SOCIAL MENTORING

Challenges in the Basque Country
Tool for the 2030 agenda
Meeting of entities

SOCIAL MENTORING AND THE 2030 AGENDA: STRENGTHENING TIES

INTRODUCTION

Working for a better society is not new: for millennia, there have been people in our communities who are committed to devoting their time, energy and lives to creating more cohesive societies.

But our understanding of how best to develop that commitment is changing. They are often seen as 'fashions' or passing fads, but in general, those who dedicate part of their lives to fighting for a more cohesive society are really responding with everything they can to address ever-increasing or changing challenges.

Social Mentoring and the 2030 Agenda are two current instruments that share objectives, including the conviction that we are obliged to act for a better world for everyone. This belief that we can leave no one behind is as per the slogan of the well-known 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. It is based on the belief that every person – whether vulnerable or not – has potential and capabilities that can be fully developed when they are in the right social context. And this is what Social Mentoring advocates for.

Based on this belief, we decided to meet in Tolosa (Basque country, Spain) on 12 September 2023 to reflect on Social Mentoring and the 2030 Agenda. Twenty-six people from twelve social organisations showed that working as a team makes sense when we want to build effective working formulas and proposals[1].

These pages, therefore, reflect Baketik Foundation's commitment and that of the other organisations that belong to the Coordinadora de Mentoría Social del Estado Español (Social Mentoring Network of Spain). They state that the actions and projects in the field of Social Mentoring contribute to achieving and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. It is only by all coming together, each in their own specific role, that we will be able to make progress towards truly achieving a more equal world.

Baketik
November 2023

[1] Through dynamics proposed by Baketik, these people were able to develop together some of the ideas that are presented in this publication. This publication only represents the opinion and ideas of Baketik. The people and organisations that participated in this conference do not necessarily share ideas set out in the following pages.

THE 2030 AGENDA: WHERE ARE WE?

In recent years, we have heard more and more about the 2030 Agenda, especially in institutional spheres and in certain media outlets. This major international agreement approved in 2015 aims to achieve 169 targets in 15 years and has attracted the attention of different stakeholders, in some cases to defend it and, in others, to question its validity.

In both viewpoints, we will find issues that are shared and others that can be challenged from the other's point of view. What is certain, however, is that the 2030 Agenda, as an international commitment – and then translated into national and local policies – exists: it is here and has to come to stay with us for a few years, at least.

To properly understand what the 2030 Agenda is, we believe it is important to look at it in its true scope: the Agenda is only a path or a route, which marks out (among many other possible options) formulas that should be considered as priorities. In this way, it focuses on generating steps and not so much on destinations.

The Agenda is clearly international, and it is logical that for this reason, many people feel it is distant from them. Nevertheless, it is also true that the Agenda is created in a way that allows it to be applied to different realities,, enabling us to adapt it to our own realities. It is indeed a global agenda, but it also responds to very local issues, depending on how we work with it. But most importantly, to be able to measure the 2030 Agenda in all its breadth, we must understand that it is a text of consensus. This text had to be approved by representatives of 193 countries with completely different and even diverging ideologies, outlooks and understandings. And as such, it is, therefore, a text of minimums, a lowest common denominator. Nonetheless, it is a great achievement based on a principle: to reach consensus and guarantee the commitment of all.

In this society where dichotomous views or the imposition of a single view still carry a lot of weight, we often find it difficult to understand the value of adoptions by consensus, the strength of what was achieved after much to-ing and fro-ing, the need to have elements that build bridges and value what we have in common.

It is clear that if each one of us could have designed the Agenda, we would have hundreds of thousands of different agendas. But the 2030 Agenda, with its pros and cons, provides a useful framework to start moving forward and changing what we need to change.

The question is: what if the 2030 Agenda didn't exist? It is very likely that, if it did not exist, we would need to invent it and strive for broad international consensus to ensure that our policies were focused on real sustainable development.

