



ALLIANCE OF RELIGIONS AND CONSERVATION

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Hello and welcome to the first ARC newsletter to our faith partners in sub-Saharan Africa!

Since we all met in Nairobi in March, there have been many exciting developments and we at ARC have been delighted to hear from you about how well your plans are developing, and about the eco projects you have initiated. 27 faith groups have committed to drawing up long-plans of action on the environment. This is impressive, as are the examples of action already being proposed. Here is some of your latest news.

Seven Year Plan update

You should all have received the letter from Alison detailing how to obtain your assistance grant of £2,000 to help you develop your Seven Year Plan. Most of you have responded and should have received the grant; if any of you are still waiting, please be in contact with alisonh@arcworld.org. Draft plans should be with us by the end of the year and we look forward to meeting you all again at the AACC in Nairobi next summer to showcase those plans.

AACC organises climate justice conference

ARC's partner, the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), has been busy too. The AACC organised a four-day Pan-African Interfaith Conference on climate justice and sustainable peace in Nairobi, Kenya, last month as part of its preparations for the UN's Climate Change conference (COP17) to be held in Durban, South Africa, this November.

Joining the AACC in the four-day event on June 6-9 were the Programme for Christian Muslim Relations in Africa and the South African Faith Communities' Environment Institute. The conference agreed to mobilise all believers on the continent to take practical action to bring about climate justice and sustainable peace. The AACC will send high-level emissaries to share faith concerns, convictions and commitments and call on negotiators to take decisive measures to address climate change.

Tree-planting in Ghana

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana has started a tree-planting programme in north and south Ghana to restore degraded savannah. The plan is to plant two million trees in the next decade, with 100,000 seedlings in community woodlots.

As well as holding public meetings on the need to manage environmental resources sustainably, the Church is also providing training workshops in snail farming, bee keeping and other alternative livelihood programmes, and training 200 firefighter volunteers to prevent forest fires in replanted areas. This photograph shows trees being planted in a degraded area.



Bishop Nathan makes an energy-saving stove



Anglican Bishop Nathan Kyamamywa in Western Uganda has drawn up an ambitious plan for his diocese to plant five million trees over the next seven years – and he's taken his work a step further, making an energy-saving stove for his house. He aims to have at least 15,000 households use economic and energy saving stoves as their main cooking method.

And he's back to good health after coming down with malaria at our workshop in Nairobi.

Uganda Muslim Youth Assembly success

Immam Ibban Iddih Kasozi is delighted with the success of the Uganda Muslim Youth Assembly (UMYA) tree-planting programme. UMYA started its tree-planting programme using mosques and schools as pilot projects. The photograph on the right shows seedlings being delivered to Kiryasaka Muslim Primary School.

"I am glad to confidently inform you these projects have succeeded," he says.

"I was impressed, for example, Kiryasaka



Muslim Primary school which received 3,000 seedlings only lost 50, Alibin Abutwalib Islamic centre boasts of 7,000 trees, Kibibi secondary school 2,000 seedlings, Lugazi Muslim Community has 20,000 growing trees, Buyita mosque has over 6,500 growing trees and the individuals who also received seedlings have their trees growing well too."

The success means demand for trees has gone up and UMYA hopes its Seven Year Plan will have a "multiplier effect". The plan, drawn up with HEAR, aims to distribute and plant two million seedlings of fruit and agro forestry trees in the Muslim community.

Role of women

Hajjat Aphwa Sebyala, who reminded us all in Nairobi about the vital role women play in conserving the environment, has drawn up her roadmap for involving women in environmental activities under the Uganda Muslim Women Association and the Ugandan Muslim Supreme Council. More details to follow!

Hajjat also sent us details of an environmental campaign launched in all 51 mosques in Gomba district, Uganda.

As well as holding awareness-raising discussions about climate change in the mosques and local community, tree seedlings were distributed by the Gomba County Sheikh, who also planted the first fruit tree (see the photograph on the right, with Hajjat looking on).



