

Striving to live our values:

Code of Ethics for Caritas Internationalis member organizations¹

Introduction

The work of Caritas Internationalis is motivated, oriented and defined by Holy Scripture, the teaching and tradition of the Catholic Church and a loving personal encounter with people in need². “Caritas is the Church’s caress to her people”³ and embodies a preferential option for and with those who are poor, excluded or marginalised. Caritas strives to secure the integral development of the whole person, and to relieve the suffering caused by catastrophes, conflicts & injustice.

Article 1.3 of Caritas Internationalis’ Internal Rules prescribes that: “Member organisations must meet minimum standards of governance, organisational infrastructure, financial viability and accountability, and compliance with ethical codes of conduct, as decided by the Representative Council. They remain autonomous in their juridical, financial and contractual status.”

In addition to the Statutes and Internal Rules which provide the canonical legal framework for Caritas Internationalis, several standards and guidelines have been developed for the work of the Confederation, including the following, the status of which has not changed:

- The Caritas Partnership Guiding Principles (2003)
- Caritas Internationalis Child Protection Policy Framework (2004)
- Caritas Internationalis Guidelines on Relations with the Military (2006)
- Caritas Internationalis Guidelines on Environmental Justice (2006)
- Caritas Internationalis Emergency Guidelines (2007)
- Caritas Internationalis Minimum Standards [to be approved]

Caritas Internationalis is also a signatory to:

¹ Caritas Internationalis is the global confederation of 164 Catholic Church national member organisations providing humanitarian assistance, development, social services and advocacy in some 200 countries and territories of the world.

² “When you meet with the one in greater need, your heart will begin to enlarge, to enlarge, to enlarge! Because our coming together multiplies our capacity to love – our meeting with another enlarges our heart. Do it!”, Pope Francis, Video Message on the Feast of Saint Cajetan, 07 August 2013 (<http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-francis-message-for-the-feast-of-saint-cajetan>).

³ Pope Francis address to the Caritas Internationalis Representative Council, 17 May 2013 (<http://www.caritas.org/about/PopeFrancisInspiresCaritasLeadership.html>)

- The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-governmental Organisations
- The Sphere Project's Humanitarian Charter and Minimum standards in Disaster Response.

In addition, as a major network in the international humanitarian and development community, Caritas Internationalis actively seeks to improve its work and incorporate good practice as it develops.

The following Code of Ethics is based upon and summarises in one normative statement the values and principles contained in the above, which comprise the overarching ethical framework to which all Members and staff⁴ are expected to adhere. In all its work, Caritas Internationalis, its Members and staff aspire to embody these values and principles, and in so doing to be active witnesses to Christ's compassion at work in the world.

The Minimum Standards of Caritas Internationalis prescribe how this Code of Ethics is translated into organisational policy and behaviour, and include a procedure for assessing Members' compliance. The "Code of Conduct for Staff" describes the behaviour that is expected of all Caritas staff.

Caritas Internationalis is confident that the majority of its Members and staff act with great conscience and integrity, and exemplify the values and principles of this Code of Ethics, without needing explicit statements. This document is a guiding norm for Members of Caritas Internationalis and staff at all levels. However, by means of this Code of Ethics we ensure greater clarity and consistency across the Confederation, above all in its identity and ecclesial mission. Members of the Caritas Confederation are expected either: to i) adopt this Code of Ethics and operating principles as written, or ii) adapt it for their own organisations, ensuring consistency between the two. It is intended that diocesan Caritas will also adopt this Code of Ethics but where this is not the case and programme implementation is undertaken by dioceses or other partners on behalf of Caritas Internationalis members, the latter must ensure through specific agreements that these minimum standards are appropriately applied.

This Code should be included in national and diocesan Caritas' Human Resources policies, and staff in these organisations should receive a copy of it, be trained on the Code and be expected to abide by it.

Values and Principles:

All human life is sacred from conception to natural death. Made in the image and likeness of God, all women and men are created with unique dignity since they "stand above all things, and [their] rights and duties are universal and inviolable."⁵ "By his innermost nature man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential."⁶ "All of social life is an

⁴ For the purposes of this Code, "staff" refers to board members, employees, volunteers, consultants and all those who act as agents of the Confederation at all levels.

⁵ Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: *Gaudium et Spes* (http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html), #26.

