



# Faith for Earth Dialogue United Nations Environment Assembly 4 Synthesis Paper



A Synthesis Paper based on the presentations and discussions of the Faith for Earth Dialogue held during the United Nations Environment Assembly 4 (11-15 March 2019, Nairobi, Kenya)

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**Disclaimer**

The views expressed do not represent the opinion or the stated policy of the United Nations Environment Programme. This paper is a synthesis of the speeches of speakers at the Faith for Earth dialogue.

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# Foreword

One of the main objectives of the Faith for Earth Initiative is to strategically engage with faith-based organisations (FBOs) and mobilise faith leaders and the faith community in an effective partnership to collectively achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and fulfil the objectives of the 2030 Agenda.

In its first year of operation, the initiative has achieved many important milestones making it one of the most known global initiatives linking environmental protection to the work of faith-based organisations (FBOs) based on faith and religious values and principles. This was not possible without the keen interest and involvement of more than 700 FBOs and faith leaders who became members of our global network.

Since January 2018, some concerted efforts were made to link with faith leaders that have culminated in the selection of four to become members of the Advisory Council of the UN Task Force on Religion and Development among other 32 faith leaders working with the 19 UN organisations who are part of the UN Task Force. A number of global conferences, as part of the implementation of the goals of the strategy, were held in Nairobi and around the world focusing on mobilising partnerships and discussing faith-based investments. The Faith for Earth Initiative was invited by and held meetings with major FBOs where priority environmental issues have been discussed, and areas of collaboration have been identified.

By December 2018, 42 FBOs were given observer status at UN Environment Assembly as part of the accreditation process increasing the number by 400 per cent. This was achieved just in time to start the preparations for the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-4).

It was thrilling to know that more than 135 faith leaders registered and attended the Faith for Earth Dialogue that was held during the period 11-15 March 2019.

Faith leaders represented 56 FBOs and 12 faiths and congregations from all continents of the world. The dialogue offered the needed space for 63 speakers through 11 sessions to discuss the role of FBOs in achieving the themes of the Assembly on the adoption of innovative approaches to tackle environmental challenges and on sustainable consumption and production.

As the year progresses, we continue to work on building capacity and putting a structure in place for the Faith for Earth Coalition. A primary goal for this year is to mobilise the financial structure underpinning this global partnership. After a fruitful dialogue, I am hopeful and energised for a collaborative and proactive future for this initiative's pressing agenda with our FBO partners.

**Dr. Iyad Abu Moghli**

Director, Faith for Earth Initiative

# Executive summary

Faith-based organisations (FBO) have been active in promoting climate action, campaigning and diffusing information about climate change and innovating for sustainable consumption and production. They also possess great potential in mobilising more members of civil society and government bodies to take action and improve their commitments to sustainable living.

FBOs are perfectly positioned to assume a more primary role in governing the relationship between mankind and the environment. Faith literature and principles are embedded with the concepts of morality, ethics and reciprocity that can be channelled to mandate environmental protection and climate action. The structures of faiths allow for the integration of considerations for climate action and its various elements such as the water ecosystems, animals, flora and our consumption that contribute to the degradation of the aforementioned. In addition, faith spaces have a high standing in society and are well trusted, often holding very close relationships with factions of society. They therefore are able to take up the large responsibility of guiding humankind in a direction of sustainable living.

Climate action does not have to take a complex form. Each and every action, including normative lifestyle changes at the local level is a significant step in raising awareness, and diffusing proactivity. FBOs, and in particular places of worship can take advantage of their standing in society to encourage behaviour that is pro-environment and conducive to discussion and innovation.

This can include things that can be done personally, for example engaging in local green projects, reducing the usage of personal cars, and learning about the correct procedures for recycling and disposing of

waste materials. However, the role of FBOs is not limited to advocacy and mobilising the community, but also is essential as a key stakeholder participating in policy making.

Forming partnerships with potential stakeholders is the optimum way in knowledge-sharing and diffusing information and innovative ways of greening processes. FBOs are partnering with other FBOs and organisations to either innovate, transfer innovation or apply innovative approaches that help to reduce pollution and our overall impact on biodiversity and the environment. Vulnerable and silenced communities must be integrated within partnerships to ensure balanced and representative innovations that take account of all perspectives – the youth and women are prime actors that possess the potential to contribute to innovative approaches for sustainable consumption and production.

FBOs must engage with investors, but must also invest in projects that enable vulnerable members of our communities to lead interventions for climate action. The youth require a form of trust and investment to be able to achieve their full potential in their outreach and impact of their advocacy and physical work in reversing our negative impact on the environment. Finances must also be invested in areas that would allow for faith spaces to reach their full potential in greening processes i.e. ensuring that places of worship do not have restrictions that disallow activities such as tree planting and installation of green energy equipment.

Waste management and the integration of circular thinking is pinnacle to achieving sustainability and in reducing our negative impact on flora and fauna. This includes interventions that curb the entry of single-use plastics into our ecosystems and our food chains, the use of materials that can





be recycled and reused, as well as the circularisation of other outputs such as waste from the fashion industry. FBOs have endeavoured to collaborate, spread knowledge of waste processes and reduce waste.

FBOs can set an example by investing in green energy. Solar energy seems to be the most popular and effective form of renewable energy. Green energy not only reduces carbon emissions, but also enables and empowers many people who still do not have access to a solid electricity supply. FBOs can connect faith followers to access green sources of energy.

FBOs are ideally positioned to be the first port of call in terms of disseminating information on climate action and the ways in which civil society can get involved. FBOs must ensure that the narrative of their dialogue with civil society allows for them to see the bigger picture: how their inaction on climate change is ultimately affecting them, and the people around them. This allows for individuals to begin visualising Earth as a shared space, rather than adopting an atomised and desensitised view of climate change.

# Background and context

UN Environment held its fourth Environment Assembly during 11-15 March 2019, with the themes of sustainable consumption and production, and innovative approaches to solving environmental issues. The Faith for Earth Initiative held its thematic dialogue in the Faith and SDG Tent, and convened bilateral and multilateral meetings with faith-based organisations' (FBOs) representatives on issues of sustainable development and the environment.

The overall aim of the Faith for Earth Dialogue was to provide faith leaders and faith-based organisations an opportunity to present their positions, experiences and interfaith engagement as related to the main theme of the UN Environment Assembly - "Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production". Furthermore, the dialogue has provided the participants with an opportunity to reflect on UN system activities and on how it can integrate the initiative into its programme of work and partner with FBOs. Discussions also included ways of coordinating current and future efforts. Holding the dialogue during UNEA-4 was a golden opportunity for accredited FBOs to engage in policy dialogue with major groups and stakeholders, as well as with representatives of member states.

FBOs do not have a standalone category as part of the major groups, but as a sub category of Non-Governmental Organisations. However, the high number of faith leaders who were present at the Assembly made it clear that FBOs do represent a sizeable part and their voices should be heard – at the highest policy making body of UN Environment, the UN organisation entrusted in keeping the global environment under review and setting the global policies on environmental issues, an

integrated component of the Sustainable Development Goals.

More specific objectives of the dialogue included:

- Share experiences and information between inter-faith groups involved in environmental work in various faiths and organisations (best practices, challenges, lessons learned and gaps to address in the future)
- Discuss coordination mechanisms and approaches between the Faith for Earth Initiative and FBOs and faith leaders towards creating a Faith for Earth Coalition
- Ensure the role of environmental religious activities is strengthened among different FBOs, NGOs and world organisations
- Discuss and present faith-based perspectives on the theme of UNEA-4 on innovative solutions to tackle environmental issues and consumption and production
- Mobilise Faith for Earth community action and leadership
- Network with UNEA participants for policy dialogue and knowledge sharing
- Promote sustainable living in partnership with faith-based organisations
- Discuss greening faith-based assets and investments

This paper thematically synthesises the presentations and dialogue that were held during UNEA-4, highlighting examples of best practices in terms of innovation from FBOs for sustainable consumption and production, priorities that have come through from discussions and potential areas for

collaboration and cooperation.

The paper is organised in sub-sections, each of which represent a major priority area emanating from the focus of the presentations and the bulk of the interventions as chosen by the faith-based organisations that have organised these sessions.

In addition, the paper briefly explores cross-cutting priorities that are prevalent within each sub-section. Content in any of the sections may overlap, but the breakdown allows for a focus on the syntheses from the dialogue.





# Priorities

## Environmental governance: Faith-based global ethics and the environment

**“What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?”**

- Laudato si', 160

Mobilisation for the environment and climate action requires governance mechanisms that guide and encourage a positive synergy between humankind and the environment, in each nation state, at all levels of society. Faith leaders and faith-based organisations (FBOs) are ideally positioned to assume the role of primary actor in environmental governance. Faiths possess a large constituency; they remain in contact with followers on a monthly if not weekly basis, and so are a primary source of education and guidance for civil society. Faith spaces inspire a sense of trust among civil society unlike the relationship that is often held with the government or secular organisations, and thus hold great potential in influencing and mobilising followers. FBOs as a result, hold positions of power in urban and rural communities, accessing populations that are often inaccessible both physically and socially by other organisations. They can therefore be well informed of local cultures and have the know-how to promote messages that are culturally aware and tailored to local sensibilities.

