HOW TO CREATE YOUR 8-YEAR PLAN TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT:
A HANDBOOK FOR MONGOLIAN BUDDHISTS

THE ALLIANCE OF RELIGIONS AND CONSERVATION
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CONTENTS

Introduction to the ARC-UN 8-Year Plan 4
An Invitation 7
I. The seven key areas for creating an 8-year plan 8
   1. Faith-consistent use of assets 9
   2. Education and young people 13
   3. Pastoral care – theology, tradition and wisdom 17
   4. Lifestyles 20
   5. Media and advocacy 23
   6. Partnerships, Eco-twinnings and environment departments 24
   7. Celebration 27
II. What next? 30
III. Resources and contacts 31
IV. Appendices 32
   Appendix 1: Audits 32
   Appendix 2: Sacred Gifts 33

PLEASE NOTE

August 2008. This document was developed for the Tributary Fund/Gandan Monastery conference for Buddhists and the Environment in UB. It is for discussion, inspiration, and future expansion. Please distribute as widely as you wish and keep an eye on ARC’s website www.arcworld.org for the latest version, containing the most up-to-date stories and examples.

Cover image: Cryptomeria in a Benedictine-owned forest in Tanzania
I am very pleased to know that ARC, in conjunction with its members, is developing seven [and eight] year plans to take forward their commitment to care more effectively for the earth's natural environment.

The fact that the majority of the world's faiths ascribe the creation of the world to an all-powerful deity, implies that the leaders and followers of each faith have a moral responsibility for the continued well-being of our planet, and particularly for its natural environment. In recent times it has become apparent that the sheer size of the human population, and its consequent increasing demand for natural resources, are seriously threatening the future health of our planet and the welfare of all life on earth.

I am well aware of the excellent work undertaken by the faith communities ever since the first encounter between conservationists and the leaders of the major faiths at Assisi in Italy, in 1986, but it is only too evident that, in spite of the commendable efforts of the members of ARC, the situation facing us today is even more critical.

I am happy to commend this very important initiative, and I am confident that it will make a significant difference to the quality of life on earth in the long term.
The Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) is a United Kingdom-based international organisation founded by His Royal Highness, the Prince Philip, in 1995. 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 has now joined with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to develop a significant and innovative programme to work with the world’s major faiths to address issues of climate change and the natural environment through the development of faith-based Seven and Eight Year Plans for generational change. Please see our website www.arcworld.org for more details.

Addressing the biggest global challenges

The destruction of the natural environment - including the impact of climate change - is probably the biggest challenge to the welfare of all life on earth. It threatens the survival of communities and puts the diversity and wonder of nature at risk. For many people, this has created anxiety about the future. And we believe it is a time when the major religions of the world can take a lead - sharing their insights, and working with their faithful to address these issues for generations to come.

The Seven Year Plan programme is a response to requests by many faiths for advice about what to do next. The aim is to assist faith communities create long-term action plans, offering practical models of engagement with these great global issues. The key contribution the religions can make is to develop programmes that will deliver responses based not on fear, guilt, or apprehension, but because they are true to what the faith understands.

Each faith group is developing different parts of the Plans. So for example Mongolian Buddhists are concentrating on education (because that is what their country most needs) and sacred places (because that is what their country has lost its knowledge of). Faith retreat centres in the UK are looking at food sourcing; Lutherans in
Sweden and Shinto in Japan are exploring their impacts on the forests.

In each case, faiths are finding that by going through the formal process of discussing their strengths within the seven key areas, and by writing their commitment down on paper, they have been able to have a vision of the future: a vision that will allow the conditions necessary for the plans to manifest.

This guide, detailing how to set up an Eight Year Plan, was adapted specifically for Mongolian Buddhist communities.

**What do we mean by ‘generational change’?**

The heart of this programme is to assist you to draw up your own Eight Year Plan of action designed to create changes that today’s children – and their children – will continue to act on, and benefit from.

Human behaviour takes generations to change. There are, of course, some examples of sudden and massive shifts but on the whole, throughout history, change has been gradual and very often has been inspired, guided and enabled by the work and courage of the faiths.

Many secular groups focus upon the idea of ethics as the means by which changes in human behaviour will be affected. However faiths tend to seek the creation of an ethos, within which ethical choices are made because they arise from the ethos. Such an ethos is created through the interaction of many different forces – not in isolation from what is going on outside, but in organic interaction with it. These forces range from storytelling to science; from sacred spaces and their rituals to the mall and market place; from the work of spiritual teachers to that of novelists, playwrights, musicians and screen-writers.

