

# faith and the environment

Report from the Environmental  
Competence Building Program



Det Norske  
Misjonsselskap



Digni



## Content

FOREWORD	3	by <i>Rev. Dr. Wakseyoum Idossa</i>
INTRODUCTION	4	The Environmental Competence Building
CHAPTER I	9	Finding and Recommandations
CHAPTER II	23	How our faith relate to environmental issues
CHAPTER III	41	Case Studies

## Abbreviations

CCC	China Christian Coucil
EECMY-DASSC	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus – Development and Social Services Commision
ESAF	Evangelical Social Action Forum
FLM	Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy – Malagasy Lutheran Church
NMS	Norwegian Mission Society

## Foreword

The natural ecosystems of our planet are losing their ability to sustain human community due to climate change, which results from human disrespect, injustice, and abuse towards the environment. The exploitation of the natural environment through pollution, depletion, drought, etc., is leading to deeper injustice and environmental collapse.

In this situation, we have to recognize that we are not aloof from the crisis facing our planet. We share the consequences, just as we share the responsibility for causing the problem.

Humanity has been given dominion over the earth and the environment. This God-given dominion is a sacred responsibility to steward the earth. As human beings we are not licensed to abuse the creation of which we are part. We are not the owners of creation, but its stewards. We are called to “watch over and care for it” (Genesis 2:15). We have been given responsibility to conserve and renew the earth, not to deplete or destroy the earth, which God redeemed and restored (Romans 8:18–23).

The destruction of our climate is the result of the sin of human greed and alienation from God and nature. The consequence is pollution of clean air, depletion of non-renewable resources, global warming, loss of varieties of life, erosion leading to unstable agriculture and deforestation, food scarcity, migration, violence, war, etc.

This is why churches, nongovernmental organizations, governments and all stakeholders who advocate for the preservation of mother earth need to join hands, to work hard and take action in the process of curbing the environmental catastrophe facing our generation.

We are at the crossroads. We hear the cry of creation. The future of the earth is threatened. We are able to save or to destroy creation. It is our choice. We are called to be stewards, to nurture, to protect, and to preserve God’s creation. May God help His church to be an instrument to advance the conservation, protection and preservation of the environment!



**Rev. Dr. Wakseyoum Idossa**  
President of the Ethiopian  
Evangelical Church Mekane  
Yesus

# The Environmental Competence Building Program – An introduction

## History/background

In 2009, Noragric conducted an evaluation of the environment engagement within Digni's project portfolio. While the report gives a positive assessment of the environment-related projects, there are areas that need improvement. For example, the report underlines the church's potential in mobilizing the local community. Equipping churches and other faith-based entities with the technical and theological capacity to get involved in climate change mitigation and advocacy efforts – to address environmental issues in the local context and to speak out on behalf of the poor – is singled out as a particularly important task for Digni. This has served as a cue to initiate a competence building project on faith and environment.

In 2011, after preliminary hearings among members and partners, Digni commissioned The Norwegian Mission Society and Jakob Veia to manage a competence building program focusing on environmental engagement. The Environmental Competence Building Program (ECBP) was carried out in the period 2012–2014. In addition to Digni and The Norwegian Mission Society, the program included two Norwegian member organizations, Normisjon and Areopagos, and partner organizations in China (China Christian Council, The Amity Foundation), Ethiopia (The Development and Social Services Commission of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus), India (Lutheran World Service India Trust, Evangelical Social Action Forum) and Madagascar (The Malagasy Lutheran Church).

An organizing committee was set up at an early stage (“The Green Group”), featuring representatives from the Norwegian member organizations and Digni. Throughout the program period, this group has been instrumental for planning and coordinating the activities of the program, especially in connection with three international conferences, which were held with the participants over a three-year period (see below).



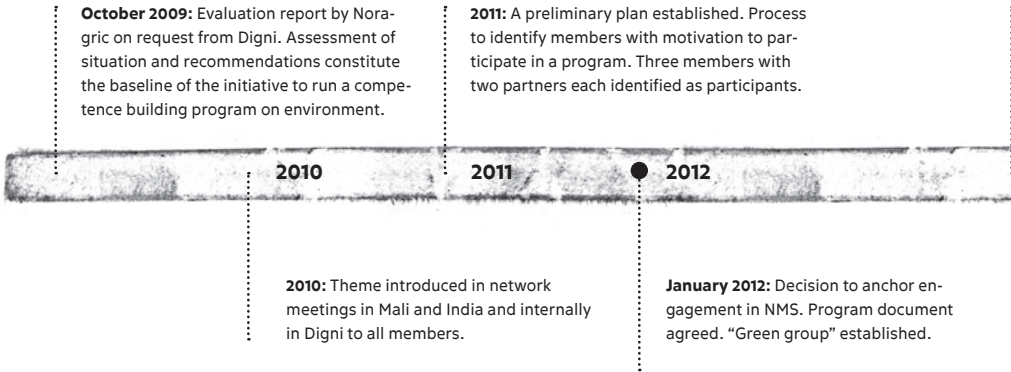
Discussions among participants at the final conference in Hosaina, Ethiopia.

### **Goals**

The main goal of the project was to establish the link between environmental engagement and our Christian faith. The assumption was that when are able to anchor our environmental engagement within our faith and identity two things should happen:

1. We would see a more sustainable engagement, due to stronger ownership
2. More churches and Christian NGOs would commit themselves to the cause

As churches, we need a theological foundation to build our involvement on. We need to relate action to faith. We need to bridge the knowledge gap that stands between the average person and his or her commitment to care for the environment, both in terms of theology and awareness about climate change and the destruction of the environment. This approach – taking theology as our point of departure – was strongly affirmed by all the participating organizations and churches, as the following report shows. →



## Timeline: The international meetings

The annual international meetings were the focal points around which the program was organized. These provided valuable opportunities for the participants to get to know each other, and to share experiences, knowledge, theological insights and challenges with regard to climate change and environmental care. The conferences also provided an occasion to develop networks and cooperation between the participants.

### Thailand, 2012

The first international meeting of the Environmental Competence Building Program was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, on 6 – 10 August 2012. The main orientation of the seminar was on faith-based environmental consciousness. Norwegian theologian, Dr. Bård Mæland (rector at the School of Mission and Theology in Stavanger, MHS) was the main speaker, introducing faith perspectives on care for the environment and climate change, focusing particularly on how eco-theological perspectives are reflected in the confessions of the church.



Participants in first international meeting in Chiang Mai, 2012.



Participants in second international meeting in Chiang Mai, 2013.

**August 2012:** First meeting, arranged in Chiang Mai, Thailand. "Faith Based Approach to Environmental Capacity"

**August 2013:** Second meeting, arranged in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

**December 2014:** Final report submitted by program manager.

2013

2014

**2013–2014:** Writing and collecting articles and contributions for final report.

**November 2014:** Third and final conference, arranged in Hosaina, Ethiopia.

### Thailand, 2013

The second international meeting of the Environmental Competence Building Program was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, on 12 – 16 August 2012. On this occasion, much time was allocated to discussions and comments from the various participants. Also, the Indian theologian, Dr. Chandran Paul Martin (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America), led the participants through a full day focusing on theological perspectives on environmental issues, providing excellent insight into the relationship between theology and the environment with special reference to marginalized populations.

### Thailand, 2014

The third and final meeting of the program was held in Hosaina, Ethiopia, on 3 – 7 November 2014. The meeting was hosted by the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. This meeting provided an occasion to draw together all the issues discussed over the preceding years, assessing the draft report from the project, and collecting final input from the participants. The seminar also focused on the potential associated with the voluntary work of congregations and the need to adopt an assets-based approach to development and mitigation. This has been the focus of another com-

petence building program run by NMS, Use Your Talents. Experiences from Use Your Talents were shared in the meeting, by participants from Madagascar and Ethiopia. Also, a field visit to self-sustaining and environmentally sensitive model farms was conducted as part of the meeting.



Participants in third international meeting in Hosaina, 2014.



Group discussions were key to the proceedings in the international meetings.

→ **Structure of the report**

The present report comprises three chapters.

The first chapter summarizes the main learning points, findings and recommendations from the program.

The second chapter focuses on theology, building an argument why care for the environment is a central task for the church and pointing out the implications for the church and believers.

The third chapter includes case studies provided by the different participants, highlighting the work that is ongoing locally, and particular environmental challenges in the respective contexts. While climate change represents the broader picture, the Environmental Competence Building Program has focused more on the interventions of ordinary people on local habitats, forests and land. Our approach takes grassroots engagement as its point of departure, as the immediate and accessible way to address environmental care.

Overall, the report reflects the discussions and consultations the participants of the program have been involved with, and the lessons learned concerning our faith and its practical consequences. We find that the networks established and the cooperation during these three years has contributed to our knowledge, comprehension and our motivation to face environmental difficulties in our societies.

We hope the booklet will provide useful advice and inspire other readers to faith-based engagement to save the environment.

**Participating organizations**



Areopagos



Det Norske Misjonsselskap



Normisjon



Digni



The Amity Foundation



China Christian Council



Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus



Evangelical Social Action Forum



Lutheran World Service India Trust



Malagasy Lutheran Church



# I

# findings and recommendations

This chapter summarizes the main learning points, challenges and recommendations from the Environmental Competence Building Program.

# Main learning points

## **1. We need to discover the link between our faith and concern for the environment**

The main goal of this project has been to establish the link between environmental engagement and our Christian faith. We believe that stewardship and respect for God's creation should be an inherent and natural part of our life, both as Christian individuals and church.

Focusing on the relationship between our faith and the environment has been an eye-opener to most participants in the program, as we come to understand our place as human beings and the value of God's creation. This has demonstrated to us our mandate as believers and church, and increased our trust in God's continuous creation, healing and hope.