In the context of the African continent, the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, which comprises of six countries – South Africa, Swaziland, Angola, Mozambique, Lesotho and Namibia – has taken leadership in diffusing information on the urgency of environmental stewardship, and in providing forms of environmental governance within its networks at the international and national

levels. Positioning faith spaces as primary sources in neutralising what they consider the main environmental problems of selfishness, greed and apathy, the Anglican Church has established The Green Anglicans as the driver for its environmental movement. The movement aims to support churches and dioceses in taking action in environmental stewardship through practical projects and advocacy. The church has held two conferences on water justice in Cape Town as a response to increasing episodes of drought across the continent. They have highlighted the sacredness of water as is posited in the Bible, and have encouraged further dialogue on the long-term challenges of water justice as well as the ways in which the installation of water saving devices, in particular for harvesting, are a step in the right direction for mitigating and adapting to climate change.

The **Anglican Church of Southern Africa** has initiated the Green Anglicans as the driver for its climate action movement.

Tangible elements of faiths such as religious festivals provide fertile space to promote awareness and proactivity towards the environment such as refraining from utilising plastic products during the Lent period, and encouraging climate action at the local level towards water, land and food on the basis of faith principles. FBOs and groups have the potential to harness this trust and good standing to govern sustainable living and to evoke pro-environmental messages among faith followers taking legitimacy from religious literature and philosophy that relate to a moral compulsion to care for the environment. The Green Anglican movement has incorporated environmental governance within facets of practice of Christianity for example during the Lent period: a 'carbon

fast for Lent' was held last year, with each week having a theme – water, land, food – that addresses the intersections of climate change's impact on society. This year the overarching theme has been 'less plastic for Lent' in response to growing international outcry on the revelation of plastic waste and its existence in the ocean, on land and within our food chains. In addition, churches have been encouraging tree planting at religious ceremonies – at baptisms, confirmations, marriages, funerals visits by the bishop – premised on a consideration for the environment being an important element of ones spiritual growth. This intimate connection between nature and humankind through the medium of religion has ensured both the diffusion of climate action but also the commitment for post-planting care of the trees. This has helped to encourage proactivity towards the environment in a positive, natural and seemingly effortless way that links with the essence of people's personal lives.

Elements of Islam for example reflect the innate potential of faiths in providing environmental governance. The Islamic perspectives of *Tawhid* (oneness), *Khalifah* (guardian), *Mizan* (balance) and *Fitrah* (nature) point towards a duty for protecting the environment, that all living beings on Earth are one, and the need for sustainable consumption and production as a way of balancing the status quo on Earth. Scholars from the Centre of Islamic Studies of Universitas Nasional, Indonesia have enthused about the obligation of Muslim consumers and producers in protecting the environment. They have suggested the ways in which the aforementioned Islamic principles can be explored to educate society and to raise awareness on the religious obligation towards the one God.

An example from Indonesia reflects the ways in which FBOs and government bodies are mobilising in climate action. The channelling of jurisprudence in Islam has allowed for the tiger populations in Southeast Asia to face less harm from humankind. In 2014, the Ulama of Indonesia released a fatwa (an Islamic jurisprudential), in which it stated

stated that killing, harming, assaulting, hunting and engaging in any activity, which would lead to the extinction of endangered species is forbidden. The Islamic Declaration on Climate Change, drafted in 2015, has channelled the conservationist tone of the Qur'an and has become a wake-up call for the 1.8 billion Muslims around the world compelling them to undertake their responsibility to conserve God's creation. This declaration, a collaborative effort between several FBOs, reflects the ways in which faith spaces can provide tangible global governance for the interaction between humankind and the environment. Faith spaces have the potential to channel messages of environmental stewardship, that innately exist in all faith spaces, through tangible actions. This has great potential to provide a stronger form of environmental governance that touches and recalibrates the moral compasses of human beings.

The **Centre of Islamic Studies at the Universitas Nasional, Indonesia** has actively participated in various environmental projects, including tackling the trade of illegal wildlife, evaluation work and building and educating communities on climate change.

The **Islamic Declaration on Climate Change** calls for rapid action on phasing-out fossil fuels and the adoption of renewable energy, in addition to the increased support in climate resilience and adaptation for vulnerable communities most susceptible to the impacts of climate change.

Environmental governance within faith spaces can only be successful through greater integration, dispersion and cooperation within and between faith communities. The Catholic Church has initiated the Season of Creation, the month of September during which churches are encouraged to preach on themes such as land, water, food security and climate change. This season has been accepted by the Anglican Church as part of the liturgical



year, and a global partnership of FBOs is growing who all commit to using this period as a time to refocus faith followers on issues of climate change and climate action.

Environmental factors can be significant intersections of insurgency and conflict around the world. Already experiencing unpredictable variances in climate, sub-Saharan Africa is likely to remain a primary vulnerable region as climate change progresses, with the agricultural sector positioned as the most susceptible to rising temperatures. Climate change resilience in terms of sustainable agriculture is thus a superlative consideration in the coming decades from a social and economic perspective, but the impact of climate change also proves to be a stimulus for terror-based insurgency.

The **Strength in Diversity Development Centre** employs dialogue to encourage inter-religious relations for institutional change that transforms communities. The centre explores issues of extremism and conflict and works with youth and women in conflict areas. It has found links between climate change and insurgency.

A study undertaken by the Strength in Diversity Development Centre (SDDC) that examines the motivations and backgrounds of returning militants of the Boko Haram illustrate environmental issues as a key factor for their poverty. Religion, hunger, neglect and other political issues have been posited as additional motivations for joining extremist organisations. The tangible impact of climate change and the adverse effects of State policies have led to issues at the local level that affect lives and contribute to the level of poverty through lack of access to water and flooding, thereby fostering a need to consult external means of subsistence which often result in extremist activity. The environment is an element that can be manipulated by political powers and ignite insurgency among other political and civil society stakeholders, even mobilising terror-

based forces in extreme cases, ultimately impacting the urban and rural poor the most – strong environmental governance is imperative.

Faith-based groups and organisations have potential to be a unique neutraliser and mediator in the link between environment, poverty and terror-based insurgency. The SDDC, which aim to create institutional changes to transform communities through the promotion of quality religious and cultural relations, have been active in providing environmental governance-based support within Nigeria. They have developed a 5-year strategy action and implementation plan for rapid response for the effects of climate change, through which they have built a consensus and continue to advocate for policies that will address the challenges of climate change in Nigeria.

The SDDC's efforts are underpinned by the creation of partnerships with FBOs to educate, engage, enlighten and empower communities. As mediators, the SDDC are also tackling the root causes of extremism in Nigeria, and have worked on educating young adults and children on issues of food security and the fertilisation process. They have worked with the agriculture sector in which a predominant section of society work, and have channelled faith spaces to empower and properly engage with farmers and youth on matters of climate change, climate resilience and sustainable living.

The Farmers Advocacy and Support Initiative (FASI) is another example of the ways in which FBOs are supporting environmental governance. FASI focus predominantly on agricultural practice, currently working with 300,000 smallholder farmers in Nigeria on elements of climate change, food production and security. Through training, FASI are institutionalising and transferring knowledge of sustainability in best agricultural practice, enabling farmers to improve their business and management skills and to incorporate information and communication technology that increase productivity, efficiency and income, and which contribute to greening the processes of the farming industry. In these

endeavours, FASI and SDDC are assisting the State government in addressing issues of sustainability, and shine as an example of the primary role that FBOs can and are playing in providing governance for the interaction between humankind and the environment, in conjunction with addressing intersections of domestic insurgency and improving business practice.

The **Farmers Advocacy and Support Initiative** has undertaken projects to develop the skills, knowledge and capacity of people working in agriculture: providing Best Agricultural Practice training, integrating ICT tools, and strengthening the business skills of smallholder farmers.

FBOs have the capacity to provide environmental governance through legislative components embedded in the fabric of faiths. Scholars from the University Cadi Ayyad, Morocco have suggested how Islamic environmental law has the potential to reframe the legal system and thus could contribute further gravity to international efforts for climate action.

While many religious practices still stand strong in the Muslim society – Friday's prayers, the poor-tax (*Zakat*) and fasting (Ramadan) – environmental ethics is almost absent in the practice of religion in the Islamic world today. By prioritising environmental stewardship at its core, this will provide legitimacy to environmental governance thus inspiring faith followers to focus more on such issues.