All faiths pass on wisdom, which instils respect for both tradition and heritage. It is from this inheritance that faiths can reflect on the present and see the potential for the future.

Such awareness of our heritage also helps illustrate that we have been through ecological crises like this before, and that we have emerged from them:
• firstly by adapting what we already have,
• secondly by recovering original insights and teachings which have been forgotten or neglected, and
• thirdly by evolving new ways of tackling the problems.

For example Buddhism in Cambodia is today one of the chief forces helping that country pull itself out of the ecological as well as the devastating social disasters caused by years of Civil War.
AN INVITATION

We invite you to join us in creating your own Eight Year Plan for generational change

We believe that the key contribution the faiths can make to the environmental issues of today is to develop programmes which will deliver appropriate responses based not on fear, guilt or apprehension but on doing what is appropriate because that is what the faith teaches: not just now, but for generations to come.

We are all joined in this venture by many of the key environmental organisations and they will assist the Plans through their detailed knowledge and expertise.

Be Ready to Announce Your Plans by November 2009

We also invite you to create your Eight Year Plan so that you can publicly announce and celebrate it in November 2009.

Help us create local, provincial, country and international celebrations to highlight your commitment. We will be linking faith communities world wide on that day as community after community, country after country announce their Seven and Eight Year Plans.

We are encouraging most religious leaders to announce their Plans locally at major religious sites - while in the UK we will host a Special Celebration drawing all these commitments together.

The results of all these Plans will contribute directly to the Climate Change meeting in Copenhagen at the end of November 2009, which will determine the shape of the next stage of the ‘Kyoto Protocol’, considered by many to be a crucial event for the future of the planet.
I. THE SEVEN KEY AREAS FOR BUDDHISTS CREATING AN 8-YEAR PLAN

This is the heart of this Guide.

It is not a questionnaire for you to answer and send back to us. It is a list of topics, which you can use in discussion with the appropriate faith bodies, organisations and structures in order to begin to think about how your faith could make a difference through its own resources, traditions and beliefs.

We start by asking you to look at what is already being done or could be done and then move to suggestions for future developments, which will aid the creation of your Eight Year Plan.

On the following pages, we suggest seven key areas for you to explore, complete with stories and examples from around the world:

1. Faith-consistent Use of Assets – land, investments, medical facilities, purchasing and property.
2. Education and Young People – including school buildings and curricula, as well as nature teaching and camps.
3. Pastoral Care – including theological education and training; as well as rediscovering past traditions and wisdom, and helping people adapt to new situations in areas where climate change makes this necessary.
4. Lifestyles.
5. Media and advocacy.
6. Partnerships, eco-twinning and creating your own environment department
7. Celebration

Some of these aspects are more relevant to the Mongolian experience than others, but we encourage you to explore and be creative about what you can do, while being inspired by what others have done, as told in these stories and examples from around the world.
1. Faith-consistent use of assets

a) Construction and Existing Buildings
Have you looked at the environmental impact of your construction activities and decisions? For example to what extent have you assessed the environmental impact of new buildings? What were the key ecological problems and did you find any solutions?

Monasteries in Mongolia were traditionally built with materials that were able to withstand the severe heat of the summer and the extreme cold of the winter. Concrete was unable to do either of these things, and throughout Mongolia there is now the possibility not only of rebuilding monasteries in traditional ways, but also of encouraging the local communities to see that this is the only practical - and fashionable – way to do it.

Daoists in China are placing solar panels on their temple administration buildings in a bid to save resources and live in line with their teachings. In 2006 ARC helped ten monasteries hold their first ever ecological conference. By the following year half of them had installed solar panels, raising the money themselves, with the others intending to follow suit soon. The new ecological temple at Taibaishan in Shaanxi Province was built with local sustainable materials.

b) Land and Forests
To what extent have you examined assets like grazing land and forests, mines and quarries under your ownership or management and asked whether they could be differently protected or managed to better contribute to sustaining our planet? Have you written, or do you have access to a Buddhist theology of land, which outlines your Buddhism’s traditional understanding of land, as well as its understanding of the land’s role in your faith today.

