

February 2012

## Hello to everyone from ARC!

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2012. The most important news is that we have had to delay the Nairobi meeting from May to September. We are sorry to do this but there are good reasons for the delay: it follows feedback from some of our partners and we hope it will make it possible for more key people to come to that meeting.

## New date - September 17-19

So please keep **Monday September 17 to Wednesday 19** free; arrivals will be on Monday 17th and the meeting will be held on Tuesday 18 and Wednesday 19. We promise not to change it again!

The meeting will be at the AACC in Nairobi as planned. Many thanks to those of you who sent us details of alternative conference venues for future meetings; we have made a note of them all.



## Seven-year plans

Almost all of your draft long-term plans have come in and we are very excited to see your plans. We have been delighted by the scope and the commitment of the 22 long term plans we have received. By now, you should have received comments and feedback from Alison.

Thank you for all the hard work and commitment that has gone into their production. We look forward to sharing these with potential partners between now and our meeting in September and also to hearing more about them in September in Nairobi.

We hope to showcase your plans on that occasion and to share your best practice in this area. We also ask that between now and September you share your plans with as many people as possible. Can you discuss them with any potential partners, government agencies, environmental groups or other faith groups you are linked with in your own country and internationally?

We are aware that you have all committed to a great deal of wonderful and inspiring action from your existing resources but that you also need additional resources to put your plans into action.

## Welcome to Carol Macauley

Welcome to Carol Macauley who follows in the footsteps of the late Pastor Ibikunle Onasanya of the World of Life Bible Church in Nigeria to draw up a long-term plan on behalf of Pastor Ayo Oritesajfor, President of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria. We are delighted to welcome you to our group, Carol!

## Tragedy in Nigeria

Our thoughts have been with our sisters and brothers in Nigeria who have suffered so much in the recent bombings. Our prayers are with you all.



## Durban climate talks

African faith leaders played a major role at the COP 17 negotiations on climate change in Durban, South Africa, last December, including the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC). It was very uplifting to see religious communities joining together to urge action on climate change, although everyone was disappointed that the talks ended without any real agreement.

Metropolitan Seraphim of Zimbabwe, from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa

(pictured above), who attended our Nairobi workshop, was one of the faith leaders at Durban. He told a workshop that working to care for creation and against climate change and poverty was "a concrete way of building the visible unity of the church".

## Tanzanian religious Leaders

We were very inspired by the statement on climate change issued by Tanzanian religious leaders ahead of the Durban meeting. The statement said that, as human beings "who produce and consume", we all have a responsibility to do something and to be part of the solution for climate justice. The statement also said religious leaders have to set the example and show the way.

So we can all do our bit to safeguard the environment now. We have attached the Tanzanian religious leaders' statement to this email for you to read in full, but here are some of the commitments made by the Tanzanian leaders.

We, Tanzanian religious leaders, have the following responsibilities:

- to be role models in our lifestyles and reduce unnecessary consumption;
- to ensure awareness raising among our faith communities on the effects of climate change (both visible and invisible), particularly on protection of the integrity of the creation/environment;
- to emphasize the role of fundamental human values in solving climate related problems within our religious activities as a whole;
- to acknowledge that the greater percentage of Tanzanians are victims of climate change, and we must therefore devote special care, concern, compassion and love for the vulnerable people and communities of Tanzania, and advocate for climate justice and the right to a life with dignity for all;
- to search for and implement new ways of conducting climate justice activities, such as:
  - ✓ to form environmental youth clubs and using conscious music;
  - ✓ to engage ourselves in indigenous tree planting around our religious institutions (houses of worship, schools and health centres);
  - ✓ to start adopting more environmentally friendly energy sources.

## Women's workshops in Zimbabwe

The United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe held a series of climate change workshops that reached 177 women (one of the workshops is shown left). The women heard about the problems of global warming and the destruction of our natural environment.

Participants discussed how this was affecting them. For example, they said that before 1990 people used to plant their crops in November or late October. But now the rain comes late and people are confused about when to plant. Also, when it rains it pours, washing away the topsoil.