There exists power in finding commonalities between Islamic law and civil and common-law systems across the world, which aim to protect natural heritage such as could be channelled through the concept of *Waqf* in Islamic law (charitable endowment). It is imperative that FBOs realise their agency as leaders and governors for climate action from spiritual and moral perspectives, and that they take inspiration to innovate and spread knowledge for sustainable consumption and production of resources,

both intra-religiously but also inter-religiously.

Scholars of Law from **University Cadi Ayyad, Morocco** have explored the ways in which the Islamic element of the Environmental *Waqf* can be revived to provide greater governance on the interaction between humankind and the environment.

The journey for FBOs in assuming the role of governors of our interaction with the environment can be faced with many barriers. The Eden's Stewards, who empower, transform and help communities to adapt to climate change have noted that faith spaces can be resistant to change, sometimes premised on the belief that church is simply for prayer and prayer alone. In addition, it can take time to mainstream environmental considerations within the programmes run by places of worship due to the rigidity of internal processes and the programmes themselves. It is pivotal that the coordination of the integration of places of worship and FBOs into tangible outputs for climate action utilise the narratives of climate justice and an ethical and moral duty to the environment as stimulus.

The **Eden's Stewards** recognise the obstacles that exist in engaging faith spaces with climate action, and in mainstreaming environmental considerations within the programmes run by places of worship.

# Lifestyle changes

**“There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with living things both large and small”**

- Psalms 104:25

The fight against global warming requires action on the local and macro level. Normative lifestyle changes at the local level are as potent and as necessary in diffusing climate action. Normative lifestyle changes refer to the action taken by civil society, and civil society organisations at the local level without necessarily engaging with State governance structures. FBOs can use their house of worship, such as Mosques, Churches, Synagogues, Gurdwaras and temples as faith hubs and central spaces that mobilise environmental stewardship by encouraging particular behaviours – local and personal normative changes. While currently such spaces are used to convey religious teachings, these teachings must address environmental issues and related individual practices and behaviours. Although FBOs are currently mobilising in such a fashion, this should be channelled further to motivate more uptake among faith followers and other members of civil society to adopt normative behaviours. FBOs can integrate environmental stewardship as a primary element of faith followers' spirituality, religiosity and moral compulsion.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is a fellowship of churches in more than 110 countries, which encourages reflection, speech, worship and collaborated action on issues of mutual spiritual interests. It has endeavoured in encouraging normative changes, particularly channelling proactivity through churches. They have pushed for the use of public transport as an alternative to private vehicles by publishing timetables,

have encouraged for faith followers to donate material that is no longer required and can be reused, and have installed parking spaces for bicycles on premises to encourage the uptake of alternative modes of transport that is carbon free. In addition, the WCC has encouraged the support and practice of small-scale agriculture, providing space on premises, immersing visitors in planting and tending to vegetation in the hope that it will inspire them to begin doing the same themselves.

The **World Council of Churches** have pushed for the implementation of projects on church-owned land as well as for congregations to take-up normative lifestyle changes.

The Green Anglican movement in a similar fashion has promoted normative lifestyle changes by using places of worship as the centre for change. While tree planting is important, the element of tree growing is often neglected. Trees require at least two years of nurturing and watering, and as a result of neglect often die early on. With this information, the Green Anglicans have been asking for attendees to both plant and adopt a tree – as part of the adoption, people are required to continue to water the tree on a weekly basis. The motivation for this is mustered by connecting such stewardship with ones spirituality and moral duty to nature. In addition, within churches, the Green Anglicans promote the use of normative terminology when referring to climate change and action, moving away from language such as 'biodiversity loss, mitigation and adaptation', which whilst being understood by faith followers, will not speak to their heart – language such as 'revitalising the river of life' and 'making mother Africa green' changes the lens from



climate action as something transactional to something spiritual. Moreover, to encourage people to care for local rivers in the long-term, the Green Anglicans have referred to the Bible and how it has mentioned water and its sacredness 722 times, linking the care for water as answering the call of God. This is supplementing action taken by churches in holding clean ups of local water systems, which usually do not sustain the volunteers for consecutive clean ups. In order to tackle the shared global issue of plastic pollution, they have encouraged congregations to take up the Less Plastic Challenge for Lent, whereby people give up the use of single-use plastics for the duration of the religious observance. This in conjunction with faith leaders encouraging congregations to bring their own reusable bags, are part of a wider effort by the Anglican Church to change the current apathy of humankind towards the earth.

The **Green Anglicans** have encouraged followers to give up the use of single-use plastics for the duration of fasting for Lent.

The Church of South India (CSI), which strives towards unity, peace and reconciliation taking direction from religious scriptures, has made great steps in diffusing normative lifestyle changes for sustainable living through the implementation of the Green Protocol – a 12 page document approved by the CSI Synod that requests parishes to follow climate action-based guidelines. As a result, as of late 2018, couples have been planting saplings including jackfruit on church premises during their wedding ceremonies. Plastic material has been significantly reduced during church service and in the reception of marriages through most churches under the CSI. Drinking water is now served in glass tumblers to avoid single-use plastics. Additionally, small packets of vegetable seeds are now given to all invitees of events at churches to encourage faith followers to cultivate vegetables at home. This combined effort by the CSI exhibits the power that

FBOs and faith spaces have in changing attitudes by diffusing awareness through normative actions at the very centre of faith communities. This has great potential in guiding civil society towards a more sustainable and environmentally friendly lifestyle.

The **Church of South India** has implemented its Green Protocol, which provides parishes with pro-environmental guidance: conserving water and energy, avoiding single-use plastics, managing waste responsibly.

FBOs can also play a role in promoting and negotiating changes in consumption within food chains – adopting a vegetarian lifestyle. Veganism and vegetarianism encompass circularity and sustainability that are green in comparison to current unsustainable global food chains. Adopting a vegan diet is becoming increasingly popular in nation states such as the UK where the youth have been spearheading a social movement to encourage the adoption of a meat-free diet and to push the supply in the market towards diversifying their meat-free options.

The United Religions Initiative network (URI) has channelled this through their encouragement of Meatless Mondays – asking for followers of faith communities to give up meat for one day a week. This has been underpinned by the need for compassion, non-violence and consideration for the planet, the people and animals, and has been contextualised against the sheer amount of water, rainforest and CO2 that are involved in the process of producing small amounts of meat, but also the ways in which animals are vital parts of natural processes including fertilisation and biodegradation. The Buddhist Tzu Chi foundation, an NGO that works on enhancing environmental protection, has supported the plant-based diet, and is encouraging followers to be mindful of becoming vegetarian, premised on the need for ethical eating. As part of this campaign, they made 11 January as Ethical Eating Day – a day dedicated to

only eating plant-based products. They have encouraged congregations to buy domestically grown products. Whilst they have had an uptake from the general public, the delivery of their message requires more work in order to truly inspire the masses to rethink their relationship with their diet and the environment.

The **United Religions Initiative** has encouraged people to take up the challenge of Meatless Mondays: one day per week dedicated to not consuming any meat products.

The **Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation** has initiated an Ethical Eating day to encourage followers to eat ethically and consider a plant-based diet.

Part and parcel of evoking a change of attitude within faith spaces towards environmental stewardship is applying a holistic approach that seeks to ground one within the bigger picture of our coexistence with other human beings across the globe, the environment and animals.

The Brahma Kumaris' Environment Initiative is built upon the virtues of simplicity, compassion, economic living, learning and sharing. The initiative utilises meditation and personal reflection at its centre, to instil a planetary consciousness that allows humankind to start seeing one planet as our shared home. Through a programme of meditation and prayer, the Brahma Kumaris inspire climate action among civil society, moving the thought processes away from materialism, consumerism and divisiveness of the individualistic approach that is often channelled at the macro political level by nation states as part of the international relations and development agenda. The Brahma Kumaris believe that the role of spirituality is perhaps to bring a reminder of hope and vision for the future, and their efforts tackle the personal and spiritual aspects of climate change that are often forgotten when motivating people to become stewards of the earth.

The **Brahma Kumaris'** Environment Initiative encourages greater well-being through inner peace and universal values based on 5 principles: living with simplicity, buying compassionately, using economically, learning continuously, sharing generously.

Normative lifestyle changes can and should be executed in a diverse number of ways, tackling the complexity of encouraging climate action among civil society as a matter of urgency. Change at the local level can inspire greater movements, and is an important section of the greater theme of UNEA-4 that ought to be targeted by FBOs, who are positioned well within society to do so.