Solan is a community of 15 Orthodox nuns in France’s Rhone valley. They founded their monastery in an abandoned farm complex, without water or electricity, and since 1991 they have built it into a working organic farm, producing organic wine, apricot jam, chestnuts and figs. The local authority offered a 75 percent subsidy for them to chop down their forest, sell the logs, replant new trees and leave them for 30 years – but they
wanted to do it differently. Instead, a forester felled selected trees in the forest, and planted 5,000 new saplings by hand. The result for the nuns and local wildlife is a constantly mature forest, which provides wood and income, while maintaining a sense of a special and sacred place. The result for the local authority is a change in practice (and after long debates it now subsidises the hand planting); and for local landowners there is another - proven and viable - model of forestry to follow.

c) Water
To what extent are you aware of your Buddhism’s theology of water? Can you incorporated this teachings and wisdom into promoting environmentally responsible irrigation, desalination, showers, gardening, sewerage etc? Where there are rivers and marine environments running through or close to your monastery, have you monitored how polluted they are, and if so, have you taken action to reduce that pollution?

The Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions in Bangalore, India, recently conducted laboratory testing into traditional Hindu Ayurvedic teachings, instructing householders to store water in copper pots. The scientists found that e-coli bacteria are killed within 12 hours of being placed into water stored in copper pots. Some four million under-fives die from diarrhoea every year; many from e-coli-related infections. Ancient religious wisdom on water treatment might save some of their lives.

d) Healthcare
If you run medical facilities such as clinics or hospitals have you made an environmentally sustainable management plan on the use of water, sanitation, cleanliness, provisions, buildings, transport, electricity, reducing waste, reusing materials etc? It can help the planet and – through creating cleaner air – it can directly and immediately help your patients. Have you looked at the sourcing of the food served to patients and visitors – and perhaps increased the amount of food that is grown locally, in season, without pesticides and according to natural, vital principles?

e) Food, hospitality and retail outlets
Faiths run many hotels, guesthouses, gift shops, cafeterias and restaurants around the world. Rites of passage such as births,
marriages and deaths often involve times of generous catering and gifts. Have you looked at the hospitality and retail outlets in and around Buddhist monasteries in Mongolia to see if your sourcing is ethically and ecologically sound and that you are using renewable energy if this is workable? Improvements might involve introducing more organic goods, and recommending free range eggs, because it is a more compassionate form of farming than the factory alternative.

In 2008 the Christian Women’s Fellowship in Kottayam, Kerala, India set up a food centre in the middle of their town. It was the first outlet in Kottayam to run on biogas. Set up costs were comparatively high – at 40,000 Rs (around US$1000) - but they are confident that not only will they make it up within a year from reduced fuel bills, but that they will become an example of environmental excellence and an inspiration to other businesses and households. Do the monks and nuns in Mongolia run food centres that could be models of environmental excellence in their communities?

f) Financial Investments and Micro-Finance

Microfinance initiatives represent one of the greatest movements for positive social change over the past 30 years - providing affordable credit to the poor. It doesn’t take a great deal of money to start a microfinance initiative. Is this something that the monasteries in Mongolia can encourage?

Nobel Winner Muhammad Yunus started the Grameen Bank by lending $27 to some poor craftsmen, while volunteering to be guarantor on a larger loan from a traditional bank. Today he runs the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, which has lent more than $5 billion to 5.3 million people. It is built on his conviction that poor people can be reliable borrowers and avid entrepreneurs.

The Ecumenical Church Loan Funds were set up in the UK after World War II to rebuild churches; later they were extended to grant loans for small-scale income-generating projects, and today their main activity is lending to small and social businesses in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, including loans for ecological farm products and

2. Education and young people

Some 50 percent of educational institutions around the world are founded, managed, or associated with faith institutions.

a) School and out-of-school Curricula

What potential is there in your educational work for incorporating more in-depth, and faith-consistent teachings about the environment into the curriculum? Do you, or can you, have vegetable patches where you teach pupils how to grow food? Do you look at and promote preparation of food grown without pesticides? Or go into nature to paint and study birds and wild plants, to help young people appreciate their beauty?

The Erdene Zuu monks have participated in a project working with children from poor families who had been cutting down trees in protected woodlands to sell to local restaurants for fuel. The monks decided to run life skills classes for them and their families, and the results exceeded everyone’s expectations. In 2005, 50 child woodcutters attended a 40-hour Life Skills course, learning traditional conservation and religious values alongside skills such as building self-esteem, decision-making and creative thinking. It was so popular that in 2006 the monastery not only hosted a second course for a further 50 children, but they devised another one for the parents, who had made fervent requests to experience this inspirational training for themselves. Not only did the woodcutting reduce, but many of the children returned to school, inspired by their experiences. Meanwhile the restaurants are being introduced to alternative fuel sources.