The churches' role and effectiveness in addressing environmental issues is stronger when anchored in the very identity and mission of the church. In fact, it is a prerequisite for action, as the experience of the competence building program shows. We need to get the "why" (theology) right, before we get the "how" (environmental action by churches) right.

The program has helped to revitalize our duties and responsibilities as Christians to contribute for the betterment of the environment in a holistic manner, sustaining the God-designed functions of nature from a theological, ethical, and practical point of view. It has boosted our awareness of climate injustice and enhanced our understanding of the hard facts of climate change.

Of course, this also has to do with a general awakening in the Western world and in the global church. Of particular interest to Digni, its members and partners, is the 2010 Cape Town commitment of the Evangelical Lausanne movement, which makes concern for the environment integral to the mission of the church. As we approach the crucial UN global climate summit in Paris 2015, we are urged to care, share and dare to act as churches.

## **2. Basic education and training can make a huge difference**

Raising awareness about environment conservation, and introducing practical, environmentally friendly tools and techniques, are the primary mitigation interventions at our hand in the developing

world. It is also a win-win situation: Adapting environmentally friendly methods tends to increase productivity, improve health conditions as well as preventing environmental degradation.

The point was beautifully demonstrated through a field visit the program participants conducted to a couple of farms outside Hosaina in Ethiopia. As a result of their training, the farmers' land was protected from erosion and further degradation and their agricultural production had been boosted. They were able to ensure their families' food security and the education of their children through increasing productive capacity from home-grown sources. They generated income by selling different vegetables, fruits and seedlings to nearby markets. They demonstrated great care for natural resources such as soil and water, knowing well that their land was only able to bear fruit after they begun employing different conservation methods.

Similarly, several case stories featured in chapter two illustrate how adopting environmentally friendly tools and techniques improves the livelihood of communities while arresting degradation of the environment. Examples of sensible interventions abound, such as the introduction of effective wood stoves, solar energy, biogas, organic farming practices, etc.

### **3. We need to understand our role and lead by example**

Although recognizing the need to learn more about the environmental issues and climate change, participation in the program has increased our knowledge and awareness of the urgency that surrounds these matters. Bringing input and information from different corners of the world to the table, has also enhanced our understanding of the particular contextual challenges we are faced with.

The program has encouraged and empowered us to put more emphasis on the meaning and consequences of our own actions as individuals and collectives, encouraging the adaption of environmentally friendly habits and the exercise of moderation, keeping in mind the needs of others. We need to lead by example and be the change that we want to see in the world.

In practical terms, several participants have pointed out the need to promote “responsible consumerism”, acknowledging the reality and opportunities offered by the market, rather than

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Model farmer Ato Woldehana Kelbore shares his story. Adopting new farming methods has improved the food security and economic situation of his family.



The field visit to model farms was covered by the church's TV crew. Here, Mr. Wolde-ammanuel is interviewed.



Mr. Wolde-ammanuel addresses the program participants. New farming methods, but also peace and gender equality within the family, has contributed to his success.



This land used to be barren and infertile. Mr. Wolde-ammanuel has been awarded by the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture for his achievements in turning the situation around.

- rejecting it. Carving out a space for accountable, just and sustainable economic development remain one of the most crucial challenges of our time, to which we also need to make personal and institutional/organizational commitments.

The participants also report that the importance of environmental protection has gained a foothold in the leadership of their respective organizations/churches, providing a vital platform to raise awareness within these bodies and among the people to which they reach out.

#### **4. We are stronger when we work together**

The program has committed us to cooperate with other likeminded organizations. We have been learning from each other. Faced with environmental challenges these links need to be closer and stronger. We need to form networks and alliances and respond to the signs of time.

The involvement and motivation amongst the participants have clearly increased during the program. The relationships established among the participants and the exchange of experiences in the area of environment is a source of motivation.

Developments within the Evangelical Lutheran Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) in Ethiopia may serve as an example. Having been part of the Environmental Competence Building Program through its Development and Social Services Commission (DASSC), the church invited one of our speakers, Dr. Bård Mæland, to participate at their annual Committee of Mutual Christian Responsibility (CMCR) meetings in early 2013, to share Christian perspectives on environmental concern and assist in the development of a new environment policy. The EECMY has made environment a priority, incorporating stewardship teaching in the curriculum of the theological schools. Moreover, responding to the needs of the communities, the church is carrying out a number of activities, such as the formation of voluntary groups, awareness raising, practical action and the celebration of green days, mobilizing congregations to reach out their respective communities. Inspired by developments in Ethiopia, the leadership in the Malagasy Lutheran Church is looking into how concern for the environment may be part of the strategy of the church, proposing, for example,

to make teaching on stewardship part of the curriculum in its Bible schools.

In another example, cooperation on biogas installments have been formed between local partners in China and Madagascar.

Also, learning about each other's challenges and hearing the voices of climate victims reveals the interwoven nature of climate change. We are inextricably linked, and mutually accountable for one another's actions. Hearing the cry of Christian brothers and sisters, who suffer the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation, is a powerful call to action of the global church. For "if one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it" (1. Corinthians 12:26).

### **5. We have different responsibilities and roles to play according to our contexts**

While the average Ethiopian emits 0.1 tons CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere every year, Norwegians average 9.2 tons. Clearly, the responsibilities and expectations vary with the context. While a call for moderation in terms of personal consumption strikes a deep chord with the well-off, the urge for moderation makes less sense to the poor. And while advocacy work at a national or international level may be an option to some, local efforts to arrest soil degradation and ensure food-security may be the most acute and sensible options to others. We need to identify our responsibilities and roles according to our resources and contexts.

The underlying issue here, though, is not only one of contextual differences, but justice. Those least responsible for the environmental crisis experience its greatest impact and face challenges for further development due to restrictions on global emissions.

### **6. We need to use our talents**

When we design development projects, also environment projects, we tend to focus on the needs of the community. Often these are defined as resources that are lacking (money, know-how, etc.). Rather than focusing on what is missing, we should focus more on what is already there. We have to start from what we know and what we have, our assets at hand. We have to identify what the community has in terms of skills and other resources. The

potential of human resources should also be identified in order to enable communities rely on themselves rather than external resources.

Everybody is created with potential and talents, which are assets. Taking the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14–30) as a point of departure, the Malagasy Lutheran Church together with NMS has developed the concept “Use Your Talent” to mobilize the congregations as change agents in the local communities. Rather than always having the needs of the communities addressed by others, the assets-based approach of “Use Your Talents” encourages the local congregation to play a proactive role in development, mobilizing churchgoers and community members for social action, mapping the challenges and resources of the community, promoting independent and locally owned responses to local problems. Thus, the church becomes an active presence in the communities, an embodiment of Christ. In Madagascar, the concept has involved setting up development committees in the congregations, leading the work, coordinating activities and managing income and expenses. No external funding is involved. The concept has been adopted by churches in several countries, including in Ethiopia.

“Use Your Talents” is an expression of what we may call “congregational diakonia”, the voluntary social work of the congregation, which differs from “institutionalized diakonia”, the professional social work of the church. This does not imply a dichotomy, rather; these two expressions of the church’s social work exist and work complementarily.

## The main challenges

### 1. Uniting the church on the environment message

When the church is together, it can be a change-maker. The success of the “Use Your Talent” program in Madagascar is a good example of this. Unfortunately, while the church has been at the forefront in promoting environmental care, the opposite is also true. Different churches, church members and missions have opposing views and opinions on how to, even whether or not to, respond to the challenges of climate change. A central debate is



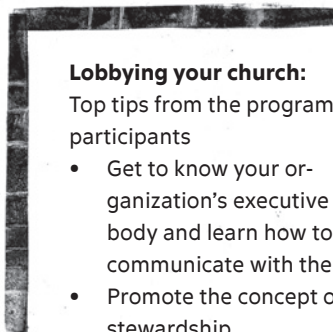
whether environmental care should be a core task for the church or not. The present booklet clearly affirms the centrality of the environment issue to the mission of the church, but much work remains for this idea to take root.

## **2. Creating ownership to the green agenda within the organization/church structure**

Several participants reported lack of ownership to environmental issues within their respective organizations and churches. Mainstreaming environmental concern within the churches is not going to happen overnight. It requires from us an ability to work strategically, getting key leaders on board, promoting the concept of stewardship, working to have the theological schools adopt teaching on theology and the environment, spreading information about climate change and appealing to justice and accountability. True ownership is reflected when environment is part of the churches' policies, strategies and recruitment.

## **3. Spreading the message and mobilizing the grassroots**

A central challenge, echoed by all participants, is the question of how to spread the message to the grassroots and/or the local congregations. Mobilizing for change and advocacy is difficult. The acuteness of climate change is hard to grasp, as it is a slowly occurring event. Moreover, the nature of the challenge may simply be too overwhelming: What difference can we make? In order to face these challenges, we need to lead by example, spread trustworthy information and strive to promote



### **Lobbying your church:**

Top tips from the program participants

- Get to know your organization's executive body and learn how to communicate with them.
- Promote the concept of stewardship.
- Work to make care for the environment a subject in the church's policy document or even to adopt an environment policy
- Suggest including a curriculum of environment even in Bible colleges/ seminaries.
- Preach and teach Christian stewardship, encourage responsible consumerism.
- For awareness rising, organize environmental friendly arrangements, camps and events.
- Arrange seminars for local church leaders in areas of environmental protection.

a sound, simple and non-divisive theology of environmental action. Also, we need to address the gap between the leadership and professional staff on the one hand, who are often strongly concerned about environment and stewardship, and the congregations, pastors and lay persons – the Christian communities – who may prioritize differently.

#### **4. Addressing the knowledge gap**

Climate change and environment conservation is a vast and complex field. Getting the facts right and identifying the correct mitigation efforts is a challenge to all of us, not least in terms of capacity. How do we filter the vast amount of information, and what do we do about the information we receive? And how do we improve the flow of information within our own structure, keeping each other up-to-date on developments in each other's contexts?