# Partnerships and stakeholders

**“Nature is the effect and God is the cause. You should recognise the immanence of the Divine in the entire cosmos”**

- Sathya Sai Baba

A move towards sustainable consumption and production, and the encouragement of innovation for sustainable solutions cannot occur in isolation, without integrating key stakeholders into discussion and action. Youth are a major stakeholder that must be encompassed in action against climate change. FBOs should continue to incorporate them into dialogue on sustainable living. The Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA) helps young Catholics in sub-Saharan Africa to respond to the challenges of environmental degradation and climate change through education, networking and by supporting local action plans. It firmly believes that the youth are a primary stakeholder in climate action – they are not the future but indeed the present and a key asset of the care for our common home rather than being a ‘time bomb’ generation. It is therefore imperative to consider ways in which the passion and commitment presented by the youth towards the environment can be harnessed in a meaningful way to include them in project-work and to encourage their collaboration in innovation.

Environmental stewardship can be enabled within faith-based spaces through education on climate change awareness with youth, and is being done by FBOs such as the work of the Green Fighters Rwanda (GFR). The GFR, a youth led non-profit organisation that fights for a better environment and provides community awareness, is addressing the

visible issue of a global lack of youth participation within dialogue on our relationship with the environment and climate change. The GFR are working with civil society to tackle issues of water, waste management and education in Rwanda, and are actively collaborating with other FBOs such as the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, to share and channel expertise in their respective sectors. While the youth are eager to get involved in climate action and in incorporating sustainable living, the community require further trust and support from government entities, the private sector and development partners in the form of guidance, cooperation and financial investment to foster capacity expansion. The Green Anglican movement has also mobilised youth through projects, activities and social media campaigns as part of its Young Green Anglicans initiative. Through this, they have incorporated the voice of the youth, and have expanded their network where churches across the world have joined the movement.

The **Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa** works with young Catholics in sub-Saharan Africa to respond to climate change, including projects such as running knowledge-sharing workshops, producing climate change toolkits and running waste management training sessions.

**Green Fighters Rwanda** has created a network platform to engage youth in local interventions for the environment. They have also executed knowledge-sharing activities with youth to produce project proposals for local pro-environmental solutions. Their focuses have been on agriculture, rainwater harvesting and household waste management.

The indigenous community are another key stakeholder who must be incorporated within climate action efforts. They hold a unique knowledge and perspective that can contribute towards innovative methods. Forests have been scientifically acknowledged as vital to restoring the balance within our ecosystems, and they have played a large role in the lives of indigenous populations across the world. FBOs can support indigenous communities by empowering them to educate others by spreading their ancestors' knowledge of forest protection, thereby supporting a shared global effort grounded in ethics to neutralise conflict, avoid deforestation and prioritise living in harmony with the environment. The Interfaith Rainforest Initiative was launched in 2017 in collaboration with UN Environment and other FBOs. The initiative is an international multi-faith alliance that works to bring moral urgency and faith-based leadership to global efforts to end deforestation, and participating faith leaders are at a consensus that a new relationship of shared global ethics, with the vital incorporation of the indigenous community, is a positive step in the right direction.

The **Interfaith Rainforest Initiative** is a collaborative effort between FBOs and other entities to mobilise religious and spiritual leaders to make ending tropical deforestation an ethical priority. The initiative is building coalitions among indigenous peoples, government bodies, businesses and civil society.

The International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change, a platform for indigenous peoples participating in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, has enthused on the importance of integrating indigenous peoples within the main discussion and action to protect the environment, but also the ways in which religious leaders can become powerful allies for indigenous peoples. The forestland has remained significant to the cultures, spiritualities and ways of life of indigenous

people, and they therefore maintain an intimate connection and expert knowledge of protecting our forests. It is important to acknowledge that the synergy between indigenous people and major religions has been tense in the past, and so any partnering between both entities requires the nurturing of trust and cooperation. FBOs and faith communities with their political power and moral influence can support indigenous rights, and thereby help to advance cooperative protection of the forests that humankind as a collective entity rely on to live.

Partnerships and collaboration are vital to ensuring continuous knowledge sharing, capacity building and joint advocacy. This is currently taking place between FBOs through the mediums of joint initiatives and forums.

- The **Green Anglicans** movement have been collaborating with Gigawatt Global and the Interfaith Centre for Sustainable Development to establish small-scale industrial solar farms on church land.
- The **International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development** are bringing together governmental entities, intergovernmental entities, civil society organisations and FBOs, through engaging, knowledge exchange, capacity building and joint advocacy, with a focus on SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).
- The **United Religions Initiative** is running the Environment Network, a thematic network and Cooperation Circle, which connects and coordinates with other Cooperation Circles in

regions throughout the world. The network is partnered with various organisations including the UN, and is working with several Cooperation Circles (CC) including: Peace and Environment CC Pakistan, Green Prophet CC Israel, and Somali Media for Environment Science, Health and Agriculture.

- The **Sathya Sai International Organisation** (SSIO) have in recent years held an international Go Green Conference where it connected with delegates from 60 countries around the world, seeking to inspire substantial changes related to protecting the planet. In addition, young adults have led the SSIO's Serve the Planet programme, connecting with various stakeholders through study material, practical toolkits and educational resources promoting environmental awareness and sustainable living.
- The **World Evangelical Alliance's** Creation Care Task Force is implementing the organisation's mission by firstly connecting evangelical creation care organisations for greater impact at national and global levels: through its partnerships, it is engaging government bodies in targeted environmental work.
- The **International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change** integrates the voices of the indigenous peoples within discussion on issues of climate change impacts, finance, recognition of traditional knowledge and the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights.

With the support of the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative, Siaga Bumi is a recent collaboration of six religions in Indonesia that is working on protecting forestland there. The movement for environmental stewardship in the country has been driven through the channel of faith via fatwas that have spoken against actions that harm nature including deforestation – they represent an example of how faiths can assert their influence to make environmental issues a priority for their members. Siaga Bumi has partnered with both international and national stakeholders, including government bodies and FBOs to drive this project, which is focussing on contextualising the aspects of religious teachings for rainforest protection, mobilising financial and human capital its protection, and encouraging interfaith dialogue and action to allow for humanity to find a common ground relating to caring for Earth.

The **Siaga Bumi** has partnered with both international and national stakeholders to drive a project that mobilises climate action to protect Indonesia's rainforests: it is encouraging new financing, interfaith dialogue and knowledge sharing.

The All African Conference of Churches (AACC), a fellowship of churches representing Christians in 42 African countries called on the 500 present organisations at their General Assembly 2018 to consider climate change as a moral issue and lobby their governments to make legislative and financial commitments to support measures of adaptation at community, national and regional levels whilst tapping into indigenous knowledge and practices. FBOs such as the AACC through their partnerships possess the capacity and outreach to effectively promote climate action at the programme and project level across the world. FBOs are encouraged to acknowledge their agency in the global efforts to diffuse interventions for sustainable living and adaptation to the tangible effects of climate change.





The **All African Conference of Churches** is working with its partner churches in implementing its programmatic pillars, of which the Peace Diakonia and Development pillar is addressing interventions for climate change and creation for care.

GreenFaith and its works in environmental stewardship with its partners reflects the power of collaboration between FBOs, and the impact this can have for driving climate action. GreenFaith is an interfaith coalition for the environment that works with places of worship, religious schools and people of all faiths to become better environmental stewards. In recent years, its partnerships in India have been most fruitful in mobilising climate action – working with Indian interfaith partners from Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Jain, Sikh and Christian communities, it has coordinated various events to highlight the importance of sustainable living including its partnerships with Eco Sikh and Islamic Relief India and

has provided training for representatives from 30 countries in its Emerging Leaders Multi-Faith Climate Convergence in 2015. In addition it has enabled renewable energy installations and pilgrimages to sacred sites and locations impacted by typhoons thereby increasing the profile of the need for climate action to evoke action for resilience and adaptation or human settlements. Through its partnerships in India alone, GreenFaith has greatly increased outreach and impact to inspire institutions and people around the world to take action.

The Parliament of the World's Religions' latest venture represents an innovative way of partnering for the shared goal of climate action. The Climate Commitments Project aims to connect all commitments by faith communities to confront climate change globally through its online network which allows for FBOs to commit to one of four options: advocacy for laws and policies that are pro-climate action; resource and education; congregational greening; energy infrastructure. The platform allows for collaboration, provides clarity and

greater outreach for current projects being undertaken for the environment, as well as allowing for the celebration of the proactivity of faith communities by amplifying the achievements of their projects as they progress.

**GreenFaith** through its Emerging Leaders Multi-Faith Climate Convergence has provided training for representatives from 30 countries, and continues to support collaborative climate action projects.

The **Parliament of the World's Religions** has initiated its Climate Commitments Project through which it allows for FBOs to commit to advocacy, education, congregational greening, or employing green energy.

Room does exist for the improvement of the public image of the synergy between FBOs and the environment. Faith-based action has often not been represented in a positive light in popular media. The portrayal of positive inter-collaboration between FBOs and civil society on environment issues must be done so through media outputs to underline faith-spaces as potent spaces for progression, innovation and activity on climate change.

It is important to note that while faith communities may have lost the power they once held in society now having become another player amongst the many others, power exists in forming partnerships with one another within faith spaces as has been demonstrated in this section, and in understanding that all faith communities share the desire to be prosperous.