The 2030 Agenda is not the solution to all problems. It is nothing more and nothing less than another instrument, a tool that we have at our disposal and that, fortunately or unfortunately, is shared between different institutions, stakeholders and communities. We could say that

the 2030 Agenda serves as a common language for us: each of us (institutions, civil society or other stakeholders) focuses on what identifies us, but it is possible that – by adapting it to our reality – each of us can also validate, revalidate or reform the content of the 2030 Agenda.

SOCIAL MENTORING: LEADING THE WAY

Our societies are enormously diverse and unequal: inequalities and discrimination are present wherever we look. Issues such as gender, origin, age and many other factors mean that not all people have the same opportunities. The difficulties that many people face prevent them from being able to live a full life.

All this leads to distortions in our communities, tensions, disaffection and situations that do not contribute to building a cohesive society.

Social Mentoring is a way of addressing these uncertainties and is based on promoting a

'relationship between people who volunteer (mentors) to provide support to others who are at risk of exclusion (mentorees and mentees)'[2].

This tandem formed by the mentored person and the mentor is the key protagonist of the whole story but, to guarantee a good relationship, they receive constant support from professionals who help them. This is where the social organisations that promote Social Mentoring projects come in.

These relationships are unique, as are the people who are in them, yet they share several characteristics:
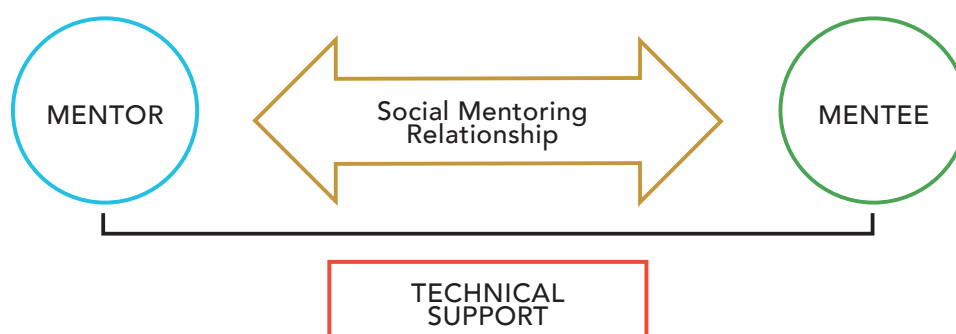
- They involve a commitment to the other person from the outset;
- They are built (slowly) on trust and respect;
- They build up a personal bond at their own pace;
- They are stable, long-term relationships.

[2] Statement by the Social Mentoring Coordinator, 2021
https://www.mentoriasocial.org/wp-content/
uploads/2022/02/Declaracio%CC%81n-de-la-CMS.pdf

Building trust and a bond is a process, with comings and goings, and therefore also requires the ongoing support offered by some social organisations.

It is also important to understand that, undoubtedly, the protagonist is the person being mentored: their participation in the programme and in the relationship comes from being in a situation of vulnerability and from the belief that a mentoring relationship can help to change this starting point and promote their social and personal development.

Professional mentoring also includes training and coaching to ensure that the volunteers involved as mentors do not create dependency or become paternalistic and that they exercise their role in a way that empowers the mentee.

Of course, the mentor also benefits and gains personal development and the opportunity to get to know realities that are not part of their daily life. In short, both parties benefit and learn throughout the process.

In the Basque Country (Spain), there are already several projects underway that have Social Mentoring at their core, with, for example, teenagers, children, local people or people from other origins, women mentoring other women, etc. Also involved are professionals from social organisations and universities, with or without the support of public institutions and so on. The range of people who are committed to Social Mentoring is growing and, without a doubt, both the volunteers who are the protagonists of the relationships and those who support contribute to building a different world from the current one.

STARTING THE JOURNEY: SOCIAL MENTORING AND THE 2030 AGENDA

We see that as we approach the 2030 Agenda and Social Mentoring, common ground and connections begin to surface.

According to the United Nations, the 2030 Agenda is 'an opportunity for countries and their societies to embark on a new path to improve the lives of all, leaving no one behind'. Ultimately, this Agenda seeks to 'improve the quality and life and prospects of people throughout the world'[4].