⁶ *ibid*, paragraph 12.

expression of its unmistakable protagonist: the human person,”⁷ who, “far from being the object or passive element of social life is rather, and must always remain, its subject, foundation and goal.”⁸ “This social order requires constant improvement. It must be founded on truth, built on justice and animated by love; in freedom it should grow every day toward a more humane balance.”⁹

Human dignity and the social nature of the human person are the foundation and inspiration for a moral vision of society which will be achieved if we live by the following values and principles:

Values

1. **Justice:** responding to the call of faith, we strive to build a just moral order and “right relationships” within our own lives and organisations, the communities in which we work, and the whole of God’s creation. We accompany, serve and plead the cause of those made poor and pushed to the margins, helping them to transform the societies in which they live and the structures that keep them poor.

“Society ensures social justice when it provides the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due, according to their nature and their vocation. Social justice is linked to the common good and the exercise of authority.”¹⁰

2. **The common good:** the enjoyment of human dignity and ability to grow in community is affected by the way we organise our society: socially, religiously, culturally, economically, ecologically, legally and politically. We work within the universal communion of the Catholic Church, and with other religious traditions, governments, wider civil society and all in authority, to protect human dignity, fulfil individual and social rights and responsibilities, and promote the common good.

“A society that wishes and intends to remain at the service of the human being at every level is a society that has the common good – the good of all people and of the whole person – as its primary goal. The human person cannot find fulfilment in himself, that is, apart from the fact that he exists “with” others and “for” others.”¹¹ The common good is always oriented towards the progress of persons: “The order of things must be subordinate to the order of persons, and not the other way around.”¹²

3. **Integral Human Development:** we view development as based on a holistic understanding of the human person, within the context and experience of the family and the wider community, embracing spiritual, psychological, emotional, physical, material and economic elements. Wherever we work we strive for the development of the whole person and the whole community, and transform unjust social systems. In our work we ensure strong and consistent links between the relief, rehabilitation and developmental components.

⁷ Catechism of the Catholic Church, #106.

⁸ Pius XII, Radio Message of 24 December 1944, 5: AAS 37 (1945), 12

⁹ *Gaudium et Spes*, #26.

¹⁰ Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1928.

¹¹ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, #165, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005

¹² *Gaudium et Spes*, #26/3

“To be authentic, [development] must be well rounded; it must foster the development of each man and of the whole man... Man is truly human only if he is the master of his own actions and the judge of their worth, only if he is the architect of his own progress. He must act according to his God-given nature, freely accepting its potentials and its claims upon him.”¹³

4. **Compassion:** united in one human family we are profoundly moved by the suffering of others and have a moral duty to recognise the humanitarian imperative to respond. This duty is essential both to our identity as a Catholic organization and to our membership of the human family. Thus, as members of the international community, we recognise our obligation to provide humanitarian assistance and the duty of others to ensure unimpeded access for us to do so.

“The Christian’s programme – the programme of the Good Samaritan, the programme of Jesus – is a ‘heart that sees.’ This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly.”¹⁴ As Jesus told us: “In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.”¹⁵

5. **Preferential Option for and with the Poor and Oppressed:** in accordance with the Gospel of Jesus, we choose to accompany those who are poor, marginalised or oppressed. We are committed to combating the dehumanising poverty that robs people of their dignity and humanity. We are guided by Christian Scripture to work for freedom of the oppressed and an equitable sharing of the gifts of the earth and to help the marginalized be responsible for their own development. We take up the cause of people who are poor as our own, putting ourselves alongside them. To this degree we will take a stand alongside them in their need and confront the injustice they face.

“This rather is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own.”¹⁶

“The fight against poverty finds a strong motivation in the option or preferential love of the Church for the poor.”¹⁷ “The poor should be seen ‘not as a problem, but as people who can become the principle builders of a new and more human future for everyone.’”¹⁸

6. **Respect:** we respect religious traditions, culture, structures and customs in so far as they enhance and uphold the dignity of the human person.

“A just society can become a reality only when it is based on the respect of the transcendent dignity of the human person.”¹⁹

¹³ Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio, On the Development of Peoples*, # 14 and 34 (1967),

www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum_en.html

¹⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, #31(2005),

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est_en.html

¹⁵ Matthew 25:40

¹⁶ Isaiah 58:6-7

¹⁷ CF John Paul II, Address to the Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops, Puebla, Mexico,(28 January 1979), I/8: AAS 71 (1979), 194-5.

¹⁸ John Paul II, Message for the World Peace Day 2000, 14: AAS 92 (2000), 366.

7. **Solidarity:** we work in solidarity with people who are poor and marginal, thereby achieving the fruits of peace, justice and human development. Solidarity binds us together in the common vision of establishing a world where all human beings receive what rightly belongs to them as sons and daughters of God.