#### **6. Working more strategically within our capacity**

We have been working on a conceptual frame for a faith-based approach to environment care. We have also made environment a cross-cutting issue in our development work. But what does it mean in practice? And how can we make sure that the lessons learned and the relations formed through the competence building program are acted upon? Too often we find that we continue our separate businesses as usual when there are no extra resources and structures in place. We need to define clearer how these structures facilitate how we work strategically with environmental issues in our settings, as we often find ourselves limited by lack of manpower and funding for environmental issues. We need to identify and align our “professional” and organizational assets with the voluntary assets, both tangible and intangible. None are better placed to undertake such a pairing of professionalism and voluntarism than the churches.

#### **7. Engaging the root causes of climate change**

While the church has a proud history of reaching out to the poor, its track record when it comes to addressing the root causes of suffering is mixed. Addressing the root causes of climate change and environmental degradation requires engagement in the realms

of (national and global) politics and economics. However, there are several stumbling blocks. Churches and churchgoers often find themselves out of depth engaging in climate politics. In some contexts, the political sphere may not be open to the church or it may involve great danger. Moreover, church involvement in politics is often a contentious issue, with arguments being made that the church should remain “neutral” or stay out of “wordly” business. While we agree that the church should strive for political neutrality and not seek political power, the values of the church are anything but neutral – and our stance is that they need to be acted upon, even when the consequences are political. Fortunately, we are not on our own, we are many. Forging alliances with likeminded churches, NGOs and the green movement, and joining national and international networks and pressure groups will go a long way towards answering the call to address root causes.

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Lead by example**

The most efficient way of advocating climate awareness is through leading by example. Integrity is the keyword.

### **2. Address theology**

The church depends on a solid, simple and non-divisive theological foundation for its engagement with climate change and environmental care. When such interventions are considered to be outside the core tasks of the church, our efforts will lack legitimacy and support from ordinary churchgoers.

### **3. Make environment a priority**

Churches and organizations are constrained by economy and manpower. We cannot expect concern for the environment to happen on top of other tasks. Environment needs to be a priority task, with dedicated staff. It needs to be part of our strategies and policies.

Preparing and adopting environment policies helps to create conceptual and practical ownership to the green agenda within

the churches/organizations. It is often the first step on the way towards mainstreaming concern for the environment.

#### **4. Adopt holistic and assets-based approaches**

Given the enormity of the task, we need to link professionalism with voluntarism. The assets-based approach is central to this project, taking existing local resources and knowledge as a point of departure.

Programs should be designed holistically to look at the whole picture, in which humans and the environment are part of the same system. One cannot separate the well-being of the environment from that of the community and vice versa. Environmental impact assessments should be incorporated in all projects.

#### **5. Act locally (but think globally)**

Most of us can make a big difference in our local contexts, as the examples in chapter two clearly demonstrate. We need to promote the win-win formula of environmentally friendly practices, which improves both livelihoods and the condition of the environment.

#### **6. Maximize communication**

In order to address the “general public” we need to use all available communication channels, whether it be various forms of media, community events, religious services or other. We should not be afraid to speak out.

Also, it is important to keep each other up to date on local challenges and mitigation efforts. It is particularly important to communicate personal testimonies from people who have been affected by climate change. For “if one member suffers, all suffer together” (1. Corinthians 12:26).

#### **7. Promote the ideas of stewardship, accountability and justice**

The earth is not ours. It belongs to God, and to future generations. Our mandate is to be stewards of the earth, not to exploit all its resources for our own ends. We are accountable to God and to our neighbors, and to those who are to follow us, to not extract more than our fair share of the natural resources available, thus compromising the sustainability of Earth. It is a matter of justice: between those who feast mindlessly on the bounties of nature and

those who suffer the consequences, and between our generation and the generations that will follow us.

### **8. Promote responsible consumerism**

At the same time, we realize that development and well-being to a large extent hinges on an economic development fuelled by consumption. Opting out of the market is not an option. Instead, we need to promote moderation and responsible consumerism.

Also, there are sustainable business models for financing development in the areas of environment, natural resource management, disaster risk management, risk and preparedness. We should not be afraid of adopting a more commercial approach to our interventions, as the experience of ESAF in India clearly shows.

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In India, the microcredit organization Evangelical Social Action Forum (ESAF) has successfully established a program that provides green household technology for pay.

ESAF's concept is to provide households with environment-friendly technology, especially fuel-efficient stoves for cooking. ESAF provides the products as a loan. Most households repay the loans within a year. The program itself is self-sustaining, financed through moderate interest rents on the loans. So far, 60,000 stoves has been distributed. ESAF expects to reach 300,000 households within a three-year period. Providing the stoves for pay means ESAF can sustain its operations and reach a large target area, which would not be financially viable if the stoves were given away free of charge.

In fact, customers are more than happy to invest in the stoves provided by ESAF. Buying and using fuel-efficient stoves costs far less than the average household would normally spend on firewood for cooking. Within seven



**Mr Adjith Sen** is senior manager at ESAF, in charge of its green household technology scheme. He shared ESAF's experiences at the Hosaina meeting of the Environmental Competence Building Program.

months, most families have recouped the initial investment through reduced consumption of wood or other sources of energy.

The construction of the stoves also ensures minimal carbon emission. ESAF estimates that the introduction of 60,000 stoves equals an emission reduction of about 100 tons. In addition, the introduction of fuel-efficient and clean-burning stoves results in less dangerous smoke in kitchens and less cutting and collection of firewood in the local environment.

### **9. Don't give up**

It's not too late. We can still change the course of history. In fact, the course of history is being changed as we speak: carbon emissions are going down, renewable energy is gaining a firm stake in the market at the behest of fossil fuels, political leaders are committing themselves to working together to turn the ship around. There is hope!

II

how our faith  
relate to  
environmental  
issues

*« In him were created all things in  
heaven and on earth: everything visible  
and everything invisible »*

(Colossians 1:16)

EXCERPT FROM THE CAPE TOWN  
COMMITMENT OF THE LAUSANNE MOVEMENT

*A) We love the world of God's creation.* This love is not mere sentimental affection for nature (which the Bible nowhere commands), still less is it pantheistic worship of nature (which the Bible expressly forbids). Rather it is the logical outworking of our love for God by caring for what belongs to him. 'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it.' The earth is the property of the God we claim to love and obey. We care for the earth, most simply, because it belongs to the one whom we call Lord. (Psalm 24:1; Deuteronomy 10:14)

The earth is created, sustained and redeemed by Christ. (Colossians 1:15–20; Hebrews 1:2–3) We cannot claim to love God while abusing what belongs to Christ by right of creation, redemption and inheritance. We care for the earth and responsibly use its abundant resources, not according to the rationale of the secular world, but for the Lord's sake. If Jesus is Lord of all the earth, we cannot separate our relationship to Christ from how we act in relation to the earth. For to proclaim the gospel that says 'Jesus is Lord' is to proclaim the gospel that includes the



earth, since Christ's Lordship is over all creation. Creation care is thus a gospel issue within the Lordship of Christ.

*Such love for God's creation* demands that we repent of our part in the destruction, waste and pollution of the earth's resources and our collusion in the toxic idolatry of consumerism. Instead, we commit ourselves to urgent and prophetic ecological responsibility. We support Christians whose particular missional calling is to environmental advocacy and action, as well as those committed to godly fulfillment of the mandate to provide for human welfare and needs by exercising responsible dominion and stewardship. The Bible declares God's redemptive purpose for creation itself. Integral mission means discerning, proclaiming, and living out, the biblical truth that the gospel is God's good news, through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, for individual persons, and for society, and for creation. All three are broken and suffering because of sin; all three are included in the redeeming love and mission of God; all three must be part of the comprehensive mission of God's people.

# The big narrative: What is the Christian view of creation, nature, and the environment?

## **God is the creator and creation belongs to him**

The whole bedrock of environmental care is that God is the creator of heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1). The whole creation is an expression of God, so as we begin to understand the creation we can begin to get an idea of the creator. That is why the apostle Paul declares that God's eternal qualities can be understood from what he has made (Romans 1:20). However, God is not to be identified with his creation: God is distinct from, and yet God is unceasingly involved in his creation. He consistently meets us where we live, through His gifts from the earth. We are intimately related with the rest of creation, for we are formed from the earth.

Psalm 24 states that the whole world belongs to God and to Him alone. *The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it* (Psalms 24:1). Created in the image and likeness of God, human beings have been entrusted with the caring of God's creation (Genesis 1:26-28). Then God said, according to Genesis 1, *"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."*

## **We are called as stewards of the earth**

The opening chapters of Genesis show that humanity's relationship with the rest of creation is ambiguous: we are part of it and we are above it. We are part of the earth and we are to rule over it. We are creatures of God and made in the image of God.

It is these truths held in tension that keeps Christianity free of the extremes of biocentrism and anthropocentrism respectively. We should not reduce humanity to pure nature, nor should we deify humanity. Christianity is neither merely anthropocentric (human-centered), nor merely bio-centric (environment-centered): it is primarily theocentric (God-centred).

Our solidarity with the rest of the creation should serve to keep us from an oppressive rulership. Dominion is not a dictatorial rulership, we are not lords over creation: it is a delegated rulership, a rulership that is accountable. As God's stewards of creation, we will be called to account for how we have treated His earth.

God has given humankind a full responsibility of handling the caring of His creation. For the realization of this purpose, the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to take care of it (cf. Genesis 2:15). In other words, man was there as a steward of the garden. A steward is someone who handles affairs for someone else, but will give a full accounting for his actions to the owner of the affairs. The picture here is that God is the owner of the affairs, meaning the world, and man is the steward appointed to handle the caring of it.

