



Helping faith groups develop environmental programmes based on their core beliefs, teachings and practices
Strategic Review, May 2016



Our vision

People, through their beliefs, treading more gently upon the Earth.

Our mission

To help faith groups develop environmental programmes based on their core beliefs, teachings and practices.

To help the religions link with key environmental groups – creating powerful alliances between religions and conservation groups.

ARC Strategic Review

This Strategic Review was conducted in May 2016 with members of ARC's executive team and trustee Glyn Davies. The purpose was to take stock of ARC's position, 21 years after we were founded, and to determine the charity's future strategic direction.

Background

ARC is a secular body that helps the major religions of the world to develop their own environmental programmes, based on their own core teachings, beliefs and practices. It was founded in 1995 by HRH Prince Philip and now works with 12 major religions through the key traditions within each faith. They are:

- Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism
- Daoism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism
- Shintoism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism



Photograph by Partha Sarathi Sahaana



Why work with faiths?

- Faiths are the largest organised sector of civil society worldwide, with 84% of people saying they belong to a faith.
- Faiths are involved in at least 50% of schools worldwide.
- Faiths are among the largest investment blocks on the global stock market.
- Faiths own 7-8% of the world's habitable land surface and have influence over another 15% considered sacred.
- Faiths are trusted as a leading source of wisdom, information and authority in many parts of the world.

Introduction

ARC Secretary General, Martin Palmer

ARC was founded by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh to be a secular organisation dedicated to building partnerships between the major faiths of the world and the key secular conservation and environmental organisations.

ARC is not an inter-faith body. It works with each specific faith tradition to help them contribute in their unique way to protecting our living planet. It arose from the earlier work that prince Philip and ARC's co-founder Martin Palmer had done in WWF International aimed at awakening an environmental awareness within the great faiths. This started in 1986 and ARC was founded in 1995.

When WWF International asked the major faiths in 1986 what projects they had on protecting the environment there were just two – a Christian one in Portugal and a Buddhist one in Thailand. The environment crisis had not yet entered

'The earth is
the Lord's, and
everything in it,
the world, and
all who live in it.'

– Psalm 24:1

'It is He
who created
everything on
the earth for
you.'

– Qur'an 2:29

'If you believe in
God, which is
what Christians
are supposed to
do, then you
should feel a
responsibility
to care for His
Creation.'

– HRH The Prince Philip,
ARC's founder

the general discourse of the faiths except in a few rather academic arenas. Practical action was almost unknown and no secular group had any working relationship with any of the faiths.

By 2009 the UN declared that in part through ARC's work, the faiths were now the largest civil society movement on the environment. Every major faith now has full time programmes and staff working on their ecological footprint, environmental advocacy and practical programmes.

As a result, secular groups from the UN, the World Bank, to The Nature Conservancy, various national WWFs and others, have programmes working with the faiths. In 2016 at the UN Habitat conference setting the path for the journey for sustainable cities to 2030, faith was added as the fifth pillar of developing such cities.

When ARC was founded in 1995 it was agreed that after 19 years we would assess whether we still needed to be in

existence as we have seen too many NGOs go on being just in order to go on being funded.

So from 2012 to 2014 we reviewed where we had been successful and where we had not. As a result, in 2015 we spun off a number of independent groups, for example, Faith in Water (FiW). This process took time but by 2015 FiW had achieved independent status as a charity. However, for a while ARC is providing support as it finds its feet. For example, many funders want two or three years of audited accounts. None of the new groups have these yet so ARC sometimes acts as a guarantor or grant holder.

Post the initial changes brought about in 2015, ARC's trustees felt the need to assess where ARC should now go. Hence the review which took place in 2016 and resulted in a formal paper being presented to our trustees in December 2016. This is now shaping ARC's activities as we move forward.

'Untrammelled in
the midst of men,
the Earth, adorned
with heights and
gentle slopes and
plains, bears plants
and herbs of various
healing powers.
May she spread
wide for us,
afford us joy!