For its part, Social Mentoring states that 'the current globalised socioeconomic system creates inequality and, therefore, unequal opportunities between different population groups'. In this context, mentoring and mentoring relationships have 'the goal of working for equality (…). Mentoring is an effective and innovative tool in the interest of social justice'[5].

However, neither of these two tools is valid on its own. The organisations that promote Social Mentoring projects firmly believe in these relationships' power of change, but we are aware that to really achieve equality, we must also have an impact on the change of structures and public policies. That is where the 2030 Agenda comes in, in the form of commitment from public policies that also accept that it is limited and that at the current rate of compliance and implementation, the Goals pursued by the States Parties will not be met. Moreover, even if the Agenda were to be fulfilled in its entirety, it does not cover each and every one of the existing challenges, and new ones are created every day.

In short, we need multiple tools, with different formulas, mechanisms and ways to be able to continue fighting widespread inequality and to have more active and participatory societies.

However, the reality is that those of us who work in Social Mentoring in the Basque Country see that the relationship between this and the 2030 Agenda has yet to be built: a tangible link is lacking, and we need to work consciously on this aspect, both in our organisations and in public institutions.

Not everyone who participated in the meeting on Social Mentoring and 2030 Agenda was aware of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals or did not know if their projects were linked to these goals. The general feeling is that they are 'far away'. On their part, not everyone in institutions has a good understanding of how Social Mentoring contributes to public policy.

[3] https://unric.org/es/agenda-2030/
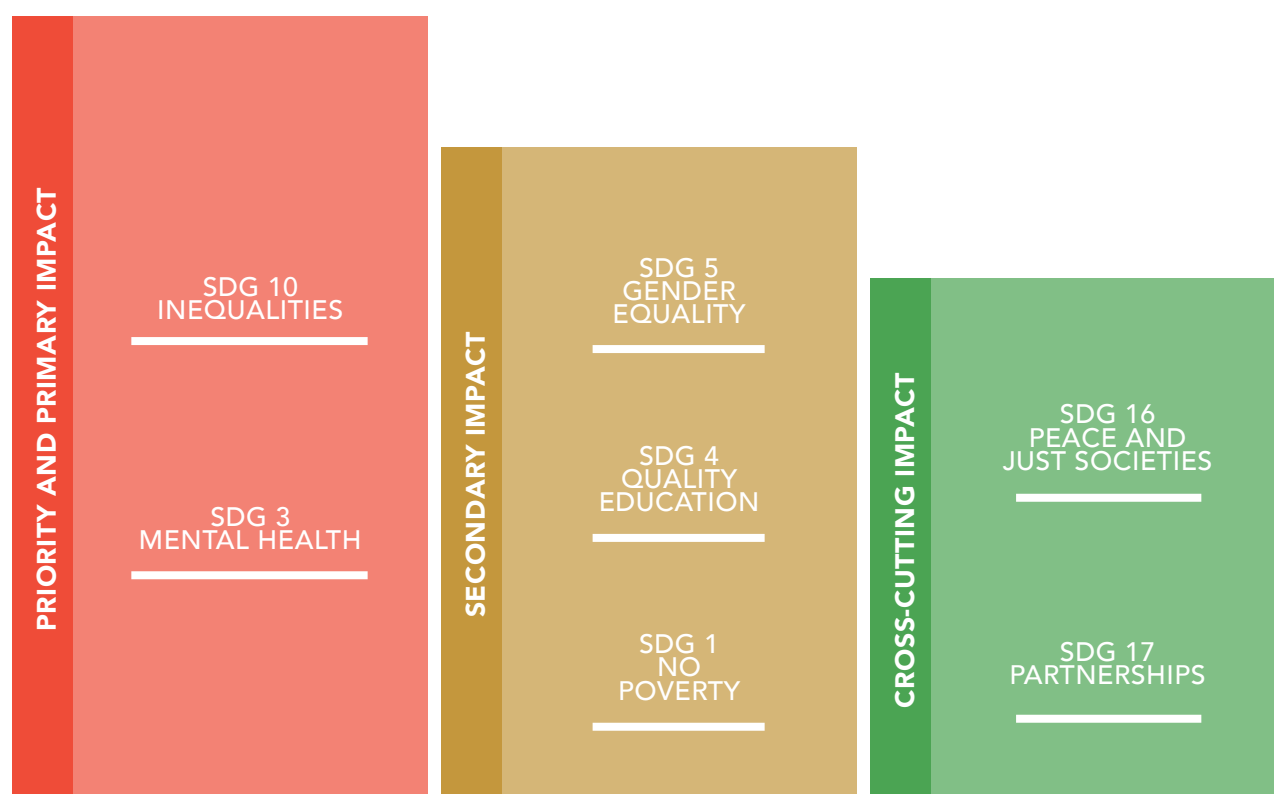[4] https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/es/development-agenda/
[5] Declaration by the Social Mentoring Coordinator, 2021.