### **Stewardship is a collective task**

God did not expect only one person to be the steward of all creation. Rather, He blessed Adam and Eve and made them fruitful. Filling the earth is the means by which the earth becomes subdued by man. This essential truth is embodied in the right to life. Each person born contributes to the well-being of society. Through prayer, work, and discovery, each person allows others to grow in knowledge and holiness. Thus, no one person rules the earth. Collectively, we are stewards of the earth.

Nonetheless, each of us has opportunities and resources at our disposal that others do not have. You may own property to which no one else holds title. However, understanding that stewardship is collective requires us to find ways in which we can collaborate with others to make the resources in our possession work for the good of all as intended by God. Because stewardship is collective, and the resources of the earth are intended for all of humanity, in the present and in the future, our use of them should reflect this solidarity. In other words, it is not simply what we use it for; it is also how we use it.

### **Sin has disrupted the purpose of stewardship**

Our key role is to be faithful servants in keeping and caring for God's creation. Contrary to what God demands us to do, we human beings rebelled against God and disrupted creation. Sin

alienated us from our creator God and Creation. This has led us to exploit the bounties of creation to our own ends.

The destruction of our climate is the result of the sin of human greed and alienation from God and nature. As a consequence, the whole creation is suffering: Weather disruptions are causing extreme situations of flooding, erosion, draught, polar ice melting, jeopardizing food production, water supply and entire ecosystems. God speaks to us through creation, not only as a demonstration of God's greatness and beauty, but as a call to turn away from a way of life that destroys God's creation and causes human suffering.

### **The sin of injustice**

At the heart of the ongoing ecological disaster is a glaring injustice. The poor and indigenous people are particularly hard hit by climate change, even though they contribute the least to the destruction of the environment. At the same time, we are severely compromising the wellbeing of future generations, disrupting the sustainability of earth through extracting too many natural resources, polluting the air and water and the emission of greenhouse gases. Closing our eyes and ears to suffering and injustice prevents us from recognizing the face of Jesus in the poor, the helpless and the suffering, and the unborn, alienating ourselves from God (Matthew 25:34-40, Isaiah 58).

### **Salvation and restoration**

Despite the all-embracing and all-encompassing effects of the fall, God still cares for the earth. He has not washed his hands of it, in fact the care that he has for the earth is ultimately shown in sending Jesus. Divine compassion is directed to the whole world. It reaches out beyond the human community to embrace "all things" in the reconciliation of Christ (Colossians 1:15-20).

The introduction of sin has had consequences for the entire creation. Similarly, the redemption by Christ has consequences for the entire creation. Salvation is not merely an individual matter but a healing of God's people and the cosmos, the natural environment. Creation includes humanity and nature; in the same manner salvation also include both humanity and nature. We are commissioned to care for creation, which is now in captivity to

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THE CRY FROM A WOUNDED PLANET

*Sons and daughters of the Earth,  
you who know good and evil:  
Life is in danger! Show that you care!*

DISCOVER THE WHOLENESS

*The Earth is a tapestry woven without seams.  
No-one has the right to tear it apart.*

SENSE THE HOLINESS

*A holy fragrance hovers over all that exists.  
Life must be valued, protected and loved.*

REJOICE IN THE BEAUTY

*Creation has a wealth of its own.  
Nothing is merely raw materials.  
The gifts the earth gives must be handled  
with devotion and gratitude.*

REMEMBER THE CONTEXT

*Your life is woven into the pattern of all life on earth.  
All that you have is given to you as a loan.  
You must pass it all on to those who come after you.*

STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE

*Mother earth has enough to meet the needs of all,  
but not satisfy their greed.  
The gap between poor and rich  
is contempt for human dignity.*

LIVE IN RECONCILIATION

*Sons and daughters of the earth, you who  
have the power to tear up her tapestry:  
You are called to a life of reconciliation!*

Finn Wagle,  
Bishop Emeritus of Nidaros (Norway)

DO IT ANYWAY

*People are often unreasonable, illogical, and self-centred;  
forgive them anyway.*

*If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives:  
be kind anyway.*

*If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies;  
succeed anyway.*

*If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you;  
be honest and frank anyway.*

*What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight;  
build anyway*

*If you find serenity and happiness, others may be jealous;  
be happy anyway.*

*The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow;  
do good anyway.*

*Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough;  
give the world the best you've got anyway.*

*It was never between you and them anyway.*

*You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God*

Mother Theresa

→ disruption and death with hope that this creation will know the freedom it awaits, (2. Peter 3:13).

Through the death and resurrection of Christ, the relationship between God and humankind is reestablished. We are set free to serve God and His creation. While we remain limited by the consequences of sin, the seeds of the new world are already present. We are lead to create signs of a different future here and now, in the midst of the difficulties of the world, seeds of renewal that will bear fruit when the time comes.

### **Care for creation is integral to the holistic mission of the church**

It is as an urgent task for theology to show the inter-connection between the living memory of Jesus and the issues that confront the global community. Spreading the word of Christ while disregarding basic human needs is to preach an incomplete Gospel, as the experience of the mission movement shows. The evangelical Lausanne movement, in the Cape Town Commitment, states that:

*“Integral mission means discerning, proclaiming, and living out, the biblical truth that the gospel is God’s good news, through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, for individual persons, and for society, and for creation. All three are broken and suffering because of sin; all three are included in the redeeming love and mission of God; all three must be part of the comprehensive mission of God’s people.”*

Therefore, ecological action is not only as ethically responsible, but also as radically Christian, as the faithful praxis of Christian discipleship. This is why the church should take upon itself the responsibility to give guidance on how congregations can enhance their engagement in environmental protection, as people who are forgiven their sin; empowered by God’s love to care, serve, keep and honor the integrity of creation.

### **The Christian hope concerns the present and the future**

As Christians the notion of “hope” takes on a greater dimension. It is our birthright. Not in the sense that it is rooted in our own abilities as human beings, but as a powerful potential for

transformation and salvation that is unlocked through our relationship with God, the creator and redeemer, who has promised to be with us “always, until the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

The promise of the Christian hope concerns the future and the present alike. It is active currency, not a savings account. To reserve one’s hope for future salvation only is to give up hope, to reject our birthright and squander our talents. A church that seeks God, live and breathe hope in a broken world.

This section combines contributions from several sources, mainly from the program participants and speakers. Modified and verbatim phrases, excerpts and inspiration have also been lifted from Rev. Dr. Wakseyoum Idossa’s opening speech at the Hosaina seminar, from the document *Klimarettferdighet* (2013), published by Skaperverk og bærekraft (a cooperation between The Church of Norway, The Christian Council of Norway and the Norwegian Church Aid), the Cape Town Commitment of the Lausanne Movement (2010), and from the Taizé community (*Christian Hope, Letter from Taizé 2003/3*).

## **The Christian confession and the theology on creation and the environment**

### **The ecumenical confessions**

Throughout the history of the church, the belief in God the creator of heaven and earth has been a cornerstone in the Christian confession and the belief in God. Still this side of the faith in the Triune God may often have been overlooked and ignored as the focus on the Son, Jesus Christ our Savior, overshadowed God the Creator. This part of the doctrine of the Triune God has, however, never been contested within the Church. It has, however, been a necessary part of the Christian confession as it marks limits versus other religious positions, such as a dualistic theology, where God is seen as detached from Creation, or a pantheistic theology where God and creation can hardly be separated from each other. In classical Christian theology God is intimately connected with Creation, and still separate from it.

Hence, when the Christian of most churches confess the Apostles’ Creed or the Nicene Creed, they say:

- a. There is a God,
- b. God is one, not many, and



- c. God is the power and mind behind the creation (“the maker of heaven and earth”), who has been there from its creation, through how it is preserved now (by His Spirit), and how it once will appear in glory, in the shape of a new heaven and earth.

From this belief in God the creator comes also the belief in eternity and universality: God has put his stamp on everything. There is nothing on earth or in heaven that does not relate to God in some way or another. One is here in particular reminded about St. Paul, in Romans, where God is described thus: “*For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse*” (Romans 1:20)

In the Nicene Creed, this belief is also related to the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, who is described as the Giver of Life. Hence, one may draw a line from the first Giver of Life, through the Son who came to bring life in fullness (John 10:10), and, lastly, to the Spirit of Life, who constantly is at work to sustain life and remind us about our duty to protect life wherever it is threatened (Genesis 2:7; John 3.8).

### **The Lutheran confession**

The Evangelical-Lutheran tradition has some very concrete statements about the significance of a belief in God the creator. Luther’s explanation of the first article of faith in the Small Catechism is especially instructive. Here Luther attempts an answer to what it means that “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth”, and he says in a very concrete way:

*“I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my limbs, my reason, and all my senses, and still preserves them; in addition thereto, clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and homestead, wife and children, fields, cattle, and all my goods; that He provides me richly and daily with all that I need to support this body and life, protects me from all danger, and guards me and preserves me from all evil; and all this out of pure, fatherly, divine goodness*

*and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which I owe it to Him to thank, praise, serve, and obey Him. This is most certainly true.”*

As we see, creation is seen as an expression of divine provision, preservation and protection. To put ones beliefs in God the creator this way, makes a strong emphasis the “gift” aspect of God. This parallels how Luther in his Large Catechism makes an intimate connection between God’s giving of himself in the creation, through his Son, and through the Holy Ghost:

*”Thus we have most briefly presented the meaning of this article [Of Creation], as much as is at first necessary for the most simple to learn, both as to what we have and receive from God, and what we owe in return, which is a most excellent knowledge, but a far greater treasure. For here we see how the Father has given Himself to us, together with all creatures, and has most richly provided for us in this life, besides that He has overwhelmed us with unspeakable, eternal treasures by His Son and the Holy Ghost (...)”*

There is of course also another aspect of our belief in God the creator and creation: that not everybody may experience God’s provision, preservation and protection through their experiences of the environment. If this is the negative experience of creation, God may appear as remote and hidden. There is, however, more to the doctrine of God within Lutheran theology. First, there is the whole issue of suffering and the theology of the cross. God is not primarily a God of glory and prosperity. As given in the event of the cross, God’s love to humanity is revealed in the Cross, not through our speculation about his manifest presence, or manifest absence, in creation.