“Solidarity highlights in a particular way the intrinsic social nature of the human person, the equality of all in dignity and rights and the common path of individuals and peoples towards an ever more committed unity.”²⁰

Principles:

1. **Partnership:** “authentic partnership means a long-term commitment to agreed objectives based on shared values, strategies, and information. It is characterised by honest feedback, joint planning, accompaniment, transparency, and accountability on both sides, and a genuine openness and sensitivity to the other’s needs, feelings, expertise, experience, and wisdom. It is based on mutual respect, trust and goodwill. Effective partnership creates solidarity among member organisations, other organisations that share our vision, and the communities and people with whom we work.”²¹

“... Caritas Internationalis promotes cooperation among its members, without diminishing their due autonomy, by carrying out tasks of encouragement, coordination, representation and capacity building.”²²

2. **Subsidiarity:** we ensure that power, decisions and responsibility are devolved to the lowest level at which they can be properly exercised. In so doing we will strive to maximise and build upon local abilities and resources. Central to our identity as Caritas are the national, diocesan and parish members, and we will all strive to promote and strengthen these to enable them to assume greater autonomy and responsibility.

“Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them.”²³

3. **Participation:** we ensure that people we serve are involved in the design, management and implementation of the projects we undertake on their behalf and the associated decisions from assessment through to evaluation. Participation is an expression of human dignity and implies shared responsibility for the human community. Caritas is committed to development processes that prioritise active participation as the foundation of a democratic and inclusive society.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 132.

²⁰ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace: “Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church” (http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html, #192).

²¹ Caritas Internationalis, Caritas Partnership Principles: A Caritas Internationalis Handbook for Reflection and Action (Rome, 2003, <http://www.caritas.org/upload/par/partnership.qxd1.pdf>), p. 14.

²² Statutes of Caritas Internationalis, article 1.5

²³ Pope Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno*, AAS 23 (1931), #79.

“The dignity of the human person involves the right to take an active part in public affairs and to contribute one's part to the common good of its citizens.”²⁴

4. **Empowerment:** we help people develop and realise their full potential, and build mutually respectful relations, so they can control and improve their quality of life. Through integral human development and empowerment, we will promote active, powerful local communities with members playing a significant role in civil society.

“I hope there will be noise ... But I want you to make yourselves heard in your dioceses, I want the noise to go out, I want the Church to go out onto the streets, I want us to resist everything worldly, everything static, everything comfortable ... everything that might make us closed in on ourselves. The parishes, the schools, the institutions are made for going out.”²⁵

5. **Independence:** we as Caritas members determine our operational priorities and programmes and do not allow ourselves to be used as instruments of national or foreign economic or political interests, especially when such are not in conformity with Catholic Church Teaching.

“Positive signs in the contemporary world are the growing awareness of the solidarity of the poor among themselves, their efforts to support one another, and their public demonstrations on the social scene which, without recourse to violence, present their own needs and rights in the face of the inefficiency or corruption of the public authorities.”²⁶

6. **Stewardship and Accountability:** we will make every effort to be accountable to those whom we serve, those who support our work and society at large. We also ensure good stewardship of the resources entrusted to us.

“At times it happens that those who receive aid become subordinate to the aid-givers, and the poor serve to perpetuate expensive bureaucracies which consume an excessively high percentage of funds intended for development. Hence it is to be hoped that all international agencies and non-governmental organizations will commit themselves to complete transparency, informing donors and the public of the percentage of their income allocated to programmes of cooperation, the actual content of those programmes and, finally, the detailed expenditure of the institution itself.”²⁷

7. **Equality, universality, impartiality and openness to all peoples:** all women and men, girls and boys are created equal and make their own unique contributions to our world, collectively realising that which is fully human. We commit ourselves to equal and active participation of women and men, girls and boys in all our work.

²⁴ *Pacem In Terris*. Encyclical of Pope John XXIII on Establishing Universal Peace In Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty (1963), #26, www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html

²⁵ Pope Francis, Address to Meeting with Young People from Argentina, Rio de Janeiro, 25 July 2013, (http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130725_gmg-argentini-rio_en.html)

²⁶ *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, Pope John Paul II, For the Twentieth Anniversary of “*Populorum Progressio* (1987), #39 http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis_en.html

²⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 2009, #47, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html

We serve people impartially, particularly those who are poorest and most vulnerable, according to objective assessments of their situations and the needs they express, irrespective of race, age, sex, physical ability, ethnicity, creed or political persuasion, indeed without adverse distinction of any kind.

“We must ... recognize, affirm and defend the equal dignity of man and woman: they are both persons, utterly unique among all the living beings found in the world.”²⁸ ... Giving women opportunities to make their voice heard and to express their talents through initiatives which reinforce their worth, their self-esteem and their uniqueness would enable them to occupy a place in society equal to that of men.”²⁹

8. **Protection:** we strive to ensure the safety of those with and for whom we work, especially children in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, national legislation and Caritas’ Child Protection Framework (2004) and other good practice.