Catholic Archdiocese of Abuja



Sr Agatha O Chikelue has sent us a one-year action plan which the Catholic Archdiocese of Abuja has developed as a first step toward developing a Seven Year Plan. The plan, which runs from 2011 to 2012, begins with raising awareness among archdiocesan staff, priests and Catholic teachers, but also includes tree-planting, water conservation and irrigation, education and advocacy.

Sr Agatha says: "Our main focus is to bring to the attention of every Nigerian the need for attitudinal change in the way we use God's natural endowments to ensure their preservation for generations to come and also, to encourage our people to plant more trees for generations coming after us."

She adds: "The plan will serve as a platform or framework through which our seven year plan of action would be drawn next year."

Rwanda's food security plans

The Council of Protestant Churches in Rwanda is planning to improve food security among its community with an ambitious programme to expand farmer training. Using the agro-pastoral centre run by the women's religious community, Abaja ba Kristo of Rubengera, as a base, it plans to train 1,050 people in agriculture over seven years.

Abaja Ba Krisito is an ecumenical religious congregation created in 1984 to admit women engaged to training and to serving the community.

The council's General Secretary Tharcisse Gatwa says: "The congregation has received many national and international rewards. They have responded enthusiastically to the idea of working with the Council of Protestant Churches to train farmers from across the country so to spread what has become miracles in the Karongi Region in the western province of Rwanda."



United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe



Rev Edward Matuvhunye plans to get 1.8 million trees planted in the next three years and is about to start a new programme to train women members of his church in environmental management. Women make up more than two thirds of his Church membership and have a Church Council of their own.

Women, he says, have already made their voice heard on the environment – for example, forming a pressure group which stopped the further cultivation of land and the cutting down of trees along the Marirangwe river bank. The stream there, which was always the most reliable stream for water supply, was drying out and forcing women to wait in long queues to fill their buckets.

The women's protest led the Church to organise a workshop on the environment for more than 100 women, including pastors' spouses. They now plan to take the lead in growing trees first in the churchyard as well as growing flowers and fruit trees in their gardens – with the hope that each woman in the parish will do the same at her homestead.

Kano Greening Programme

Sheikh Qaribullah in Kano, Nigeria, has been developing a Greening Programme which includes a Green Cemeteries programme – providing tree seedlings for distribution to eight major cemeteries in Kano city and a Green Pilgrimage Programme – greening the Maukib Pilgrimage which takes place annually in Kano with one million pilgrims.

He also has devised a campaign to make schools cleaner and greener and remove poly bags at the same time. Each child is tasked with picking up 100 pieces of used poly bags a week, thus helping to clean the streets. The school rewards the child with academic points and the bags collected are used to hold tree seedlings at tree nurseries. Any excess bags collected are recycled and sold to poly bag manufacturers.

ELCT Northern Diocese tree nurseries

At the Nairobi meeting, Bishop Fredrick Shoo of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania's Northern diocese described how he went about drawing up his ambitious

long-term plan to plant 8.5 million trees on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro. One of his strategies was to insist that every candidate for confirmation planted a tree.

The backbone of providing seedlings to young people was the setting up of a nursery by a group of local women. Bishop Shoo hope that this will grow to more than 30 nurseries – providing seedlings and employment for women. Since Nairobi, three new nurseries have been established and the list of parishes asking for seedlings is growing.



Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council



You may remember the colourful and informative PowerPoint Sheikh Aman Hussien Kabeto presented in Nairobi telling us how 40,000 mosques in Ethiopia were now committed to being greened and how many mosques in the countryside are already covered by fruit trees.

Sheikh Hussien is now proposing a new project to create awareness on climate change and traditional environmental conservation techniques for 250,000 Muslim scholars, young people and women teachers as well as to conduct training for 50 women on techniques of urban agriculture.

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 or susie.weldon@arcworld.org.

In the next newsletter:

- Evangelical Presbyterian Church launches eco-clubs
- Rwanda mobilises its parishes in environmental action
- 10 preacher's environmental points (from the ones you created in Nairobi)

With all good wishes,

The team at ARC!

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