SOCIAL MENTORING AND THE 2030 AGENDA: HOW ARE THEY LINKED?

We have already seen that Social Mentoring and the 2030 Agenda share some common ground and that both are seen as tools at the service of a more just and less unequal society. But how, in concrete terms, are Social Mentoring relationships contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda?

When consulted about this, the Basque organisations decided to find out which Sustainable Development Goals they were really working on with their mentoring projects, and their conclusion was as follows:

PRIORITY AND PRIMARY IMPACT	SECONDARY IMPACT	CROSS-CUTTING IMPACT
SDG 10 INEQUALITIES	SDG 5 GENDER EQUALITY	SDG 16 PEACE AND JUST SOCIETIES
SDG 3 MENTAL HEALTH	SDG 4 QUALITY EDUCATION	SDG 17 PARTNERSHIPS
	SDG 1 NO POVERTY	

PRIORITY AND PRIMARY IMPACT

Social Mentoring relationships thus have a clear and undeniable impact on two issues: on the one hand, they are a formula to prevent mental health problems associated with situations of social risk (SDG 3) and, in turn, the relationships combat structural inequality in our societies (SDG 10):

SDG 3
ENSURE HEALTHY LIVES AND PROMOTE WELL-BEING FOR ALL AT ALL AGES.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WEL-BEING

- Social Mentoring relationships lead to significant improvements in the psychosocial well-being of those involved.

- This well-being is directed specifically at the mentored person, but mentoring volunteers also gain psychosocial benefits.

- These relationships are a clear example of fighting the loneliness and social isolation that often result from situations of inequality.

- It is committed to developing new ways of forming relationships, in response to tendencies towards violence or the tensions observed around inequalities.

- Having another person who listens to you and supports you creates recognition. This results in self-confidence, well-being and self-esteem for the mentee.

- Often, they also promote healthy habits through plans and proposals that are made at meetings.

- Ultimately, they improve psychosocial distress or help to prevent it, through relationships that effectively support the individual and support them on a social level.

- Social Mentoring relationships result in recognising people's right to feel supported.

SDG 10
REDUCE INEQUALITY WITHIN AND AMONG COUNTRIES.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
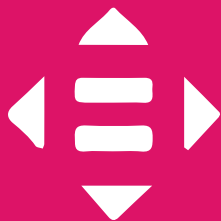
● Mentees are diverse, but they share the reality of being part of a group of society that is affected by situations of vulnerability.

● Social Mentoring relationships specifically address the position of inequality.

● They create opportunities and access to social, cultural or leisure resources that did not always exist prior to the relationship.

● These relationships fight against pre-established realities and create empowerment processes for people at risk of exclusion or instability.

● These relationships also contribute to a change of outlook and to softening our prejudices.

● Social Mentoring works carefully to ensure that there are no power relations in mentoring. Active and transformative participation is promoted.

● Social participation (also key to SDG 11) is a key factor in Social Mentoring.

● In short, these relationships bring about a change of perspective, allow people to place themselves in roles other than pre-established ones and promote transformation and empowerment.

● Mentoring, therefore, works towards equal opportunities.

SOCIAL MENTORING AND THE 2030 AGENDA: STRENGTHENING TIES

SECONDARY IMPACT

These previous two objectives were identified as priorities due to a consensus being reached that they apply to each and every one of the Social Mentoring projects currently underway in the Basque Country (Spain).

