatives that encourage communities in Norway and abroad to reduce their contribution to global warming. It is vital that Caritas Norway considers climate change not in isolation, but together with other development challenges, and builds long-term community resilience to respond to negative effects of climate extremes and unpredictable weather patterns.

Over the next five years, Caritas Norway will continue to expand its work on climate adaptation with the partners, develop mitigation measures and support access to renewable energy sources in local communities. It is our aim to establish and strengthen partnerships with other Caritas organisations and public and private sector companies, especially within the renewable energy sector and the solar power industry connected to job creation and vocational training. To strengthen resilience, we will also focus on disaster risk reduction connected to climate change, and advocate for more funding for climate adaptation.

Caritas Norway works together with likeminded NGOs through the umbrella group Forum for Development and the Environment (ForUM for Utvikling og Miljø) to address climate-change related issues; it has also recently joined the Global Catholic Climate Movement. Advocacy work on climate change will not be Caritas Norway's main priority, but we will support our implementing partners to advocate for stronger disaster risk reduction and climate-change adaptation policy nationally. Caritas Norway took part in the international climate negotiations during the Conferences of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement (COP21), and it will follow up on other important international meetings within the field. In this we can support our partners to engage in their national climate policy processes, including the Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement. Caritas Norway will continue to advocate for actions that are crucial for people in our programmes. The organisation will also urge the Norwegian Government to implement policies that would:

- Increase financial and technical assistance to developing countries, thus enabling them to:
  - o End poverty (SDG1),
  - o Ensure sustainable food production systems, and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, help maintain ecosystems, strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding, and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality (SDG2.4),
  - o Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all (SDG7),
  - o Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters (SDG13.1),
  - o Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning (13.2),
  - o Build resilience to natural disasters and develop in sustainable ways (SDG16).
- Allow Norway to assume a leadership role in reducing national and global pollution levels in line with the goal of the Paris agreement.
- Support innovative finance mechanisms.
- Raise climate finance in accordance with historical responsibility and economic capacity, to meet the increased developmental costs of tackling climate change.

## 5. Programme-specific implications

### Food security

We live in a world where more than 800 million people suffer from chronic hunger. This situation is likely to be further exacerbated by climate change. IPCC predicts that food insecurity will increase by 15-40 percent by the year 2050, due to climate change. Agriculture and food systems have a complex and necessary role to play within this context, being both a lifeline for millions and a major contributor to climate change. Caritas Norway sees climate change and food security (SDG2) as interlinked, and implements climate-adapted agricultural practices in its food security programs.

- ***Caritas Norway will ensure sustainable food production and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, help maintain ecosystems and strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change in our food security programmes.***

- ***Caritas Norway and the implementing partners will conduct an environmental impact study at the beginning and at the end of all multi-year programmes, in addition to regular reporting during the programme cycle.***
- ***The above will be aligned with focus on environmental justice, understood as fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, colour, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies<sup>2</sup>.***

**Practical resources:**

- [FAO manual on climate-smart agriculture](#)

**Migration**

Another important and interlinked area of focus is migration. While environmental migration is not a new phenomenon, the risks accompanying global climate change will likely put additional pressure on the world's poorest communities, increasing human movement both within countries and across borders due to hunger, food insecurity, extreme weather conditions and violent competition over scarce resources. Migration and internal displacement will become a grave reality for many small island communities, some of which are already forced to consider permanent relocation. Significant numbers of people will also be affected throughout the developing communities of Africa and Asia.

- ***Caritas Norway's programmes on food security will provide alternatives to migration, both as an economic alternative and by cultivating land through climate-adapted techniques that are more resilient to flooding and drought.***

**Practical resources:**

- [IOM, Migration and Climate Change](#)
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**Humanitarian assistance**

Climate change has already increased the frequency and intensity of extreme weather patterns. The international community must act to strengthen the legal and humanitarian frameworks for responding to the needs of the poorest communities displaced and affected by climate change.

- ***Caritas Norway will reduce the emissions and the environmental impact of humanitarian programmes by implementing activities through local partners, avoiding deforestation for cooking fuel and using cash solutions to support the local economy and reduce emissions due to transport of food over long distances.***

**Practical resources:**

- SPHERE Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response

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<sup>2</sup> [Definition by the United States Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#)

## 6. Organisational implications

Caritas Norway has a long-term commitment in the field of climate change and adaptation, and withdrew organisational investments from the fossil energy sector at an early stage. While there has already been focus on climate-change adaptation in many of our programmes, this will be developed and expanded into other areas. We will also be held to account to show our environmental approach in how we run our organisation and our internal processes. Caritas Norway is committed to reducing its footprint in a consistent and appropriate way on an ongoing basis. We will follow the principles of sustainability: *Reduce, Reuse, Repair and Recycle*, in managing our environmental impact, and will do so through the steps outlined in this policy.

### *Minimising our environmental impact from travel*

As an international development agency working across the world, we consider international travel as essential to our operations, but we also strive to reduce our carbon footprint. Caritas has invested in remote meeting and conferencing technology, and we are encouraging staff to use this option instead of travel whenever possible. When travelling to Norwegian cities, the options to use train will be investigated first. The costs and the extra time of the journey will be considered when choosing the mode of transport. Offsetting the carbon emission from our travels will be considered, and can be integrated in our programmes on climate adaptation and mitigation.

### *Minimising our environmental impact in Norway*

We aim to reduce our environmental impact in our communications work by using only recycled paper and economical formats, and by encouraging recipients to recycle all materials. A bike parking, a shower and a changing room in the office encourage the staff to choose environmentally friendly forms of transport in their commute. We also encourage our employees to use public transport when going to external meetings. We minimise meat consumption by providing vegetarian alternatives when serving food at meetings and seminars, and use ecological, fair-trade tea and coffee. Environmental and ethical requirements and expectations are included in our contracts with partners and in our procurement policy. We also aim to decrease our footprint through our supply-chain management practices and purchasing policies and practices. We are in the process of attaining an environmental certification to meet the highest international and Norwegian standards for environmental conduct. The staff will receive training in how to apply these standards and this policy.