Cooperative action among FBOs allows for the work of environmental stewardship to transcend religious borders, bringing climate action into the mainframe of discussion that connects and potentially mobilises a larger audience together. However, FBOs should note that while faith brings the moral voice to the global push for climate action, science produces the long-term picture of the direction in which humankind are heading. It is important for FBOs to remember the interdependency of both faith and ethics, as well as science and evidence, particularly when formulating partnerships, and interventions. The Interfaith Rainforest Initiative, supported by the Government of Norway, was created on the very basis of integrating a voice of morality within scientific discussion on climate action, and the initiative has seen great uptake.

# Financing for sustainable development

## “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof”

- Psalms 24:1

To promote and support innovation within faith-based spaces for sustainable production and consumption, accompanying financial mechanisms are necessary to induce such environments. Firstly, financing must be adapted to incorporate vulnerable communities into climate action, particularly the poor, who will be most affected by climate change and who are often overlooked. FBOs are channelling this within ongoing projects and investments through prioritisation and adaptation, empowering vulnerable communities to build social strategies that promote innovation and the adoption of means of circular living.

Women should be encouraged within faith-spaces to build sustainable businesses based on renewable energy and other green considerations, incorporating issues of sustainable development and the environment. The Jitokeze Wamama Wafrika, Kenya (JWW) works to empower vulnerable women and their households for resilience to the impacts of climate change. The model that JWW takes approaches women in a holistic way, working with them on a weekly basis, pulling resources and applying finance in a way that helps to build businesses based on clean renewable energy that are led by women. More investment in building participatory institutional frameworks that empower vulnerable members of the community – in this case women – is a positive step in addressing the Sustainable Development Goals, but also in empowering sectors of society in accelerating international efforts for innovation and green energy. FBOs ought to look into ways of distributing financing that increases the

the participation of vulnerable communities within the leadership of the global climate action movement.

**Jitokeze Wamama Wafrika Kenya** run a variety of projects to empower vulnerable women and their households to build resilience to the impacts of climate change: Girls Empowerment, Disaster Relief and Farmers Empowerment programmes.

Diffusing green elements within urban planning of relevance to faith spaces in some cases can experience barriers. For some places of worship, the land on which they exist is rented or has other legal restrictions in place, disallowing intervention such as tree planting or installing green energy sources on site. FBOs should consider investing in local spaces that enable localised climate action and provide more autonomy and space for green innovation. As mentioned before, places of worship carry great potency, in that they act as the central focal point for faith followers, and thus are a fertile space to encourage climate action.

There has been recognition for the agency of FBOs in financial investments that are now being made on innovative projects for circular living. Networks such as Faith Invest provide ample space for such investment. FaithInvest is an upcoming space that identifies and creates faith-aligned investment opportunities, allowing for inter-factional cooperation, and enabling current charity or aid-funded sustainability and environment-based projects to develop investable business plans. FaithInvest provides opportunity and conceptualisation of mobility for inclusive and impactful faith-based investments, amplifying the voice of climate action among FBOs, and enabling for greater autonomy among FBOs to drive their

own innovation for sustainable consumption and production. FBOs should consider the potential that their geospatial conditions and assets have in accelerating green projects that encompass sustainability and circular living.

**FaithInvest** is an upcoming platform that will enable the identification and creation of investment opportunities for FBOs, aligned with values held by faith groups.

The Jitokeze Wamama Wafrika, operating in Kenya, have suggested for an investment to be considered for building participatory institutional frameworks that empower vulnerable communities to mobilise within this effort of the environment, as well as in the empowerment of women and their increased participation in the leadership of such projects. This is premised on the fact that institutional frameworks provide the solid rules, customs, norms and laws that

socialise behavioural boundaries, and it is essential for vulnerable communities to be involved in these processes. FBOs have the potential to mainstream both their voice and their cultural assets into dialogue, research and policy formulation through investment. Moreover, women form around half of the global population and so are a significant stakeholder and receiver of pro-green intervention. FBOs ought to invest in women within processes to ensure their needs, concerns and contributions to the movement for climate action and innovation for sustainability are adequately represented.

**Jitokeze Wamama Wafrika** is pushing for investment in building participatory institutional frameworks that empower FBOs to mobilise for climate action, and women to increase participation in the leadership of climate-related projects.

# Waste management/circularity: Sustainable consumption and production

**“The believer is like a bee, who eats that which is pure and wholesome, and lays that which is pure and wholesome. When it lands on something it does not break or ruin it”**

- Prophet Muhammad

FBOs have been active in applying both circularity, and innovative waste management systems, underpinned by a move towards sustainable consumption and production. The Govardhan Ecovillage stands as a great example of the possibility of integrating green energy and circular living within human settlements around the world. Based on its core principles of harmony with the surroundings, with the self and with society, the Ecovillage employs 300 tribal families and a symbiotic development model, in which every piece of waste becomes an input for another system within the larger system. The village runs on solar power, green architecture for the functional buildings on site, hosts a rainwater harvesting pond, a biogas plant to process wet waste, a facility to process sewage water and utilises plastic waste to support farming processes.

Circularity exists in almost every aspect of the village, including the recycling of the urine of cattle where it is transformed into fertiliser and insecticides for organic farming. This complex system enables for the full integration of circularity, is underpinned by green fundamental mechanisms, and supports emotional sustainability for its visitors through activities it runs including yoga practice. It also provides skills development and education for local rural

schools and the tribal youth. This system represents sustainable living and waste management at its finest.

The **Govardhan Ecovillage** employs a symbiotic development model, where every piece of waste becomes an input for another system within the larger system. It is effectively managing waste in a circular fashion.

The Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation (BTCF) has been innovative in their approach to waste management and circularity. BTCF have 58 service stations around the world and change ‘trash to treasure’ by producing items such as sunglasses and decorative products – a repurposing project in collaboration with JingSi technology. Through this recycling system and BTCF's additional awareness centres, it engages with private partners and civil society, applying a bottom-up approach to educate them on climate change and the need for climate action. BTCF's recycling efforts strengthen environmental awareness and make a direct contribution to reducing carbon dioxide emissions. The recycling process teaches people to separate materials to help conserve resources, thereby reducing and avoiding waste, which often ends up in landfill, or polluting water ecosystems.

In Lesotho and South Africa, BTCF have been working with local volunteers to carry out clean ups in villages. In Mozambique, the organisation has supported local women in cleaning parts of the city. JingSi technology, which focuses on innovation for charity and environmental protection, has used waste that comes from partnerships with organisations like BTCF to produce furniture systems that are multi-purposed – these products that can form pop-up tables,



cabinets and other equipment and have been dispatched for quick humanitarian relief, most recently for the Nepal Earthquake in 2015, for the Mozambique floods in 2015, and for Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. BTCF firmly believes that in order for such innovation to be successful within faith-based spaces, it is important that the driving force of innovation and management of outputs is not predicated on financial gain, but rather through a moral compulsion and duty to the environment – a message that should underpin all efforts. FBOs should ensure that their climate action narratives are grounded on climate action being a shared religious and moral responsibility.

**JingSi** technology is using waste material to produce furniture systems that are multi-purposed – they can serve as pop-up tables, cabinets and other equipment.

The Circular Design Challenge, India's first sustainable fashion award in partnership with UN Environment is an example of innovation in waste management, particularly in tackling the intersection of clothing. The challenge is a platform for young fashion/accessory designers and entrepreneurs to showcase their innovation, in using materials that are made from diverse Gaut sources including plastic. It promotes and inspires innovation in integrating circularity within fashion, to reduce the environmental impact of fashion, textiles and the apparel industry – an output that has continued to pollute India's water ecosystems. Leaders on sustainable fashion in India are working with other stakeholders and the large rural farmer community who work in the cotton industry. Initiatives such as the Circular Design Challenge promote the interaction of organisations that are working for a similar cause of waste management in the fashion industry. The winner of the challenge, 'I was a Sari' has transformed the sari into designer fashion items by employing local artisans and turning them into designers who are able to produce new products giving them new functionality. This

collective action is attempting to influence and mobilise consumers, designers, the media and all other stakeholders within the value chain on the consequences of the consumption of clothing. Fashion is being utilised as a means to create higher value for protecting the environment. The process is enabling and empowering rural habitants to engage in climate action efforts, whilst providing for themselves.

The **Circular Design Challenge** that invites designers and entrepreneurs to showcase their innovation using materials that are made from waste products, in particular plastic.

Plastic has in recent years been globally recognised, as a major pollutant of our water ecosystems. It is harming the lives of animals, humans and flora above the sea and within – it is now a high possibility that plastic waste will outweigh the volume of fish in the ocean by 2050.