Although this could be seen as a limitation of Christian theology, both the Lutheran theology of the cross and the theology of creation, positions Christians to see the goodness of creation as a gift, and to see God in creation even when suffering, and not abundance, speaks the strongest language.

Next, one should also heed the critical perspective in Luther as to how humans receive the gifts of God. In his Large Catechism,

Luther not only repeats his teaching on the belief in creation, but also harshly describes what it means not to believe in God the Creator:

*"(...) For if we believed it with the heart, we would also act accordingly, and not stalk about proudly, act defiantly, and boast as though we had life, riches, power, and honor, etc., of ourselves, so that others must fear and serve us, as is the practice of the wretched, perverse world, which is drowned in blindness, and abuses all the good things and gifts of God only for its own pride, avarice, lust, and luxury, and never once regards God, so as to thank Him or acknowledge Him as Lord and Creator."*

Consequently, the opposite of a belief in God the Giver of gifts, and of humans' gratefulness as the adequate response, is human abuse and exploitation of God's gifts for humans' own sake. Luther here clearly alludes to the tradition of the seven deadly sins: The point of the tradition of deadly sins is that these sins not only are sins, but they function as hinges on doors. Once they break, all kinds of other sins, therefore, will find their easy way forward and hence accelerate our direction towards death. Whereas the fundamental attitude of the believer is humble prayer, gratefulness and joy, the vice of those one do not believe in creation and the Giver of life, is a self-bent narcissism, often described by Luther as curved inward on oneself.

This section is written by Dr. Bård Mæland, based on a presentation given in Chiang Mai, 2012, as part of the Environmental Competence Building Program.

## Diakonia

Diakonia is a theological concept that points to the identity and mission of the church; the love of God for all people and the whole of creation revealed through our life and service.

In contemporary theology the word diakonia presents a variety of connotations and representations, most often meaning to serve to change people's lives, to contribute to the construction of citizenship of the less fortunate. In this understanding,

addressing environmental degradation, pollution and climate change is diaconal work in its purest form. It is no different from other, more traditional diaconal undertakings of the church: reaching out to the poor, providing shelter, health services, and education, and so forth. It is an enactment on the command to love our neighbors as ourselves, to which churches and missions have always adhered.

Within the ecumenical movement, the term diakonia has gained importance during the last decades as many have come to the opinion that it expresses an important dimension of the churches' call to respond to challenges in today's world, with persistent poverty and growing inequality fueled by the devastating reality of climate change.

The important document on diakonia by the Lutheran World Federation, *Diakonia in Context*,<sup>1</sup> reflects this process and intends to contribute to it from a Lutheran perspective. It does so in light of how the Lutheran family is engaged in diaconal work, as the caring ministry of the Church, the Gospel in action expressed through loving your neighbor, creating inclusive communities, caring for creation and struggling for justice. Transformation, reconciliation and empowerment are the three terms used in this document to indicate the core values, the direction of the work, and also to give signals as to how diakonia should be carried out.

In this particular understanding, diaconal work is seen to be an integral part of mission, in its bold action, not only to alleviate suffering and engage in acts of mercy, but to address the root causes of human suffering and injustice. Care for creation concerns everything that God has created; the earth with its plants, animals and human beings, the oceans and the air and the entire ecological system. "*The earth and its fullness are the Lord's.*" (1. Corinthians 10:26) means that we are called to take care of something which is not ours.

To practice diakonia is to serve human beings, the created world, and God simultaneously. This basic definition has consequences for worship and Christian education including our own personal consumption and life-style. The fact that individuals, congregations and specialized organizations relate to and support each other mutually, add values and quality to what is done.

<sup>1</sup>  
Rev. Dr. Kjell Nord-  
stokke, ed. (2009).  
*Diakonia in Context*.  
The Lutheran World  
Federation.

# The consequences of faith – how do we respond?

## Godliness with contentment

Human beings are morally accountable to God for how we treat His creation. God demands to rule over the all the creation in the manner of the kingdom of God. The freedom exercised as human beings must be according to the God's moral law and human conscience.

God gave men and women superiority over all other creatures. The responsibility implies proper environmental stewardship. This appointed authority should seek to harmonize the fulfillment of the needs of all creatures. Instead, we are living in a world characterized by gross injustice. This is a consequence of human sin.

According to Oxfam, the combined wealth of the 80 richest billionaires is the same amount as that of the bottom 50 % of the Earth's population.<sup>2</sup> The wealthiest also use the majority of the world's energy resources and contribute the most towards greenhouse gas emissions. For example, according to World Bank statistics, every Norwegian produces 9.2 metric tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> each year, while an Ethiopian produces 0.1 metric tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the world there is probably only one language that we all share: that of the market. Economic development is probably our most effective tool to fight poverty. It is of genuine benefit for the human race. But it is also has a dark side. Our livelihood, the environment, is threatened by an economic development that is unsustainable, based on endless growth and consumption.

The Christian faith clearly affirms that the accumulation of material wealth should not be the central aim of life. People are to use wisely the gifts of creation to yield ample food, clothing, health, and other benefits. It is obvious that the great advance in wealth over the past century has taken place only in a small proportion of countries. The rest of the world still struggles with poverty.

This poses a great challenge for many of us. Mahatma Gandhi once said wisely: *"The earth has enough for our need, but not for our greed"*. Another perspective, as the New Testament advises us, is "godliness with contentment":

2

*Wealth: Having it all and wanting more.*  
Oxfam Issue Briefing, January 2015.  
[https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file\\_attachments/ib-wealth-having-all-wanting-more-190115-en.pdf](https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/ib-wealth-having-all-wanting-more-190115-en.pdf)

3

The statistics are published online:  
<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.CO2E.PC>

*“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many grieves.”*

1 Timothy 6:6–11

These words are challenging. Those of us who possess the basic necessities of life, should be content with what we have. There is a strong imperative within these lines. The virtues of godliness and contentment have led thousands of Christians to stand in the forefront in society with commitment and concern for contemporary community development and socio-political renewal.

### **Average per capita emission**

(carbon tons/year) in the countries of all participants in 2014



We are all stewards of God’s property. How we relate to the created earth and its resources is also part of how we relate to God. In the spirit of contentment, we need to answer these questions: How much is enough? How many material goods do we need to live a good and dignified life? Where is the threshold, after which economic empowerment ceases to enhance our quality of life?

Another way to read 1 Timothy 6:6–11 is to observe that those who contribute most to progress in the world are those that require the least to themselves.

The Scripture states that we are stewards of God’s creation. A Christian perspective on God’s relation to the creation necessarily informs our understanding of humanity’s relationship to the world of which we live. When our levels of consumption compromise the wellbeing of others, we are disrespectful to our neighbour and to God. The danger of economic freedom and material wealth, moreover, is how easily we become isolated from fellow human beings, from creation and from God.

Translated into contemporary language, *responsible/accountable consumption* may be the key for sustainable management of our natural resources. There is a limit to how many natural resources we can extract, especially non-renewable energy resources. This requires a balanced approach towards consumption of energy as well as a conscious concern about sisters and brothers under more difficult and marginal conditions, and the generations that are to follow us.

### **Getting from “why” to “how”**

More than ever it is essential that the concept of Christian stewardship drive us to understand that a wounded earth calls for a serving church. Urgent action is needed to restore and protect the environment. The present chapter has focused primarily on why the church has a role to play in addressing climate change, and how the message of stewardship is at the core of the church’s mission. However, faced with the climate crises of today our Christian response must be more than committed hearts and minds, it needs our serving hands.

With this in mind, we now turn our attention to the question of “how”, by way of examining case studies and examples of the work carried out by the participating organizations/churches of the Environmental Competence Building Program in the respective countries.





# III

## case studies

The following chapter highlights examples and initiatives from the various countries represented among the participants in the Environmental Competence Building Program. The examples are listed country-wise.

## **Madagascar**

Local organization:

Malagasy Lutheran Church



## **Environmental degradation due to intensive farming**

### **The problem**

Intensive agriculture is a farming system characterized by extensive use of input to maximize yield. Food insecurity combined with lack of arable land forces farmers into intensive but unsustainable farming techniques. This leads to reduction of fertility and environmental degradation, which in turn leads to a decline in crop yields. To compensate the loss, farmers use even more intensive methods. They become trapped in a vicious circle of short term, non-durable agriculture.

Some areas become completely infertile due to the massive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides for farming. Farmers are not accustomed to preserving the environment with the use of organic fertilizer, because this does not appear to have an immediate effect on production quantities, despite a good quality crop production.

### **Mitigation efforts**

The promotion of intensification rice systems and cassava, and the use of basket compost, have been the main activities undertaken in society to improve crop production. With the use of basket compost on cassava, crops have doubled.

Through multiple activities, such as the edition of a technical newspaper, training of farmers and on-farm demonstration against the use of crop pests, farmers are increasingly adopting modern and more sustainable techniques. The main intervention has been to advocate for organic agriculture practices, notably the use of organic fertilizers. Learning about the long-term benefits, farmers tend to change their usual practice and use organic fertilizers at a large scale, even if the price is higher than for chemical products.

Case provided by the Malagasy Lutheran Church

## **Harmful slash-and-burn traditions**

### **The problem**

Land degradation has to do with the physical, chemical and biological transformation of soil, which involves the deterioration of its functions. Often, degradation is due to human exploitation and climatic changes. The practice of traditional techniques like slash-and-burn and bush fires limits efficient use of the land. In addition, non-compliance to the practice of contour line agriculture, and the absence of organic fertilizers to enhance soil structure, are major causes for soil degradation.

