



ARMENIA INTER-CHURCH CHARITABLE ROUND TABLE FOUNDATION (ART)

PUTTING OUR VALUES TO PRACTICE

“Nature is the primordial reality which should permanently be taken care of. It is meant to serve the welfare of man, which is the crown of nature, and man is entitled to reasonably use Nature’s gifts. We welcome the attention of environmental organizations and their initiatives towards environmental problems.”

His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians

We hope and support Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which will lead to fundamental transformation in the lives of people in the world. We will continue to work in line with Christian understanding of care for nature as man’s moral responsibility.

ART will continue to work in economic, social and spiritual improvement of the targeted communities in Armenia, but here will share with you our environmental plans related to SDGs.

SDG 4

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Continue and expand our “Green Theology” programme ensuring nature protection classes in all theological seminaries in Armenia. Important is the publication of the second edition of “Nature Protection and Theology” textbook covering ecology, nature protection issues and expanding/editing the theological part entitled “Christian Church on Man-Nature Relations”.

Also, include nature protection and “green pilgrimage” trainings in all our projects in the communities where we work.

Two films related to “green” pilgrimage programme are shot: “Green Hospitality” and “Transforming Waste”. New study films and books published to disseminate the ideas of nature friendly pilgrimage and tourism are planned.

SDG 7

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Establish solar panels to serve all churches in Etchmiadzin, including administrative buildings at the Monastery of Etchmiadzin. Solar panels and energy saving measures in all theological seminaries in Armenia.

SDG 11

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

“Green City of Etchmiadzin: A Local Place for Global Spirit” project will continue and expand. Its overall purpose to develop Etchmiadzin as a green pilgrimage city model is coming to life step by step. Etchmiadzin will become an attractive, green and environmentally friendly place for sojourn by pilgrims and tourists who wish to feel themselves belonging to the historical heritage of Christianity, at the same time experience warm atmosphere of homey hospitality.

In order to improve the environmental situation and attractiveness of Etchmiadzin for pilgrims diverse, yet logically interconnected activities will be supported, the main components already implemented: rehabilitation and fencing of the historical Nersisyan forest, ensuring traditional and healthy food for pilgrims, affordable lodging and hospitality through creation of Bed and Breakfast facilities (B&B), etc.

Projects implemented in cooperation with Etchmiadzin municipality will guarantee expansion of green zones in the city creating grounds for tomorrow’s clean and green world.

SDG 12

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Places where people get healthy and traditional food will be established near churches and monasteries with various energy-saving technologies applied. Food cooked here meets the criteria set by The Alliance of Religions and Conservation:

- 70 % fresh or unprocessed food
- 50 % locally produced food
- 30 % organic food
- 100 % free-range eggs, etc.

Waste management has become a crucial problem in Armenia. At the same time innovative solutions, such as transforming waste into useful things are becoming more and more popular among ART beneficiaries. The practice of making everyday useful things from polyethylene waste otherwise known as the ordinary plastic bags, and other garbage will be propagated. and litter in our streets - a major environmental problem in Armenia and throughout the world – will disappear! By cleaning, washing and drying the plastic bags, which do not decay over centuries and are so hazardous for the environment, different beautiful items and souvenirs will be made.

SDG 13

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (taking note of agreements made by the UNFCCC forum)

"Churches and CSOs Influence on Decision Making Processes on Environmental Problems in Armenia", is an advocacy project currently underway. Its aim is to introduce a model of community-based environmental financial mechanism through creation of an enabling environment for the dialogue between authorities on communal, regional, central levels on one hand and civil society, including churches, on the other hand.

The role and participation of civil society in environmental governance is nearly zero in Armenia and many countries. The reasons are different: low level of awareness on legislative and environmental issues, as well as on possible ways to solve them, etc. Environmental problems are multiple in Armenia, especially those connected with the consequences of climate change. Thus, there is a strong and urgent need to raise awareness and implement practical steps in urging the government to take measures in change of thinking and the vector of economic development.

The project will contribute to promotion of sustainable development and improvement of environmental management through effective participation of civil society in environmental governance. The primary objective of the project is to introduce a model of community-based environmental financial mechanism through creation of an enabling environment for the dialogue between authorities on communal, regional, central levels on one hand and civil society, including churches, on the other hand. In the frames of the project a legislative package will be developed and submitted to

Armenian Parliament. We hope that it will be adopted in the coming year. And this is the first step in advocating environmental issues. ART long term plans include more activities on joint work of communities and governmental bodies which seems extremely productive.

One important observation is that when the Church implements environmental programmes and especially those on advocacy level, it sends out a clear message to people, so that they have more careful attitude towards nature and environment.