The Plastic Bank works with various stakeholders including FBOs, to significantly reduce the use of single-use plastics by introducing a circular system, and increasing awareness for civil society. The organisation has done this by monetising plastic waste – the premium paid by large corporations to bring plastic waste into their supply chain incentivises marginalised communities to earn income by collecting and passing on such waste. The plastic is collected and eventually transformed into new products.

The organisation is tackling two outputs – areas that produce high volumes of mismanaged plastic, and areas that have little or no mismanaged plastic. There is greater potential for the partnership of FBOs with organisations with such infrastructures that work on both circularity and waste management. FBOs can act as the input of such systems, encouraging faith followers to take part in climate action training sessions that are tailored to each religious space, as are currently held by Plastic Bank's Social Plastic Interfaith Stewardship movement.



The **Plastic Bank's** Social Plastic Interfaith Stewardship movement is monetising plastic to create a scalable international recycling ecosystem, making recycle plastic more available to manufacturers.

Other FBOs have also demonstrated the integration of circularity and waste management. The Church of South India (CSI), as part of its Green Protocol has been building rainwater harvesting pits on church ground, through which stored water can be utilised later within the house such as flushing water for toilets, but also for usage as part of church-based gardening processes – an essential integration of circularity within daily normative aspects of our lives.

The CSI has also worked in collaboration with local agencies to setup recycling units, through which waste from villages is being removed and appropriately disposed of. The Green Fighters Rwanda are implementing circularity through education and integration of recycling at the local level as well as through collaborating with the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation in responsibly up-cycling waste from local villages. In addition they are supporting rural areas by building rainwater-harvesting systems, and hope to expand their current work on creating organic products from other waste materials that can potentially pollute ecosystems such as converting them into organic fertiliser etc.

Eden's Stewards have focused in particular on waste management, having held monthly clean-ups, undertaken monitoring of waste disposal and consequential installation of litter-bins within Kware, Nigeria as well as supporting the establishment of environmental ministries in local churches. Their presence in the city has also inspired the formation of an environmental ministry called Better Environment for Children, which works with children in cleaning the Kandisi area, and in teaching about caring for the environment.

The Maryam Onikijipa Belgore Foundation, which promotes the passion of giving and the advancement of happiness in the lives of people, has focussed on the gendered aspect of waste management in its interventions. In addition to educating locals on the impact that crop waste, animal waste, processing waste and hazardous waste such as pesticides have on air and water pollution, the foundation has in particular worked with relevant government bodies to sensitise mothers on the important of hygiene and the proper disposal of sanitary towels. Through this, the foundation has increased awareness of recycling and waste disposal, and has brought health care closer to rural areas.

**Eden's Stewards** have run several clean-up projects with partners, most recently in Kware, Nigeria, to save the endangered cranes by removing pollution from the water system in the Nairobi National Park, Kenya and with children collecting plastic waste in Kandisi, Kenya.

**The Maryam Onikijipa Belgore Foundation** has brought health care closer to rural areas whilst tackling waste by sensitising mother on the importance of hygiene and the proper disposal of sanitary towels.

Curbing and dealing with waste is a significant space in which FBOs can mobilise and make change thereby having a large impact on the international movement for climate action. Waste products formed as a result of poor management of used products, or as by-products of other processes are a large contributor to the pollution of international ecosystems, which negatively impact the lives of humans and animals alike. Circularity and circular thinking are elemental in transitioning processes to a way that is less detrimental for the environment. FBOs ought to think about ways in which circularity can be integrated within their local and macro exercises.

# Energy

**“Taking advantage of abundant solar energy will require the establishment of mechanisms and subsidies, which will allow developing countries access to technology transfer, technical assistance and financial resources”**

- Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*

Renewable energy sources remain a major element in reducing emissions and mainstreaming circularity. FBOs and groups have the potential to be beacons of hope in the sector of green energy, by divesting in fossil fuel-based energy and adopting renewable energy sources particularly within places of worship, whilst pushing for governing bodies to consider utilising green energy sources at the national level.

The Interfaith Centre for Sustainable Development (ICSD) has channelled their commitment to sustainability through their work with greening energy. They have run the Faith Inspired Renewable Energy Project in Malawi and Mozambique on land owned by churches – in collaboration with the Green Anglican movement, Gigawatt Global and the Government of Mozambique, the ICSD have built a 15-megawatt solar power plant, thereby avoiding about 400,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions over the 20-year life of the project. In Malawi, the ICSD have built an 8-megawatt solar field in collaboration with local faith leaders. This project highlights the ways in which places of worship can become net providers of energy, having the potential to contribute

green energy to the national grid. Further potential exists for FBOs to take leadership in spreading the uptake of and information about alternative modes of energy, and while funding from intergovernmental and international development organisations and the private sector does exist, firm leadership, project coordination and handling of logistics are required to bring all entities together to drive the adoption of green energy.

The **Interfaith Centre for Sustainable Development** has employed green energy through the Renewable Energy Project by establishing solar power plants.

Other FBOs have been engaging with the energy sector, in order to green their own energy usage, as well as inspiring others in the local community to do so. The diffusion of green energy by the Brahma Kumaris' India-One Initiative is driven by a spiritual obligation to be stewards of the environment. The project is a clean-technology investment, under which a 1-megawatt solar thermal power station in India has been established. Through this, Brahma Kumaris have been working on the ground to inspire people to adopt solar energy, and have channelled this through sessions of meditation to improve self-love, love for others and to change the consciousness of locals to lead sustainable lives.

The Church of South India in accordance with their Green Protocol have worked on adopting solar energy on the site of churches in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO) has also worked on implementing solar energy. It has recently launched a solar power project – Sri Sathya Sai Mitra – that can provide a maximum of 2.1-megawatts,



and is powering the buildings on SSIO's campuses.

The **Brahma Kumaris** have built a solar thermal power station as part of their India-One Initiative.

The **Sathya Sai International Organisation** has launched a solar power plant, the power of which is being used by Temples of Learning, Healing and the on-site archives.

The Farmer Advocacy and Support Initiative has been utilising renewable energy to support farmers in sub-Saharan Africa. A lack of access to electricity in much of the region is leaving large numbers of people trapped in living conditions that disallow economic progress on the local and national level, and the agricultural sector is the area most affected by a lack of access to electricity. This gap provides an opportunity to create a renewable energy infrastructure that empowers and enables independence

among farmers including the youth. Nation states in the region are not currently making use of the renewable energy resources that they possess in abundance – biomass, geothermal, hydropower and wind energy. The modernisation and diffusion of biofuel has the potential to release women and children from the chore of foraging for firewood – green energy in these spaces, particularly for families that are in the agriculture business will empower and improve the living standards of the rural poor. The integration of green energy not only reduced carbon emissions, but also produces positive results for vulnerable members of society.

Places of worship should look into incorporating solar and wind energy as a large component of their main energy input. This will set an example for faith followers; encourage diffusion and promotion of clean energy and environmental stewardship among civil society. Solar energy has so far been the most welcomed by FBOs around the world.

# Education

**One of them took a borer and began boring a hole in the floor of the boat beneath them. His friends said to him, “What are you sitting on doing to the boat?” He replied to them, “What does it matter to you? I am boring beneath myself” They said to him, “the waters are rising through that hole and flooding the entire boat!”**

- Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai

Education is a potent medium through which FBOs have the potential to increase the diffusion of information regarding climate change, and to motivate climate action among civil society. FBOs ought to consider simplifying climate change and the language of climate action to make it legible and accessible. FBOs have a role to play in changing the attitude of people towards climate change from a moral and religious perspective. The medium of education can spread the message of climate change and the need for climate action, and can foster partnerships and support. Places of worship and FBOs can channel environmental governance through this medium to mobilise stakeholders.

Organisations such as the All Africa Conference of Churches have been working with churches to liaise with government entities to promote pro-environmental interventions as a matter of urgency. FBOs have worked with faith-based groups in Somalia to produce legible material for religious leaders to disseminate information

on climate change and possible outputs at the local level for climate action, but also to utilise media outputs to spread the message. FBOs ought to adopt more methods of educating to raise awareness on environmental stewardship in order to mobilise civil society and government factions. Anglican Churches in Kenya have worked on doing so by mainstreaming the narrative on climate change adaptation through church-based activities with faith followers.

The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO), among many other focus areas, has worked in promoting climate action through education. They have developed training programmes and networks in the field of water management, drought and desertification, have fostered the exchange of information and experience among members states on the protection of biodiversity, have prepared and printed publications promoting the role of women and the youth in the rural areas for environmental stewardship, and have published studies and research on improving sustainability within production and consumption chains. This has had a profound effect on the promotion of environmental trade and has helped to better inform tourism projects in member states.

The educational efforts of ISESCO have helped to develop an awareness of climate change at all levels, and have supported the integration of environmental considerations of circularity within institutional structures.

The **Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation** have run educational activities at the local, national and international levels to disseminate information on climate change and diffuse an urgency to act.