“I wished to acknowledge personally the suffering inflicted on the victims and the honest efforts made both to ensure the safety of our children and to deal appropriately and transparently with allegations as they arise ... Just as the Church is rightly held to exacting standards in this regard, all other institutions, without exception, should be held to the same standards.”³⁰

9. **Local economies:** whenever possible we use local resources and products and support the local economy wherever possible, in so far as doing so does not exhaust supplies or cause exceptional inflation.

“Subsidiarity, understood *in the positive sense*, [is] economic, institutional or juridical assistance offered to lesser social entities ... Their initiative, freedom, and responsibility must not be supplanted.”³¹

10. **Care for creation and attention to environmental impact:** we protect people and the planet, promoting right relationship with all of God’s creation, since the planet and all its resources are entrusted to humankind. Acting as true stewards of all creation, we consider the environment and the heritage of future generations in the planning and implementation of all our work.

“Cultivating and caring for creation is an instruction of God which he gave not only at the beginning of history, but has also given to each one of us; it is part of his plan; it means making the world increase with responsibility, transforming it so that it may be a garden, an habitable place for us all..”³²

²⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, Meeting with Catholic Movements for the Promotion of Women, St. Anthony’s Parish, Luanda, Angola, 22 March 2009,

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2009/march/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090322_promozione-donna_en.html

²⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus* (2011), #57,

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus_en.html

³⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Bishops of the United States of America on their *Ad Limina* Visit, 26 November 2011, Vatican City,

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2011/november/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20111126_bishops-usa_en.html

³¹ *Compendium, op.cit.*, #186.

³² Pope Francis, General Audience, 5 June 2013

(http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130605_udienza-generale_en.html)

11. **Coordination:** we will coordinate closely with national governments and local authorities, churches, other religious organisations, civil society, other members of the relief and development communities, and all other relevant stakeholders.

“Born from an impulse of this Apostolic See which then supervised and directed its activity, *Caritas Internationalis* is made up of a Confederation of charitable agencies, usually the national branches of *Caritas*. This Confederation, far from limiting the autonomy to which these branches are entitled, fosters their collaboration through its activities of animation, coordination and representation.”³³

12. **Advocacy:** we will advocate – nationally and internationally – on behalf of and with the poor and marginalised to bear witness to, and address, their plight and the underlying or structural causes of poverty and injustice. We will be agents of change and social transformation to promote respect for human rights.

“I would also like to emphasize that your mission enables you [Caritas] to play an important role on the international level. The experience you have garnered in these years has taught you to be advocates within the international community of a sound anthropological vision, one nourished by Catholic teaching and committed to defending the dignity of all human life ... All that you say and do, the witness of your lives and activities, remains important and contributes to the advancement of the integral good of the human person.”³⁴

13. **Learning and Staff Development:** we are committed to improving our work, what we do and how we do it, through continual reflection, capacity-building, monitoring, evaluation, knowledge management and strategic planning. We will invest in our staff to ensure that they have the skills, experience and formation they need to reach their full potential and ensure that Caritas achieves its potential and makes the greatest difference for those who are poor, marginalised or oppressed.

“The Church's charitable organizations, beginning with those of *Caritas* (at diocesan, national and international levels), ought to do everything in their power to provide the resources and above all the personnel needed for this work. Individuals who care for those in need must first be professionally competent: they should be properly trained in what to do and how to do it, and committed to continuing care. Yet, while professional competence is a primary, fundamental requirement, it is not of itself sufficient. We are dealing with human beings, and human beings always need something more than technically proper care. They need humanity. They need heartfelt concern.”³⁵

14. **Staff Care:** we ensure just, dignified and sustainable working conditions for all our staff and fulfil our duty of care to staff, promoting good practice in human resources management and complying with employment law within the relevant jurisdiction.

³³ Pope John Paul II, *During the Last Supper*, Letter to Caritas Internationalis for the Acquisition of Public, Juridic, and Canonical Personality, 16 September 2004, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/2004/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_20040916_caritas-internationalis_en.html

³⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Participants in the General Assembly of Caritas Internationalis, 27 May 2011, *op. cit.*

³⁵ Deus Caritas Est, #31 a)

“The rights of workers, like all other rights, are based on the nature of the human person and on his transcendent dignity.”³⁶:

Date: 3 November 2014

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Approved by the Representative Council of Caritas Internationalis on 18th May, 2014

³⁶ Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church
(http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html), #301