Lack of knowledge and techniques keeps people to practice Tavy, or slash-and-burn. This practice gradually leads to different forms of erosion and physical-chemical soil degradation. People still believe that slash-and-burn is a practice that can provide good quality fertilization and reduce pest attacks as well. This is often down to lack of technical support, especially in the countryside. Even though composting have been promoted some places, the techniques are not yet mastered by farmers. Accepting and adopting new methods takes time.



**Mitigation efforts**

To overcome the situation, some technical measures have been promoted, mainly the technique of defense and soil restoration and the use of organic farming techniques. Soil and forest protection legislation has also been promoted. Rangers and community-based organizations have been working to enforce the legislation. Rural development projects sensitize people, promote environmental protection and improved soil quality through awareness-raising, tree planting, and the promotion of modern techniques to avoid slash-and-burn practices.

The establishment of local committees for awareness raising and training of farmers has been particularly effective in promoting land conservation. Trained farmers set up demonstration plots, encouraging their neighbors to follow them. Many farmers plant trees and set up tree nurseries. Village nurseries are strongly encouraged by several rural development projects. Grassroots communities are trained to implement legislation and technical measures for the soil and forest resource conservation. Some become volunteers to transfer competence to their neighbors. For a long time, land degradation has been an important issue for the environment. However, actions have been undertaken and some significant results have emerged.

Case provided by the Malagasy Lutheran Church

## **Norway**

Local organizations:

Areopagos

Digni

Normisjon

Norwegian Mission Society



# **Mobilizing the Christian grassroots to act on climate change**

## **The problem**

Norway has a broad “green movement”, which raises awareness about climate change and environmental care – a movement that comprises environment conservation organizations, aid and development NGOs, academics, artists, labor unions, and indeed churches.

However, until recently, many free churches and mission societies, which make up a large share of the Christian landscape in Norway, has shown little interest in environmental issues. Some even displayed hostile attitudes towards Christian engagement to address climate change. At the grassroots level, there is widespread skepticism towards making the fight against climate change a task for the church, fearing it will steal focus from the “real mission” of the church – to win souls for Christ.

## **Mitigation efforts**

In an unprecedented move to address the lack of engagement in these circles, the leaders of the three largest mission societies in Norway (The Norwegian Mission Society, Normisjon and The Norwegian Lutheran Mission) went together to formulate an opinion piece, which was published in the Norwegian Christian daily newspaper, Vårt Land. The piece was written as a letter offering guidance to fellow Christians on why the church should concern itself with addressing issues of environmental degradation and climate change, arguing that this was central to the mission of the church.

The letter has received widespread attention (it has even been made the subject of academic analysis). The newspaper Vårt Land followed up the initiative by quizzing leaders in the free churches and mission societies about their stance on church and climate engagement, a vast majority of which turned out to be very supportive about church-lead climate engagement. It is fair to say that the initiative from the three mission leaders has raised awareness about climate action and created a space for other church leaders to voice their concern.

Much work remains to lift the agenda at the grassroots level. Bridging the gap between the convinced and the unconvinced, between the leadership and the grassroots, remains a challenge – but a clear stance from well-respected leaders has been an important step in the right direction.

Case provided by the Norwegian participating organizations



## **India**

Local organizations:

Lutheran World Service India Trust (LWSIT)

Evangelical Social Action Forum (ESAF)

# **Fighting environmental degradation on multiple fronts**

## **The problems**

All Lutheran World Service India Trust's operational communities are victims of environment degradation. The steady and rapid depletion of natural resources such as water, soil and air have led to the progressive destruction of wildlife and ecosystems, and has rendered marginalised communities vulnerable to the onslaught of natural calamities.

There are various instances and human activities, which have contributed to environmental degradation over the years. Mindless deforestation to satiate urban population and overexploitation of soil through indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers. Extensive mushrooming of stone quarries and stone crusher units in tribal dominant areas have left the land barren and hollow. Biological as well as chemical contamination of surface water, fast depletion of ground water level and the adverse effects of floods, tsunamis and drought. These are just some of the effects of environment degradation has had on the marginalised communities.

## **Mitigation efforts**

Lutheran World Service India Trust has undertaken a number of measures to combat environment degradation. The following are some examples of mitigation efforts:

Massive plantation has been undertaken with the partner communities across LWSIT operational areas. Consultations are held with all the stakeholders in the communities. Areas which need afforestation are identified, and the partner communities decide on what species of trees to be planted. On a number of occasions, the government forest department has supported LWSIT with saplings and technical expertise. Mangrove has been



planted to safeguard coastal communities from the steady rise of sea level. Coastal bioshields, sand dune plantation and wind breaker plantations have been effective to combat the hazards of environment degradation (soil/sand erosion) and to reduce the intensity of cyclonic storm, which otherwise would destroy the environment. On top of this, they function as carbon absorbing and oxygen releasing reservoirs.

Land development has been an effective tool to reclaim land for agriculture. This technique has been implemented across LWSIT operational areas with positive response from the communities. Through this endeavour, effective utilization of land has been maximized while also providing financial stability to the families. The introduction of orchard plantations have not only instilled a sense of ownership and unity amongst self-help group members; it has also checked selling of land to stone quarry owners. Also, it has effectively stopped the mortgaging of land.

Continuous contour trenches are trenches dug along the contour lines which retain water flowing along the slope. Such contours are dug at regular intervals along plots of partner communities. Partner communities have been motivated to convert vacant land into orchards, which can be economically viable for the community. The continuous contour trenches have enhanced water balance. They also help retain top and fertile soil. They effectively recharge ground water and improve ground water table.

Water harvesting structures have been promoted and is linked with a flagship programme of the government, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in India, focusing on micro-irrigation methods and individual/community farm ponds. Studies have been conducted on drought and flood resistance crops. Sustainable soil, water and crop management practices have been promoted through watershed development programs. Research on climate change has also been undertaken.

Solar energy has been promoted extensively in all the partner communities, most of which are off-grid. Solar pumps have been introduced in communities to facilitate cultivation, and the partner



communities are sensitised and motivated to use them in all their agricultural fields. Smokeless ovens have also been introduced in the partner communities who responded positively to them. They also contribute towards the safeguarding of the environment. The increase usage of solar power lights and smokeless ovens instead of kerosene and firewood have contributed to safeguard the environment. It has also caused a decrease in the occurrence of respiratory diseases in the families. Particularly women and children spend more time at home.

Construction of embankments, which checks saline water from the sea to enter the agricultural lands have been carried out. Saline and drought tolerant seeds have been distributed flood and draught prone communities. Communities are also encouraged to store indigenous varieties of seeds, which are resistant to the onslaught of nature.

AZEECON (Asian Zone Emergency and Environment Co-operation Network) a regional network of The Lutheran World Federation country and associate programs is a platform through which information is disseminated on environmental issues and climate change adaptation. LWSIT is a founding member of this regional network. Many Exchange, Exposure and Training Visits (EETV) have been organised on emergency and environmental issues.

The implementation of these efforts has had significant impact over the years. The communities are keen to contribute towards the improvement of the environment. The various research studies undertaken have helped LWSIT to better plan and implement environment related programs. Likeminded NGOs are invited to learn from our experiences and studies.

Case provided by Lutheran World Service India Trust

## Household sanitary latrines to decrease water pollution

### The problem

According to a report jointly prepared by WHO and UNICEF,<sup>1</sup> 597 million people still defecate in the open in India. This practice contributes to biological contamination of water, leading to

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization and UNICEF (2014). Progress on sanitation and drinking-water – 2014 update.

water pollution. In rural areas, another factor contributing to water pollution is chemical contamination due to the rampant and indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers. The careless disposals of plastics into the water have been detrimental for marine species in the country. Almost all LWSIT operational communities are affected by water pollution, which is detrimental to their health.

People are not aware of the ill effects of open defecation. Moreover, it takes substantial time to change the behavioral pattern of a human being. Hence, with mass awareness campaigns it is hopeful that the change will come about soon. The urge for commercial exploitation of land has led to discriminate use of chemical fertilizers in the country.

### **Mitigation efforts**

The promotion of household sanitary latrines have not only checked open defecation in the communities, but also ensured the dignity and safety of women and children. Earlier, with no sanitary toilets, the women (especially) had to wait for dusk to defecate. Quite often they were bitten by deadly insects and were victims of violence. With sanitary toilets near their huts, they are ensured better health, safety and dignity.

The use of organic fertilizers have not only checked chemical contamination but have also proved beneficial to the partner communities in more than one way. With the use of organic fertilizers the partner communities are having good yield of crops, which in turn is ensuring financial benefits.

Water filters enable marginalized partner communities to access safe drinking water. This has to a large extent checked waterborne diseases, which the partner communities experienced over time due to contaminated water.

High raise tubewell platforms (with access ramps for pregnant women, elderly and disabled people) in flood prone areas have ensured that the communities do not fall prey to contaminated water during floods. Access to safe drinking water has been instrumental in contributing towards right to health.

Case provided by Lutheran World Service India Trust

# The stone mining and crushing industry

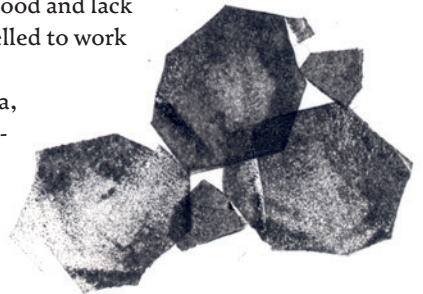
## The problem

The state Jharkhand has been labeled the richest in India due to its minerals and mining resources. It has about 80 % of the coal and 100 % of the cooking coal, 50 % of the bauxite and petite and 40 % of the iron reserves in India. But it also has the poorest living conditions compared with the other states, and the stone quarrying and crushing is impacting negatively on the environment and the people. Landscapes have been widely altered over a large region because of abandoned mining pits. Local streams and springs have dried up. Much land has been rendered uncultivable due to large-scale soil erosion, accumulation of sand and the formation of gullies. The reduction of cultivable areas together with diversion of agricultural and forests to other uses, means pressure on the livelihoods of the communities has increased.