Other education-based interventions by FBOs for climate action include the following:

- The **Green Anglicans** have used the medium of education to diffuse discussion for mitigation and adaptation. The church has produced material – Ryan the Rhinoceros – for Sunday School on the theme of creation care. The narrative touches upon the themes of saving water and electricity and not littering.
- The **Church of South India**, as part of its Green School Programme has disseminated information on climate action by teaching the values of sustainability in churches in Othara and Trivandrum, encouraging interest in agriculture and the use of cloth bags in schools. This curriculum has enhanced affection towards nature among congregations and children, and has also had a positive impact in the academic scores of some students.
- The **Sathya Sai International Organisation** have held education and awareness camps and workshops in India on waste management, plastic pollution, the importance of trees, alternative energy and water conservation.
- The **Farmer Advocacy and Support Initiative** have provided practical applied education in the field of sustainable agriculture. Modules are delivered depending on the crop cycle, ensuring that farmers receive the right information – practical knowledge and skills transfer. This includes capacity development in institutionalising

knowledge of sustainable farming, the dissemination of best agricultural practice, and the ways in which smallholder farmers can employ ICT tools to increase productivity and income.

- The **Multi-faith Collaboration for Rainforest Protection in Indonesia** synthesise textual aspects of the religious teaching and its contextual meaning with aspects of rainforest protection.
- **Islamic Relief Worldwide** have established a faith-based Climate Change Advocacy working group. They are educating civil society on climate change by broadcasting messages on prime-time television, spreading the word using billboards on busy roads near airports, and through social media campaigns to transport the message across to younger generations.
- The **Anglican Church of Kenya** is working on demystifying scientific climate change information to a level where ordinary citizens within their liturgies are able to start thinking green and to reflect on the ways in which their faith mandates climate action.
- The **Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences**, a world leading Islamic environmental organisation, among many of its activities has run its Schools4Trees programme to educate children about the importance of trees and forests to life on earth. The project strives to make connections between our lifestyles and the impact our behaviour has on the natural world.



FBOs are currently working on mandating climate action from the core beliefs of faiths. Imams have been trained by Islamic Relief Worldwide to distribute normative information on the importance of the environment, promoting faith-based advocacy through climate action. IFEES in a similar fashion refer to the Knowledge of Creation for their climate action projects, a body of teaching in the Qur'an that lays down the foundations of the conduct of our affairs with creation. FBOs ought to ensure that faith-based curriculums are enriched with considerations for climate change and climate action. Environmental issues have the potential to link together various FBOs and faith groups on the issue of mutual environmental care.

The Interfaith Centre for Sustainable Development (ICSD) has been working on the link between mobilising civil society, their thought processes and their relationship with the environment. By asking the question of what causes the disregard within people towards the welfare of others, the ICSD posits the following; people believe that their inaction/contribution to greenhouse gasses is not causing much damage; that people cannot think beyond their own immediate need; that the problem of climate change is a long term thing and so does not concern is not causing much damage; that people

cannot think beyond their own immediate need; that the problem of climate change is a long term thing and so does not concern them in the now and present. FBOs ought to keep these considerations in mind when designing interventions including anything from education material to sermons held in places of worship. Ways to circumvent this include explaining how their current disposition is harming them, as well as illustrating how their action/inaction is impacting people from different countries, sectors of society and, different socioeconomic backgrounds around the world.

FBOs should take note of this, as these are considerations that can affect the impact of educational messages that attempt to mobilise civil society and organisations for climate action.

The **Interfaith Centre for Sustainable Development** runs projects educating sectors of society on climate change. Their Seminary Faith & Ecology project has engaged divinity schools, seminaries and schools of theology to encourage them in educating students of the link between religion and our environmental ecosystems.



# Cross-cutting priorities

## Innovative approaches

**“He (Allah) set up the balance, so that you may not exceed the balance, weigh the justice and do not fall short in the balance”**

- Qur'an 55:7-8

The theme of innovation intersects all sub-themes, as it is the core driver for the diffusion and creation of solutions for climate change. In recent years, the United Nations have refocused international development efforts towards sustainability and innovation, and FBOs have demonstrated a proactive approach to implementing new ways that incorporate this. There are three types of innovation that exist within sustainable development discourse; adopting innovation being done by another entity; transferring innovation from one place to another; and creating a change through being the innovator. The Faith for Earth Initiative channels a type of transfer of innovation: to transfer and transform scientific innovation into language that is understood by everybody. The initiative has reviewed reports and distributed them in simple legible ways to be applied in the everyday lives and processes of civil society and organisations alike.

FBOs have been active in mobilising faith followers to innovate for the environment through the production of new products from waste materials and in utilising alternative methods to incorporate circular living within the everyday actions of society. FBOs have been channelling all three types of innovation, and have demonstrated their power, knowledge and ability as primary actors to support the international sustainable development agenda and action against climate change.

Govardhan Ecovillage shines as a primary example of a fully circular system, and in a way provides an ideal blueprint towards which actors aim to mould current and future human settlements, which will have both a minimum impact of society, and will produce and consume resources responsibly and sustainably. The Green Anglican movement have innovated in the form of educational material – Ryan the Rhinoceros to name one – which disseminates issues of caring for the land, saving water and electricity and not littering for congregants who attend Sunday School.

The Brahma Kumaris have been innovators in their programmes that channel climate action through meditation and prayer, adapting the thought process away from materialism, consumerism and divisiveness, and rather helping people to see the larger picture of climate change on one planet which is a shared space for humankind, flora and fauna.

The **Brahma Kumaris** run experiences consisting of Yoga meditation, study of spiritual knowledge and self-reflection, to change the way in which we perceive and engage with climate change.

The medium of forming partnerships with other FBOs and pro-environmental organisations is perhaps the most accessible way of driving progress in climate change for FBOs. Through this synergy, FBOs can actively adopt and transfer innovation. Knowledge sharing-based partnerships between FBOs have been fruitful such as the cooperation between the Buddhist Tzu Chi foundation, JingSi technology, and the Green Fighters Rwanda in innovation for waste-management. The organisations have produced and adopted ways of

introducing circularity to the long-term cycle of single-use plastics, by producing new products from them, some of which can be reintegrated into the original process from which the waste was produced. Partnerships between FBOs and other organisations have also resulted in positive output for climate action and sustainability.

Solar Cookers International, a non-profit group that advocates for and provides education on solar cooking is working with civil society and faith communities to diffuse the use of solar cooking equipment as an alternative to traditional forms of cooking that prove to be bad for human health and the environment, and unsustainable. Their reflective panels, box ovens and parabolic reflectors have zero fuel costs, omit no greenhouse gasses and no air pollution. Interventions like this have not only helped to spread knowledge about climate change, but have also improved the lives of women and other marginalised factions of societies.

**Solar Cookers International** promotes cooking equipment that uses solar thermal energy and can reduce current carbon-emitting equipment.

Innovation is a driver for collaborations between FBOs and other organisations in terms of knowledge-sharing that allow for the revision and postulation of improved interventions. Innovation has been channelled by FBOs in complex ways but also in normative ways at the local level for example with interventions that encourage faith followers to link planting of trees as part of their ceremony when attending an event at a place of worship. Innovation has underpinned the financing of new programmes and machinery that are green and pro-climate action.

Methods of waste management and the integration of circularity, in addition to the incorporation of green energy alone represent a desire and dedication from the faith community to the global effort for climate action and sustainable living.

FBOs are encouraged to continue participating in innovation-based interventions to contribute towards the global shared action for the environment. Innovation is pinnacle to building resilience and to adapt to the effects of climate change.

**Weathertec** are harvesting atmospheric humidity through their ionisation technology to tackle issues of lack of access to water and food insecurity. The technology increases the size of rain cells, resulting in longer and more intense rainfall periods.

New spaces exist for FBOs to engage in innovation, such as in greening architecture and urban planning (such as partnering with the Urban Shalom Society) which does not cut humankind away from nature but instead integrates all elements to allow for humankind, flora and fauna to live in harmony. Weathertec is another example of an organisation with which FBOs can partner – the organisation harvests atmospheric humidity thereby ameliorating issues of water caused as a direct result of climate change. FBOs have a role to play in partnering with such organisations by adopting and transferring innovation.

# Climate justice

**“And I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its goodness. But you came in, defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination”**

- Jeremiah 2:7

Climate justice is a primary causality for faith spaces and climate change – climate justice is about framing climate change as an ethical and political issue, rather than deeming it to be simply environmental and less complexly intertwined. This theme is deeply intertwined with all the sub-themes particularly because the faith community bring a unique morality and ethical lens to the international movement of climate action.

Sustainable living and environmental stewardship are deeply ingrained in the ethical values of salvation and justice in faiths around the world. FBOs and groups have the potential to mainframe climate justice, rooted in these values that transcend religio-cultural borders, to mobilise faith-followers to prioritise climate action in their own lives. Religious literature refers to God as the creator of the world and that humankind has a moral duty to one another, the land, the ocean and the whole of creation.