In addition to these, three other objectives were identified in which some projects also have considerable impact:

**SDG 5
ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS.**

5 GENDER EQUALITY

- Gender equality is key in several of the mentoring projects that focus on women's empowerment and direct participation.

- Additionally, all Social Mentoring projects have increasingly identified the need to address issues of gender inequality, attitudes and behaviours that exist in our societies and also among those who volunteer in these relationships.

- Training, reflections and specific activities contribute to breaking down gender stereotypes and roles.

- Girls' and women's participation in mentoring clearly generates empowerment processes.

- Moreover, it is inevitable that Social Mentoring relationships are also a form of care, social care, another target of SDG 5.

SDG 4
ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL.

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

- Mentoring relationships are not an educational process per se, but they create new opportunities that can contribute to improving quality education.

- Relationships often open up leisure, social and cultural spaces previously unavailable to some discriminated people.

- The psychosocial and emotional well-being brought about by these relationships often contributes to better educational processes for mentored children.

- Some of these relationships also help to promote healthy and sustainable habits, which are also key among the targets of SDG 4.

SDG 1
END POVERTY IN ALL ITS FORMS EVERYWHERE.

1 NO POVERTY

- Social Mentoring does not foster dependent relationships and contributes to empowering people at risk by increasing their potential for personal and social development.

- These relationships often affect people who are economically disadvantaged or in relative poverty.

- This empowerment and development provide a favourable context in which the socioeconomic conditions of programme participants can indirectly improve.

- One of the identified outcomes of these relationships is often increased opportunities.

- Social Mentoring projects, through the organisations that promote them, ensure that resources from various sources (public and private) are mobilised for these social initiatives.

SOCIAL MENTORING AND THE 2030 AGENDA: STRENGTHENING TIES

CROSS-CUTTING IMPACT

Another key point of consensus among those who participate in Social Mentoring projects is that, through our actions, we create transversal changes and act as key stakeholders of development in our societies. It is, therefore, undeniable that those in these relationships have an impact on SDG 16 and SDG 17:

SDG 16
PROMOTE JUST, PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES.

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

- Social Mentoring raises the visibility of inequalities and injustices in our community.

- It promotes horizontal and much more inclusive relationships than we are generally familiar with in our surroundings.

- Social Mentoring projects have a clear commitment to coexistence.

- They promote adopting and upholding social values, such as participation, equality and cohesion.

- The formulas of Social Mentoring relationships contribute to other forms of interaction, preventing further social violence and promoting peaceful coexistence.

SDG 17
REVITALIZE THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

- Mentoring relationships constitute a clear alliance between different stakeholders to contribute to social development.

- They include ordinary people as protagonists.

- Social organisations promoting projects come together.

- They receive both financial support and backing from public institutions and different governments.

- In some cases, private organisations and companies also collaborate.

- Social Mentoring is clearly an example of interaction and partnership for a common goal.

- Our societies are made up of multiple stakeholders, institutional, economic, social, cultural and so on. But we often forget to include a great transforming factor in this map: volunteers, as the protagonists of Social Mentoring relationships.

- Volunteers practise a form of social commitment and are engaged in making the necessary changes in our environment.

- Volunteers are, therefore, indispensable stakeholders in promoting behaviours and attitudes of solidarity and in mobilising people to fight for what they believe in. Volunteering is a clear mirror for us to look at ourselves.

SOCIAL MENTORING AND THE 2030 AGENDA: STRENGTHENING TIES

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The 2030 Agenda and Social Mentoring seemed to be distant from each other. However, we can see that they share multiple realities: the idea that we live in an unequal and unjust world and that to change this reality, we need to involve as many stakeholders as necessary.

Social Mentoring is already making an undisputable contribution to developing ways of addressing some of the challenges in the global development agenda. From everyday action, person-centred and local, Social Mentoring is fostering new social models. It creates participation and commitment among very different people in our societies, breaks inertia and contributes to altering established roles.