All Hallows is a Catholic school in Somerset, UK. On “Earth Day” in April 2008 the timetable for the entire day, for all pupils (aged 7-13), centred around ecological activities. It included bringing in an artist to work with the pupils to create a nearly two-metre high model bird from willow (a material local to Somerset); cleaning a nearby stream and having a lesson in the insect-life that was found in it; dyeing with natural ingredients like onion; making prayer flags based on Buddhist prayer flags, on which environmental prayers were
written. The response from children, teachers and parents was overwhelmingly positive with requests to have “Earth Day” every year. Can an Earth Day be incorporated into schools in Mongolia via the monasteries?

b) School Buildings and Grounds
What potential is there in your educational work for making sure that all new builds and extensions are rigorous in their attention to environmental details, and that any playing fields and gardens pay attention to the needs of wild flora and fauna as well as children?

c) Conservation and Recycling Policy
Do you have policies of water and energy conservation for your educational buildings? What do you do about paper, food, sewerage and other waste? And do you organise clean-up programmes?

A Buddhist community initiative run by the Traditional Conservation Centre in UB has organised several clean-up campaigns with monks working alongside students from the University of Agriculture in Ulaan Baator. The people were surprised and moved to see monks joining in with this, as it demonstrated to the public how important it is to take care of one’s surroundings, and that even monks can get their hands dirty.

d) Youth Organisations and Camps
Do you have faith-associated youth organisations where environmental ideas could also be integrated - for example through running youth camps in nature, organising street cleaning projects, and forest schools?

In summer 2007 Muslims in the British city of Birmingham hosted a “Cleaner Medina” street party – with music, street cleanups, video, information and fun. It is being used as a model for action and information in other Islamic communities – and could be a model for making cleaning up into a cutting edge activity in Mongolia’s cities.

In 2000 the Maronite Church in Lebanon made its portion of the fragile and sacred Harissa forest into a Maronite-Protected Area. Three major landowners all voluntarily joined the scheme, giving up the considerable money being offered by developers. When asked why he had made that decision, one of
the landowners said that he remembered back to when he was a boy, and had gone for a camping holiday in the forest, organised by the church. “It was one of the happiest times of my life,” he said. “That’s why I want to protect the forest now.” Can Buddhist monasteries offer and organise camps on sacred mountains – which one day in the future might mean that Mongolia’s next generation will recognise their sacredness?

**e) Environmental Monitoring**

As part of life’s education, could you work with the natural curiosity, expertise and grassroots outreach of your faithful to organise environmental monitoring of the world around them? Sometimes it is only through compassionate mindfulness and systematic observation that scientific details will be collected, that rivers and eco-systems will be monitored for flora, fauna and pollution, and that early action can therefore be taken. If there are places that your faith values, perhaps because they are beautiful, perhaps simply because they are, then you are in a wonderful situation to watch over and protect them.

The Baganuur coal mine, 140 km west of Ulaanbaatar, is a filthy place. It extracts some 2,500 tons of coal every year from its 200 million ton reserve, and in its place leaves a residue of pollution, lung problems and an unhealthy landscape. In 2005 the monks of the nearby Ontsar Isei Lin monastery decided to take action, and with the help of the World Bank’s NEMO fund and a team of Japanese specialists, undertook a major project to document the environmental and health impacts of the mine. As a result, the miners and their families have been taught ways of reducing some of the health impacts; the mine managers are bowing to public pressure and considering detoxification mechanisms; local schools have added Buddhist understandings on conservation to their core curriculum.