The proliferation of stone quarries and stone crushers has brought untold misery to the people. Stone dust spread into the communities and along the nearby fields, reduced their fertility. Workers in the quarries and people living nearby catch lung diseases like silicosis, TB and asthma. Trees, plants, houses and all other objects, even food, are covered with layers and layers of dust. Irrespective of environment protection laws, owners do not take any pollution control measures.

In this largely mono-cropped area, agriculture is the primary source of livelihood. Operational holdings are small, productivity low, soils poor and the farmers lack appropriate know-how. The area is drought prone, and the communities face chronic food insecurity. Without alternative sources of livelihood and lack of employment opportunities, people are compelled to work in the quarry areas or migrate in search of jobs.

With the development in the modern India, demand has risen for the materials used in construction. Due to the availability of best quality of stones in both Jharkhand and West Bengal, stone mining and crushing units have mushroomed. The chance to reap high profits with



minimum investment has attracted many businesspeople and entrepreneurs. Most units have been established without proper legal approval. Irrespective of the approval, the mode of operation of the mining and crushing units have remained the same. Violation of labor laws, violation of environmental regulations and poor technology for production is the norm.

The objective of higher profit is predicated on environmental carelessness. The ruthless opencast mining is operated using traditional techniques, which endangers the life of workers and degrades the environment.

### **Mitigation efforts**

The first and foremost action to protect the depleting environment is afforestation. ESAF has promoted mass plantation. Bamboo saplings are raised and planted in the wastelands. Orchards and gardens with fruit and other economic plants are developed. The growing of bamboo also supports the economy through the development of the traditional skills of bamboo craft artisans. The plants emit oxygen to keep the atmosphere clean. Folk songs in local language communicating the urgency of preserving our environment are also produced.

**Efficient use of resource and energy:** Use of bamboo as raw material is promoted, as it is one of the most re-generable natural resources. The indigenous knowledge of the local communities are valuable in this process. Products are designed in a way to give more output using lesser raw materials.

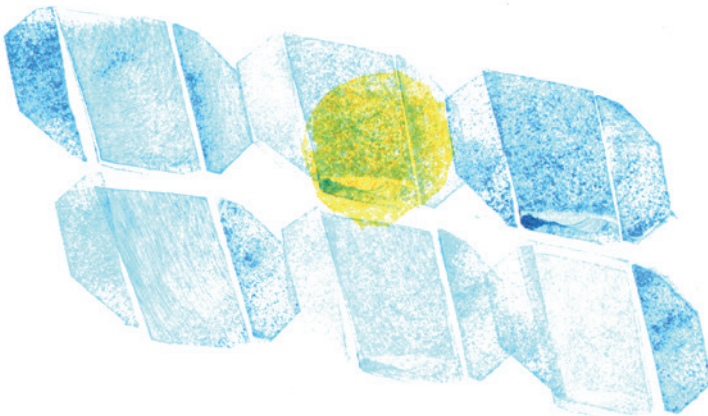
**Adoption of environment friendly technologies:** ESAF's projects focus on innovation of new ideas to reduce the dust in the crushing unit. Project staff has engaged in discussions with some crusher owners for upgrading their units to reduce the dust.

**Awareness among community members:** The sole stewards of the environment are the community members as it is part of their life and culture. The project tries to create awareness among the people for preservation of the environment. In regular meetings, the importance of the environmental care is communicated. Multimedia materials in native language are distributed to raise awareness.

Overall, these efforts lead to decreased air pollution and increased carbon absorption. Alternative livelihood programs

help the communities to adapt to environment friendly livelihood options as an alternative to stone crushing. The awareness level of community members has increased manifold and they now insist on water sprinkling in and around the crushing units to produce less dust. Unused land is converted to green cover and protected from further mining activities. This increases the green cover and reduces the environment degradation. Health awareness and accessibility helps the communities to be aware of health hazards of large-scale mining and crushing activities. Also, the project provides timely health care services.

Case provided by Evangelical Social Action Forum



## Renewable solar energy

### The problem

Around 400 million Indians do not have access to electricity. After food, the highest expenditure of rural families is lighting.

India is faced with the challenge of sustaining its rapid economic growth while dealing with the global threat of climate change. The impacts of climate change prove particularly severe for women. With climate change, there is increasing scarcity of water, reduction in yields of forest biomass and increased risks to health of women, children and the elderly.

Energy is inextricably linked with development needs. When people lack access to energy, they lose an opportunity to generate

income or study, and face constant health and safety concerns. For low-income people, energy is more than just a light at night, or a way to cook a meal.

### **Mitigation efforts**

Solar lanterns powered by solar energy can replace kerosene, leading to improved health of the people and the environment.

India is a tropical country where sunshine is available for longer hours per day and in great intensity. The country receives about 5,000 trillion kWh/year equivalent energy through solar radiation. In most parts of India, clear and sunny weather is experienced 250–300 days a year. The average solar insolation incident over India is about 5.5 kWh/m<sup>2</sup> per day. Just 1% of India's land area can meet India's entire electricity requirements by 2030.

Lutheran World Service India Trust (LWSIT) provides solar lanterns and solar lamps to villages that are inaccessible, remote and non-electrified.

Multiple benefits are being reaped at household level by using solar lights, these includes; first generation learners able to study after sunset, women can cook meals in light, avoiding inhaling of harmful gases and saving costs on buying kerosene. Mobile phones can be recharged. Solar power is an alternative source of energy for the poor and marginalized. It is literally a ray of hope amidst complete darkness in people's lives in remote areas.

Case provided by Lutheran World Service India Trust

## Ethiopia

Local organization:

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus - Development and Social Services Commission (EECMY-DASSC)



## Forest protection

### The problem

In Ethiopia, existing forests are continuously threatened by human activities such as agricultural encroachment, forest logging, firewood for domestic consumption and wild fire. According to an extensive survey by FAO (2010), the deforestation rate of Ethiopia has remained at the range of 140,000 ha per year in the period 1990–2010.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the country is considered as one of the most environmentally degraded countries in the world.

Deforestation and forest degradation, driven by logging (which is often illegal), disrupt the ecosystem. It destroys wildlife habitats and threatens biodiversity. Forests play an important role in climate systems, and consequently they are crucial in both mitigating and adapting to climate change. Most importantly, the logging adversely affect the livelihood of the communities that depend on the forest. Moreover, it worsen the soil erosion and eventually result in low agricultural production and productivity. Farmers suffer from poverty as well as food insecurity and cannot bear the costs of forest degradation.

The causes of illegal logging in Ethiopia are manifold. Poor forest management is often due to weak governance and lack of funding. This results in a weak law enforcement and coordination among the concerned sectors.

<sup>2</sup> FAO (2010), The Global Forest Resources Assessment.

The current forest laws recognize the need to ensure that communities residing within the state and regional forests benefit from development of the forests. However, although the legal framework is in place, for instance in case of investment, the law is not fully developed nor implemented, making it difficult to safeguard proper management and utilization of the remaining forest.

It is difficult to protect the forests due to delays in establishing the legal status of the forests, operational rules, clear guidelines and other important issues. In the meantime, vast forest areas are cleared for large-scale agricultural projects.

### **Mitigation efforts**

Addressing environmental degradation due to the mismanagement of forest resources in general, and logging in particular, requires the development of appropriate management systems and capacity building in the local communities to save, protect and develop forest resources. Considerable efforts have been made in this regard through the government, non governmental organizations and the local communities during the last decade, among them the EECMY-DASSC.

The EECMY-DASSC has initiated a participatory approach to forest ownership and management with the support of international donor agencies. Forest user groups are established and exclusive rights for forest use are granted to the members of the group. The principal idea behind the participatory forest management is that such rights are a crucial incentive for sustainable management. In the contract, the boundaries of the forest are defined. The ownership is confirmed and conditions for usage and income generating activities agreed upon. This helps to discourage illegal forestry activities, such as destructive commercial logging. The communities establish institutions to ensure appropriate management and utilization of the forest resources.

Also, increasing public awareness through education about forestry and natural resource conservation has been one of the important activities. People are taught the benefits of forests and encouraged to plant more trees and protect what they have by delineating the remaining patches of forests.



As a consequence of these interventions, people's awareness towards natural resource conservation and their perception and attitude towards natural resources has improved. Existing forests are protected, incidences of illegal logging reduced and the microclimate has improved. Also, habitats for wildlife have been reestablished, endogenous forest trees have been rejuvenated, and bare land has been recovered with trees and soil erosion reduced as a result of afforestation. Finally, the income of the participating communities have increased and contributed to improvement of their living condition.

Case provided by EECMY-DASSC

## Population pressure on natural resources

### The problem

Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa next to Nigeria. Most of its population (about 85 %) are smallholder farmers, earning their living mainly from mixed farming – keeping livestock and producing crops. Natural resources, agriculture and human activities are highly interrelated in Ethiopia.

The major causes of natural resources degradation in Ethiopia are biophysical and human factors. The physical factors include topography, climate, and nature of the soil, etc. The underlying human factors of the resource degradation are inappropriate use of land and poor land management practices. Overgrazing of livestock, termite infestation, human population pressure and land tenure are all part of the problem, as well as low agricultural output prices, which discourages the adoption of innovative soil and water conservation measures and encourages resource depletion.

