

AFRICAN FAITH COMMITMENTS FOR A LIVING PLANET

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ETHICS, AMECEA

Long-term plan on the environment – summary

INTRODUCTION

The Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) is an umbrella body for Catholics in the region, covering Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Sudan, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. AMECEA serves a total population of about 280 million people in these nine countries, of whom 48 million are Catholics in 120 different dioceses.

AMECEA established the Centre for Social Justice and Ethics (CSJE) in 2002 in Nairobi, Kenya, as a research and resource centre for addressing justice and ethical issues in the region. The CSJE has five years' experience in outreach programmes conducted all over the AMECEA region. It is part of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa which was set up by AMECEA 27 years ago and is the largest private University in Kenya, with over 7,000 students on two campuses outside Nairobi city.

The seven-year programme has a unique approach that aims to engage Catholics, Christians and other faith groups in the AMECEA region on how best they can take care of their environment as a response to their Christian faith and the African vision of life. The programme is designed to promote a Biblical interpretation of humanity's relationship with nature in dialogue with African cultural values on environmental protection.

THE CSJE'S PLAN INTENDS TO ACHIEVE THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES

- To create awareness about the relevance of the Church's social teaching on environmental care as a response to the Catholic faith obligation to respect human life and dignity and to promote the common good of all.
- To develop and document a deeper understanding of the emerging discipline of 'Eco-Theology' and create awareness of its relevance and urgency in the Church today
- To ensure that Christians and all people of good will in the AMECEA region take up their responsibilities to the Creator and creation with renewed courage and commitment.
- To facilitate preparation of strategic pastoral plans of action on how to engage the Christian community in the promotion of the environment and integrity of creation in the AMECEA region.
- To prepare a module for teaching environmental stewardship and integrity of creation at secondary and tertiary levels.
- To facilitate research and documentation on African spirituality, traditional beliefs and African culture, and Christian theology and the environment.
- To publish findings and create awareness on the need to integrate faith and the environment as a strategy to uphold sustainable lifestyles consistent with stewardship and integrity of creation.
- To prepare training manuals and curricula for stewardship and integrity of creation for practitioners, and for conducting seminars and workshops to targeted groups.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES

- Review existing literature and convene with African and theological experts to develop modules on stewardship of creation for use in the AMECEA community;
- Workshops and seminars on environmental care as a Christian response to church staff, primary schools, secondary schools, tertiary institutions, youth and parish councils and small Christian communities;
- Prepare a Children's Bible on environmental care;
- Develop booklets, visual aids, and music and drama competitions on environment care for use throughout each diocese;
- Research and hold an annual conference on Africa environmental theology;
- Publish and launch a model strategic plan to go green for church leaders;
- Hold one workshop per country and two workshops per year on environmental care with 60 participants for four days;
- Prepare television and radio programmes on the environment, stewardship and integrity of creation;
- Hold an international conference every other year and a symposium every year on environmental care;
- Hold one workshop per country on an African response to environmental care.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Changed attitudes toward stewardship and integrity of creation;
- An increase in the number of green parishes and schools;
- Database detailing the link between faith and environment, African spirituality and the environment;
- Increased forest cover per diocese; improved water resource management; reduced fuel wood consumption; greater awareness on using renewable energy and recycled materials; improved soil quality in agricultural zones.

FIRST STAGES

The programme aims to pilot in Kenya and develop a training module on African spirituality, culture and traditional beliefs and Christian theology on the environment for use by teaching catechists and seminarians. Catechists teach the Catechism within a diocese and disseminate Catholic teaching and information to all sections of society – from women's and youth groups to parish communities.

Training workshops with support from Episcopal Conferences will then be held in Kenya. Teaching on the module will be piloted in four Archdioceses with 20 catechists per archdiocese attending. This new teaching module will be the basis for teaching in secondary and tertiary level as well as in Catholic Theological colleges, Catholic schools and informal education.

As soon as it is developed and piloted in Kenya, the teaching module could be used and adapted for other AMECEA countries.

The long-term plan was presented to the University Council and was endorsed.

This plan was launched at ARC's Many Heavens, One Earth, Our Continent celebration held in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 2012