Some FBOs have personified fossil fuels as the blood of earth and have enthused for renewable energy sources as a moral responsibility but also a responsibility as a person of faith. Faith leaders have also unpicked religious literature to mandate the moral compulsion in being proactive about climate change even at the local level. Faith orientations are eager to bring justice and share progress with other faiths and faith

spaces. FBOs have the agency to enable civil society to see the bigger picture.

FBOs can, and have been framing global warming as an ethical and political issue rather than something more trivial and detached. The Green Anglicans have for example normalised the complex language of climate change when disseminating information on the phenomenon within its congregations and programmes, instead talking about elements of flora and fauna as living entities that hold the same significance as human beings.

The Buddhist Tzu Chi foundation have enthused on the need to change our food consumption to rely more on a plant-based diet as a ethical duty to the environment and our relationship with wildlife. The World Evangelical Alliance's (WEA) Sustainability Centre, with a mission to inspire and enable churches and leaders to champion creation care, are working with their vast network to empower Christians to exercise leadership in sustainable living and for churches and congregations to implement stewardship of the environment at the local level, thereby mobilising pro-environmental action at all levels. WEA take inspiration from the Bible and ground their work on the need to bring salvation and justice to all of creation, extending this from just the need to care for humankind, to the rest of God's creation including flora and fauna, both on land and in the sea. WEA believe there is a difference between helping vulnerable communities and in bringing them justice, and it is climate action for the latter, for which they are now channelling global efforts.

The **World Evangelical Alliance** refer to messages of salvation and justice from the Bible when enthusing about the urgency to act for climate change.

FBOs are also working in talking about and engaging with the complex elements of climate change and clearly understand the potential political issues that are currently formulating and will soon come about as a result of inaction for climate change. A lack of access to drinkable water and potential wars in the near future as a result, and increased extremist insurgency from a lack of state intervention from social policy and climate resilience and adaptation perspectives are all pressing issues. Faith spaces have the potential to neutralise and address such tensions, assuming the role of mediator between civil society and government bodies. FBOs must improve the ways in which the political potency and ethical value of climate change and climate action are communicated, both to civil society and to governing bodies in order to diffuse mobilisation in the form of commitments to energy, education, circularity and financing.

**“Space on Earth is shared and humankind has a moral and faith-based responsibility to restore and reconcile with nature including the animals and the rivers and forests”**

- Faith for Earth Dialogue, UNEA-4

Many FBOs have explicitly focused on climate justice. The World Council of Churches believes that a deeper understanding of the concept of Earth as our common home is a condition for a more effective response to climate change. It formulates its interventions on the basis of an ethical duty to bringing justice to God's creation.

The All Africa Conference of Churches visualises climate change as not only about environmental justice, but also as a human rights issue, and through this approaches climate action from the perspective of action bringing justice not only to nature, the creation of the divine, but also justice for younger generations, with whom we share our future.

In *Laudato si'* Pope Francis has written that the crisis of our common home – climate change – possesses the physical, ethical and spiritual dimensions, suggesting a strong need to incorporate climate justice within interventions.

Wamama Wafrika Jitokeze prioritises the injustice of climate change for the poor as the core mandate for climate action. As the poorest factions of society are most dependent on natural resources for subsistence and are therefore most likely to be negatively impacted by climate change, a justice ought to be served for them, for this section of society has not contributed in the large consumption of resources and production of pollution of the global North and the upcoming major economies in the South. This reason in itself proves a strong foundational argument to incorporate elements of justice as a core driver for climate action in faith spaces.





# Conclusion and recommendations

The dialogue and presentations performed by Faith for Earth Initiative attendees during the fourth Environment Assembly reflected several main priorities that mandate future action and focus.

- Religious places of worship are a strong stakeholder in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030, considering the political and geographical insurgency that exists in modern times.
- All stakeholders must be integrated into discussion and action within faith-based spaces on climate action, including in particular: the indigenous community, women and youth.
- As FBOs, people trust the messages disseminated and the actions undertaken, thus responsabilising such organisations with an opportunity to lead and innovate in sustainable consumption and production.
- Further partnerships and collaborations between key stakeholders is key to innovation in green spaces.
- Places of worship are centres of change, and must therefore set an example in adopting green infrastructure, energy and additional elements to civil society.

## Recommendations

- In its partnership with stakeholders within the initiative and its mandate, Faith for Earth should continue to work together, provide

normative language that is inclusive and useable in contexts that inform civil society, and ensure that the energy is continued to reach the goals of the initiative.

- Partners of the initiative should continue to disseminate information being produced by the United Nations, and should stay in close contact with the initiative and its other members to continue building on dialogue within the space provided.
- Partners can continue to spread through education outputs the necessity of climate action within the context of the SDGs and Agenda 2030, inform communities of the initiative to connect more people to the multilateral effort, and continue to set targets for local justice efforts.
- Partners ought to continue communicating with the initiative through face-to-face interaction as well as a shared digital space. Annual meetings are also a viable space for communication.
- Participants have agreed to establish working groups on energy and education to take joint interfaith work to practical levels.
- Partners will work with the UN Environment's Civil Society Unit to establish a sub-group within the NGO category for faith-based organisations to be clearly recognised during UN Environment Assembly meetings.

Dialogue during UNEA-4 has increased the momentum of mobilising faith-spaces towards assuming roles in leadership, knowledge-sharing and capacity expansion with regards to innovation and sustainable consumption and production. It has also allowed for a multilateral space for formulating better ways of connecting and integrating FBOs within UN Environment's commitment of incorporating unique stakeholders into the SDGs push and Agenda 2030.

Moreover discussions have helped in streamlining the direction that the initiative will take in the near future, and the areas of action and advocacy that require more attention in the upcoming months and years.

# Annex

List of organisations and speakers:

<b>All Africa Conference of Churches</b>	Bishop Arnold Temple
<b>Anglican Church of Southern Africa</b>	Rev. Dr. Canon Rachel Mash
<b>Brahma Kumaris</b>	Golo Pilz
<b>Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University</b>	Sonja Ohlsson
<b>Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation</b>	Debra Boudreaux
<b>Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, Mozambique</b>	Denise (Tai Lin) Tsai
<b>Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, Southern Africa</b>	Jennifer (Mei-Chuan) Chen
<b>Catholic Youth Network for Environment Sustainability for Africa</b>	Allen Ottaro
<b>Church of South India, Department of Ecological Concerns</b>	Prof. Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackad
<b>Eden's Stewards</b>	Rudolf Makhanu
<b>Farmers Advocacy and Support Initiative</b>	Akeem Olabanji Olasunkanmi Imam Shefiu A. Majemu
<b>Farmers Advocacy and Support Initiative/ Open Farm Nigeria</b>	Abdulsalam Kassim Buhari
<b>Government of Norway</b>	HE Ola Elvesteun
<b>GreenFaith</b>	Fr. Fletcher Harper
<b>Hasan Kalyoncu University, Gaziantep, Turkey</b>	Prof. Ibrahim Ozdemir
<b>International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change</b>	Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim
<b>Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</b>	Abdelmajid Tribak



<b>Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences</b>	Fazlun Khalid
<b>Islamic Relief Worldwide</b>	Yusuf Ahmed
<b>Jitokeze Wamama Wafrika, Kenya</b>	Philipine Kidulah
<b>Maryam Onikijipa Belgore Foundation</b>	Maryam Belgore
<b>Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway</b>	Aksel Jakobsen
<b>Parliament of the World's Religions</b>	Prof. Kusumita Pederson Joshu Basofin
<b>R&amp;D Jing Si Technology</b>	Marshall Q Siao
<b>Siaga Bumi</b>	Dr. Hayu Prabowo
<b>Solar Cookers International</b>	Alan Bigelow
<b>Strength in Diversity Development Centre</b>	Imam Shefiu A. Majemu
<b>The Anglican Church of Kenya</b>	Bishop Julius Wanyoike
<b>The Green Fighter</b>	Emmanuel Karangwa
<b>The Interfaith Centre for Sustainable Development</b>	Rabbi Yonatan Neril
<b>UN Environment</b>	Dr. Iyad Abu Moghli Dr. Charles McNeill
<b>United Religions Initiative</b>	Kiran Bali
<b>Universitas Nasional, Centre for Islamic Studies</b>	Dr. Fachruddin Mangunjaya
<b>University of Cadi Ayyad, Morocco</b>	Prof. Samira Idllalene
<b>University of Nairobi</b>	Prof. Dr. Jesse Mugambi
<b>Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development</b>	Fr. Josh trom Isaac Kureethadam
<b>World Evangelical Alliance</b>	Dr. Chris Elisara
<b>World Evangelical Alliance, Creation Care Task Force</b>	Matthias K. Boehning