The degradation of natural resources results in deterioration of the productive capacity of the land, which is the main resources for smallholder farmers who are mainly dependent on agriculture. As a consequence, many farmers are migrating in search of fertile land. In Ethiopia, migration to the lowlands has its own burdens such as health problems due to exposure to malaria, work burden

and conflicts over resources with the community in the areas and deletion of the resources.

The overall impact of the environmental degradation is food insecurity and the disruption of the livelihood of the people. Therefore, reversing natural resources degradation is crucial to maintaining peace among the communities and ensure sustainable socio-economic development of the country.

### **Mitigation efforts**

On top of the efforts of the Ethiopian government, civil society organizations have played a significant role in mobilizing local communities to embark on natural resources conservation. Here, two resources management efforts serve as examples.

**Land rehabilitation in Western Oromia:** To address natural resources degradation problems, the EECMY-DASSC implemented various rural development projects with major focus on natural resources conservation in various locations.

The rural communities in the intervention areas actively participated in the natural resources management (land rehabilitation and conservation). The farmers largely used available local materials, indigenous knowledge and skills on top of the technical guidance and material support mainly from NGOs. They delineated the degraded/abandoned lands for rehabilitation and prohibited interference of humans and animals. Moreover, different kinds of conservation structures integrating biological conservation activities such as agroforestry and tree plantation were promoted. The active rehabilitation strategies proved to be more effective than passive approaches as it speeds up the rejuvenation of the natural resources.

**Participatory forest management in Mejengir:** The Mejengir community is one of the minority people groups that live in the South-Western part of Ethiopia. The life of this people is closely linked with the forest that they inhabit. To develop and apply locally adapted sustainable forest conservation and utilization, the participatory forest management approach has been applied and significant achievement have been observed in the improvement of the livelihoods of the community and the natural resources conservation. For example, forest management groups have started to challenge the crime of deforestation using their legal

institutions. The forest is demarcated and the expansion of farmland is blocked. Alternative income sources, such as eco-tourism and the production of non-timber products, are also adopted.

Due to the increase of biomass feeding livestock has become easier, while soil fertility has improved. All in all, the environment is being restored, the micro climate is moderated and wild animals are returning. The agricultural productivity of the land has improved and positive changes have been observed in the livelihood of the community.

Case provided by EECMY-DASSC

## **China**

Local organizations:  
China Christian Council  
Amity Foundation

# **Inadequate access to safe drinking water**

## **The problem**

Water shortage involves inadequate access to safe drinking water, inadequate access to water for sanitation and waste disposal, groundwater overdraft, overuse and pollution of water resources, and regional conflicts over scarce water resources.

With the fast development of economy and society, China has almost accounted for all these manifestations. The impact is felt at several levels. When water is drying up, the poor living in the remote and mountainous areas (usually in the western part of China) have to walk long distances to get to the water points. Conflicts over water allocation are common among villages. Because of water contamination, the safety of drinking water and the health of current and future generations cannot be ensured. Many people's diseases result from unclean water; vegetables and livestock irrigated with or fed by contaminated water could absorb toxic elements, which in turn is harmful when consumed by people. Also underground water draining causes buildings to lean and sink.

There are many reasons for the current situation, like construction of dams, the emission of unprocessed industrial water and overexploitation of the underground water – all consequences of the fast-paced development of economy and society. The balance of nature is broken and it is breaking down the people as well.

## **Mitigation efforts**

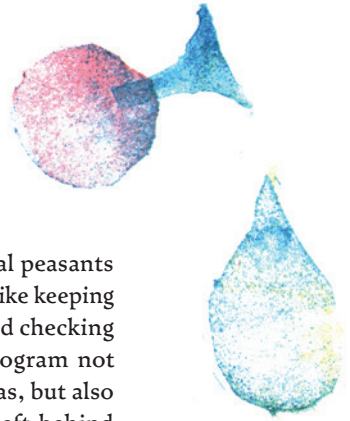
In Gansu Province, desertification is a serious issue. Rainfall water is immediately washed away and there is no underground water. Utilizing rainfall water is important for production and living in the mountainous and rural areas.

Consequently, CCC has cooperated with the Science and Technology Bureau of Dingxi City on a solution, which includes the construction and maintenance of water cisterns to help local people collect rainfall water. Firstly, we offered trainings on how to build the cisterns. After construction, the local peasants were also taught sanitation and maintenance practices, like keeping the cisterns clean and sanitized at regular intervals and checking the operating condition after fixed periods. The program not only solved the problem of water shortage in local areas, but also alleviated the housework and farm work burden on left-behind women and senior citizens, who no longer need to collect water from faraway places.

The CCC has also built water purification systems in communities affected by floods and earthquakes. Moreover, the church teaches believers and people in the communities to save water in order not to overexploit natural resources.

While addressing water shortage in local areas is a meaningful task for the church, we also need to address the root of the problem. Therefore, the church advocates sustainable habits and awareness of using and saving water fairly.

Case provided by China Christian Council



## Energy conservation

### The problem

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), China and USA are the two most energy consuming countries in the world. In the 2012 IEA statistics,<sup>3</sup> China accounted for 21 % of the whole world's energy consumption. In 2035, the share is estimated to be about 25 %. However, owing to China's large population, the per capita energy consumption is relatively low. Besides, economic activities in China tend to be concentrated around populous areas, with consequences for the configuration of energy delivery. In remote, mountainous and rural areas, people often find themselves without sufficient access to energy, if any access at all.

The energy shortage poses difficult dilemmas for China. On the one hand, the fast development of the economy and society

<sup>3</sup> The statistics are searchable online and may be accessed on <http://www.iea.org/statistics/statisticssearch/>

leads to an insatiable demand for more energy. This fast growth has severe effects on the environment. The development is also very centralized. People living in rural areas cannot obtain enough energy, and are burning straw and coal to compensate, with adverse effects on the environment and health. The idea of developing and applying renewable energy has not gained a foothold in these areas.

### **Mitigation efforts**

In the Wei Ning County of Guizhou Province, CCC cooperated with the local government to support the construction of biogas systems to satisfy energy demands.

Wei Ning County is a mountainous and remote area, home to many ethnic minorities (like Yi, Miao and Hui). The people were not aware that the waste from livestock could be a renewable energy source, contributing to better a better livelihood. Together with local government CCC bought construction materials for the first 100 biogas units and taught the local communities how to build special toilets, methane tanks, appliances in the stables and how to install all the parts into a functional system. Among the 100 units, some were households living on raising livestock while some farm collectives. The methane system helped to solve the energy shortage problem, and the introduction of toilets brought attention to hygiene issues.

Moreover, as sunlight is abundant in the highlands of Western China, the church has encouraged local communities to use solar cookers to boil rice and water, saving costs on timber and coal and reducing emissions. The church actively promotes such ideas and practices of energy conservation, which may contribute to alleviate energy shortage and promote reconciliation between humans and nature.

Case provided by China Christian Council



## **Waste**

### **The problem**

China now generates over a quarter of the world's garbage, at least 250 million tons annually. Waste is a serious problem, with lack of landfilling space and problems and pollution caused by unsorted

treatment of different waste types, including municipal solid waste or household trash and commercial waste, hazardous waste, wastewater, radioactive waste, bio-medical waste, electronic waste, etc.

Landfilling and incineration is the most common way to dispose of waste in China. However, landfill constructions are fiercely debated, as they are considered a major health hazard due to the toxic gas emitted in waste burning processes. The quick-fix of waste burning has also hindered the advance of a more environment friendly waste disposal system. People seldom consider reusing and recycling. In rural China, plastic and sewage has become a dreadful problem that needs to be solved. Garbage and sewage is discharged into rivers, lakes and the surrounding environment as one pleases.

During the past three decades of fast development, China has clearly embraced consumerism. Consumerism has boosted the Chinese economy, even during the world economic crisis. However, more and more waste is produced during the process of production and consumption, exceeding the capacity of the waste management facilities. In industrial areas, illegal gas emission and waste dump without proper treatment is common. Modern farming habits produce enormous amounts of chemical waste.

### **Mitigation efforts**

The government in China has issued tough new standards for pollution from waste incinerators, which came into effect in July 2014.<sup>4</sup> In the cities, different actions were taken to ease the waste problem. For example, in Guangzhou, Southern China, residents has paid for the collection of household waste since July 2012, while in Nanjing, a waste collection fee is included in water fee. This has helped ease the problem. But in rural areas, few actions were taken.

Amity Foundation has introduced the idea of environment protection by promoting green agriculture and waste disposal system in rural areas in Hunan Province and Guangxi Autonomous Region. Second hand markets have been arranged annually with different churches in Jiangsu to promote the idea of reuse and environment protection in local churches.

In 2012, Amity Foundation also promoted local churches in Hunan to participate in the Joint Green Action of Protection

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See for example  
<https://www.chinadialogue.net/article/show/single/en/7150-China-s-waste-incineration-deadlock>

of Mother Xiangjiang River. Taking a verse from the Bible as the slogan, “do not harm the land or the sea or the trees ...” (Revelation 7:3), over 100,000 believers and volunteers from 100 churches in five cities located along the Xiangjiang River took part in a garbage collection initiative along the river banks on the Saturday before Thanksgiving Day.

In addition to the work in rural areas and with church, education and awareness building for university students and residents in Nanjing are implemented every year, addressing the problem with consumption.

The enforcement of new regulations and standards for waste treatment and actions to reduce waste in urban areas have shown to be effective so far, which helped control the incineration of waste and the reduce the amount of waste increasing rate by 5–10 % each year.

As for Amity Foundation’s projects, the advocacy of environment protection has had a strong influence in universities and colleges. Many students environment associations have been established, which have organized themselves to reach more students and residents in communities near the campuses. In the churches’ environment protection projects, government officials from different departments, such as the Environment Protection Bureau and the Religious Affair Bureau, and non-Christian volunteers have participated.

Case provided by Amity Foundation