In short, volunteers in mentoring relationships and the people being mentored are bringing about significant changes that contribute to key aspects of the Agenda. Their commitment breaks down inequalities and broadens the options for those facing the most difficulties. At the same time, it engages a society that already sees its rights as more recognised and understands that it must be committed to supporting others in the community. In other words, they are leading stakeholders in combatting the inequalities that make up Sustainable Development Goal 10.

These relationships generate psychosocial well-being in those who participate. Ongoing contact, interaction and trust-building strengthen social ties, combat the loneliness that is so prevalent in society and prevent mental health problems through healthy emotional relationships. Thus, SDG 3 on health is also positively impacted.

Social Mentoring also tackles some of the Agenda's other challenges, such as quality education (SDG 4) as it provides opportunities for recreation and learning. Potential gender challenges and inequalities are addressed (SDG 5), and this will need even more work in the future. The socioeconomic situation of those involved can also be changed through these empowering relationships (SDG 1).

Mentors and mentees build new forms of social relationships that challenge the injustices of our community and are committed to other types of values and ways of meeting (SDG 16). In this vein, the organisations that promote Social Mentoring projects generally also seek social and political advocacy through communication and awareness-raising campaigns that seek to promote peaceful, inclusive and involved societies. An example of this is the Social Mentoring Coordination campaign on Mentoring Day on 27 October 2023. With the slogan, Social Mentoring organisations demand public policies that recognise people's right to feel supported on Mentoring People's Day, it seeks to raise awareness of different realities and reduce inequalities.

Social Mentoring organisations call for public policies that recognise people's right to feel supported on Mentoring Day.

They do so this 27 October, vindicating the role of Social Mentoring as a high-impact model that, in 2022, has favoured the inclusion and equal opportunities of more than 2,700 people in vulnerable situations.

"Uxue became my refuge from loneliness"

Uxue and Manal, Baketik mentor and mentoree.

In this way, social organisations manage, through Social Mentoring projects, to attract the interest of public institutions and some companies and, in this way, redirect and allocate economic funds to this social work (SDG 17).

However, as we mentioned at the outset, this significant and evident synergy between Social Mentoring and the 2030 Agenda is not always known and recognised, neither by social organisations nor by institutions. It is time that we, too, learn to develop more and better mutually supportive relationships and ensure that the participation of all stakeholders is bringing about change is visible.

In short, Social Mentoring and the 2030 Agenda share common ground, some approaches and are committed to tackling the most significant social challenges. These are two tools that can and should be fed back to each other.

SOCIAL MENTORING AND THE 2030 AGENDA:
STRENGTHENING TIES

ANNEX I

List of organisations participating in the conference

ORGANISATION	SOCIAL MENTORING PROJECT	TERRITORY	SCOPE OF WORK
Baketik	Izeba Proiektua	Gipuzkoa	Children and adolescents in care.
SOS Arrazkeria	Urretxindorra	Gipuzkoa	Migrant children.
SOS Arrazkeria	Izan Harrera	Gipuzkoa	Refugees.
Zehar Errefuxiatuekin	Urretxindorra	Araba	Migrant children.
Fundación Ellacuría	Urretxindorra	Bizkaia	Migrant children.
Pertsonalde		Bizkaia	Migrant youth.
Zabalbideak-Landalan	Proyecto mentoría	Bizkaia	Youth who were in care.
Dones Mentores-emakume mentoreak	Emakume mentoreak	EAE	Women who have suffered gender-based violence; gender-sensitive Social Mentoring.
UPNA	Urretxindorra	Nafarroa	Migrant children.
Fundación Adsis	Proyecto Enlace	Nafarroa	Young people aged 18 to 23 in processes of becoming independent. Women responsible for single-parent households, fully solely responsible for children. Usually of migrant origin.
Fundación Ilundain	CAMINANDOS	Nafarroa	Youth who were in care.
CMS-Coordinadora de Mentoría Social	Entidad 2º nivel	State	Various.

SOCIAL MENTORING AND THE 2030 AGENDA:
STRENGTHENING TIES

SOCIAL MENTORING

Challenges in the Basque Country
Tool for the 2030 agenda
Meeting of entities

SOCIAL MENTORING AND THE 2030 AGENDA: STRENGTHENING TIES