– Atharva Veda, XII.1.2

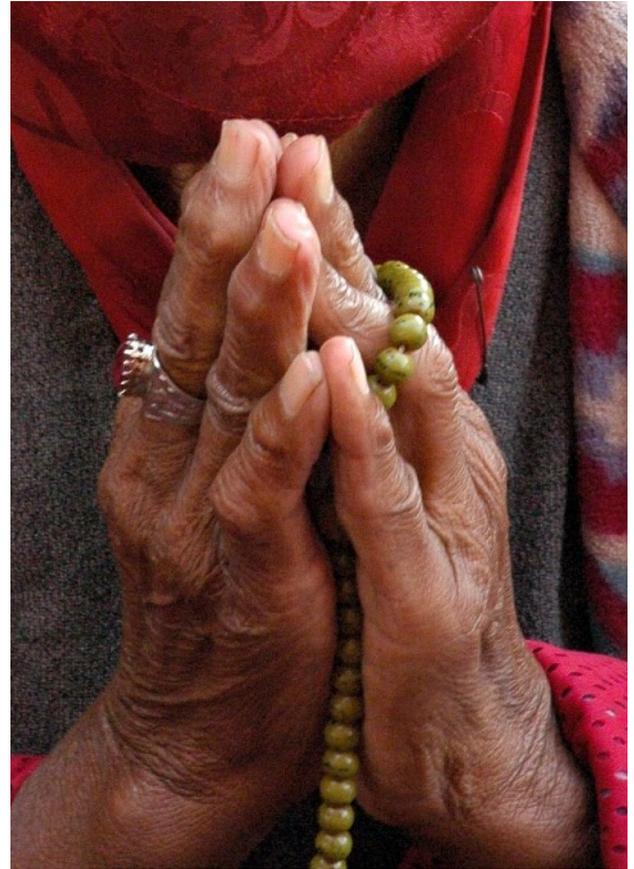


Review conclusions

ARC has played a critical role in bringing faiths to the environmental table. In the two decades since ARC began, all the major faiths have declared the environment to be a faith issue and now have various programmes of practical action on the environment.

However, there is still resistance from some secular groups and a sense in some quarters that the faiths should just preach whatever any environmental group feels is their core message.

There is a widespread ignorance of how faiths work. Few faiths are campaigners. Most are sustainers and the faiths think in generations not in 18-month campaigns. This is still an area where there needs to be development and ARC is looking at setting



In harmony
with the Dao,
The sky is clear
and spacious,
The earth is
solid and full,
All creatures
flourish together,
Content with
the way they are,
Endlessly repeating
themselves,
Endlessly renewed.

— Dao de Jing

up a training centre for secular groups wishing to understand how to work with faiths.

'Brokering' is a foundation phrase but the review concluded that ARC facilitates more than it brokers: It facilitates religion and conservation. Words and phrases still relevant to ARC include:

Inspiring Enabling Training Convening
Advocacy Letting go (not implementing)
Integrating faith values Awareness
Communication Story telling

The key decision arising from the 2016 review was to refocus on ARC's original aim of facilitating the engagement between the religious and secular worlds. For example, in response to a request from the UN and OECD, we are overseeing the engagement of the major faith finance groups in investing in the SDGs. We have returned to consolidating these secular-religious partnerships.

ARC achieves its vision by

Brokering partnerships

- Using and expanding on ARC's unique knowledge-base and skills, which allows us to interpret the languages of these two worlds, respecting them both, and enabling them to hear each other
- Creating a context in which both groups (faiths and secular bodies) can meet.

Strategic communication

- Developing the stories which illustrate and inspire this process – and communicating them primarily to, with and between the faiths.
- Framing the communications strategy as an instrument of advocacy, to fulfil ARC's vision.

Demonstration projects

- Continuing to develop models – in the form of specific projects – which prove to both parties that this process works.
- Creating relevant networks supporting and sustaining such models over the long term.