The women went away with plenty of ideas for good environmental practice including:

- Discourage cutting down of trees.
- Protect areas where they dig sand by growing trees
- Use bicycles if making vehicles sound good is difficult.
- Grow trees
- Discourage burning of trees and grass
- Stop stream bank cultivation

Rev Edward Matuvhunye, President of the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe, told us: "Despite the fact that climate change is new to the majority of the women who participated in the workshops, it received an overwhelming support and there is vitality in communities visited so far."



## Ugandan women

A 12-month pilot project has begun, involving Muslim women's groups in Gomba District, which is about 60km west of Kampala, Uganda. The project is led by Hajjat Sebyala and the aim is for the women to plant 6,000 fruit and mutaba trees in the coming year.

Gomba District is one of the worst affected by tree cutting in Uganda; mutaba trees grow quickly, allowing their branches to be cut for firewood. This project will help green the district as well improve the women's livelihoods and teach them good agriculture management.

Hajjat Sebyala (pictured right) also told us about the Ugandan Muslim Women Association (UNWA)'s final consultative meeting to draw up their long-term plan, held at the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council boardroom in the National Mosque on December 23 last year. After a lively and positive meeting, they decided they would:



- lead by example with our model base, acquire land, plant trees, and form a model farm;
- work with cultural institutions and participate in or introduce environment work in their programmes;
- ask the UMWA entertainment branch to compose songs with environment protection messages;
- start small income generating activities or support existing ones. Or start one project for all members;
- Plant trees in schools with our children.

## Ethiopian workshop

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church also held a workshop in December attended by many church units and senior staff of EECMY-DASSC (the Church's development and social services commission) to discuss drawing up a Seven-year Action plan. Gelgelo Sado of the EECMY-DASSC said the workshop looked at climate change impacts adaptation and mitigation.

Members discussed how to make use of church structures such as schools, churches and colleges. "The workshop was found to be important and interesting and all vowed to take it seriously in their day-to-day activities," said Gelgelo. "Most of them promised to initiate the planting of a tree in their compounds in schools and churches."

## The creation of an Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Toolkit

ARC has commissioned the Kenyan Organisation for Environmental Education (KOE) to work with us to produce an Education for Sustainable Development toolkit. The aim is to bring religious wisdom in the school curriculum to promote education on the environment, using eco-schools as a strategy. KOE will produce and trial a Christian and Muslim version of the toolkit in Kenya, and the plan is to transfer it for use in other countries in the future.



More about it and the workshop we are holding to develop it – see below – in the next newsletter. Also, look out for the launch of the ARC education competition.

## Workshops in Ghana (agroforestry) and Kenya (education)

ARC is supporting two workshops in the next few weeks; one on agroforestry in Ghana with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana and members of Relbonet – the Religious Bodies Network on Climate Change – and one on education in Kenya for Muslim and Christian leaders.

The education workshop is organised by the the Kenyan Organisation for Environmental Education and is an important step in developing the Education for Sustainable Development toolkit for faith schools, mentioned above. More on both these workshops in the next newsletter!

## What preachers should say on the environment

Here are some more preachers' points from our Nairobi meeting last year. These are the points that Haftu Woldu, Rev Edward Matuvhunye & Dr Tharcisse Gatwa came up with:

1. God created order out of creation during the creation.
2. Creation was given as a gift of God to humanity.
3. Human beings were called upon by God and given order to care for/manage the creation he made.
4. God gives possibility for a new beginning – Adam/Cain etc.
5. Human beings are co-workers with God, so keep his creation safe.
6. God gives the chance for transformation (Noah's story).
7. It is possible for human beings to restore the creation/environment (Noah's story).
8. Noah's action & sacrifice brings in the link to faith.
9. Desert – Jesus's people will not live with bread, but with word of God – spirit.
10. Stewardship = Noah took each individual representative of the species: animals, plants, human beings.

## Rwanda Charter on the Environment

The Protestant Council of Rwanda has come up with a wonderful Theological Charter on the Environment – more on this in the next newsletter.

## Do you have any news to share with us?

If so, please let us know – and don't forget to include any photographs. We'd also love to hear your feedback on this newsletter, and any examples of good practices/guidelines you can share with us. Email [alisonh@arcworld.org](mailto:alisonh@arcworld.org) or [susie.weldon@arcworld.org](mailto:susie.weldon@arcworld.org).

With all good wishes, The team at ARC