- Building exit strategies into the original plans and proposals, so that the projects can continue with a life and motivation of their own.
- Deciding on a limited number of targets and issues, and concentrating on these, rather than being led always by funding.

Events and structures

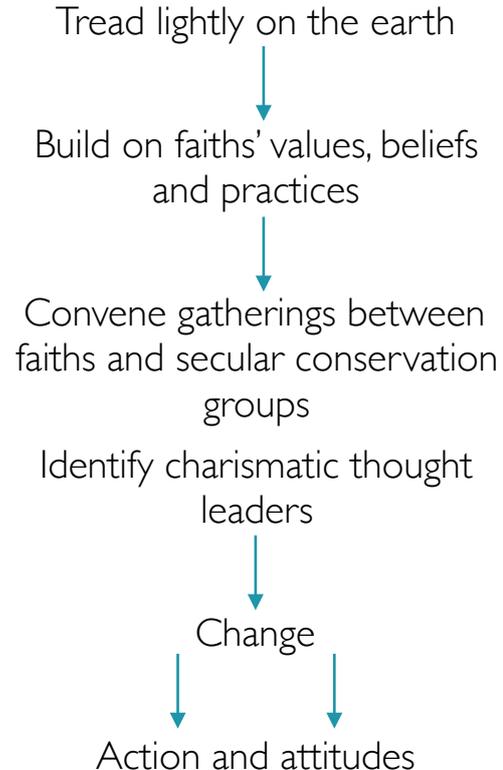
- Creating and facilitate structures which further the vision.
- Holding, supporting and facilitating special events which advocate ARC's vision.

VISION

HOW

ACTION

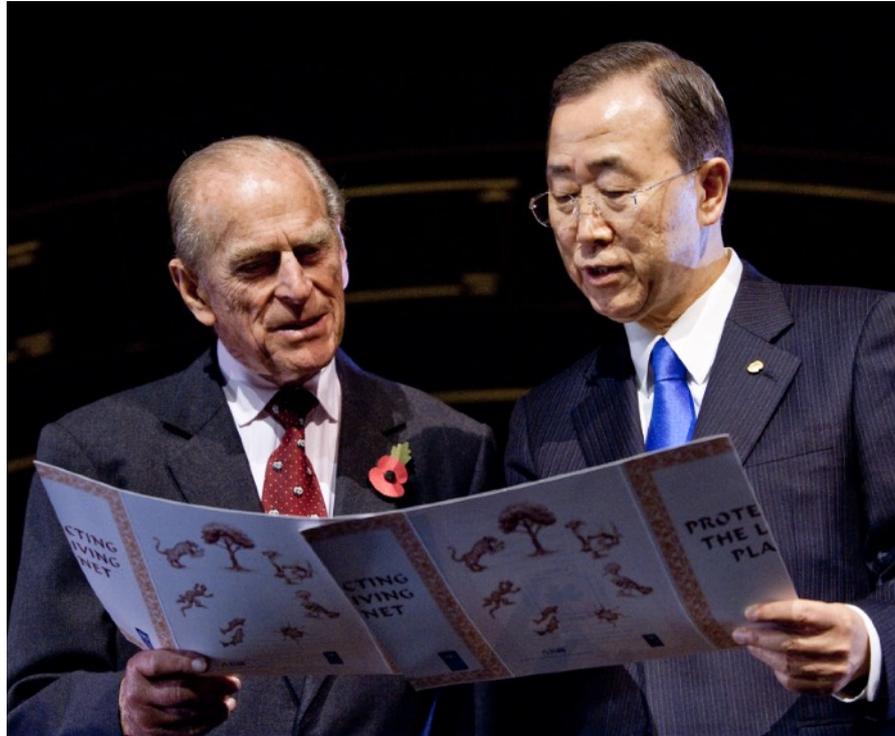
How ARC works





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HRH Prince Philip and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon at the 2009 launch of the faiths' long-term plans to preserve the living planet