The Catholic Bishops of the dioceses that span the Columbia River along the western seaboard of the USA realised in the 1980s that their precious waterway was becoming polluted. They encouraged their faithful to monitor the river, along its length, and then fed that information back at all levels to the state government, to the polluting companies and to the communities through letters, education, advocacy and influence. The river is now cleaner.
3. Pastoral care - theology, tradition and wisdom

All faiths have a tradition of pastoral care for those who are going through suffering or crisis, and all faiths have tried and tested ways of teaching their future leaders to pass on the wisdom of the ages, adapted to the requirements of the present day.

a) Training
How do you train your religious teachers and future religious leaders on environmental issues? Following Sri Kushak Bakula’s example in the college he founded in Mongolia, could the training curriculum for your young monks be even more ‘green’?

b) Crisis and Adaptation
What is the role of crisis in your theology and how have you dealt with crises in the past? Does your faith see climate change as a crisis today? If so, what strategies or tools from your experience could you apply to responding to climate change?

c) Liturgies, quotations and orders of prayer:
Can your liturgies, study of the scriptures, services and orders of prayer and practice be developed in line with your theology to include not only your tradition of caring for the natural world but also your values of treading lightly on the earth and judging people by how they behave, not by what they own?

d) Sacred places
What role have your sacred places traditionally played in helping preserve habitats for wildlife etc? For example, churchyards are often vital mini-eco-systems especially in urban areas; sacred mountains are sanctuaries for many endangered animals; holy water sources – wells, streams and lakes – can be the last refuge for creatures whose habitats have otherwise been destroyed or polluted.

The sacred mountains of China have been protected for millennia by Daoist nuns and monks. Now Daoism is actively developing environmental protection programmes to ensure that the pressures of tourism, development and logging do not endanger these vital, spiritual and bio-diverse landscapes.

Churchyards, cemeteries and gardens near temples and mosques etc are often rare wild areas in big cities. Some
groups are increasingly allowing wilderness areas to grow, through reducing lawn cutting and pesticides - and are producing special educational material for visitors to remind them what natural wonders there are in their local area. For example the ancient trees in the Eyup mosque in Istanbul are the last surviving breeding places for storks on the Golden Horn.

e) Stories and Practices
Are there any stories or half-forgotten traditional practices that highlight how your tradition has always cared for creation/the natural environment, and can these be revived?

g) Adaptation
Have you thought about how your teachers and faith leaders will care in a pastoral way for those affected by climate change or environmental catastrophe? Have you created a plan to do so, so that in case of flood, or famine or typhoon, you are as prepared as you can be?

h) Praying
Prayer is central to every faith. Can you pray for a better, more harmonious world: for human beings to find solutions to those problems they can change, and to accept those problems they cannot?

When asked what Buddhists should do in response to climate change, Buddhist teacher Thrangu Rinpoche said they should do two things. First they should inform themselves about how things are, to know what practical steps to take. And second they should make aspiration prayers to the Buddha. Perhaps that will not stop global warming directly, he said, “but it will gradually help to transform our minds, and then we will make efforts to help the situation”.

4. Lifestyles

a) Audits
Have you carried out an environmental audit of your assets and use of natural resources, recycling, energy etc as a faith community, families and individuals? Have you or could you encourage your own faithful to do their own environmental audits and take action
accordingly? If not, then there are some audit resources at the end of this document.

**b) Traditions of Simple Living**
Are you encouraging, or could you encourage, your faithful to live more simply and in harmony with the environment – in the areas of food, travel, energy, personal investments, charity giving etc? If so, how are you supporting and assisting them? If not, then could this be a key area for development in your eight year plan? Can you draw upon any of your own traditions - monasticism for example - to develop and promote a simpler lifestyle?

Jain youth organisations have long encouraged their members to advocate simple, vegetarian diets. They believe this would not only reduce the negative karmic effects caused by the suffering resulting from killing animals on such a large scale, but would also improve the earth ecologically, by reducing the grain needed to fatten livestock and the greenhouse gases emitted by cattle fed unnaturally on grain. Mongolia is traditionally strongly meat eating, but is there any place for introducing more vegetables into the diet?

The Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD) has long promoted a campaign for Catholics to “Live Simply, so that Others May Simply Live,” urging people to make pledges, before God, to be more generous by stepping more lightly on the earth.

**c) Families, Population and Choice**
The size of the world’s population is clearly an issue for the future of the natural environment and the use of fuels and energy. Even in faiths where there is a tradition or teaching of a particular stance about the size of families, there is still considerable debate on this issue.

One of the most successful countries in voluntary curbing of population growth is Iran – and it was brought about as much through religious teaching as through economics and legal structures. Islamic leaders quoted the Prophet Mohammed saying that a man should have only as many children as the earth can support, while issuing fatwas (or “permissions”) encouraging contraception. From 1986 to 2001 population growth decreased from 3.2 to 1.2 percent.
d) Pilgrimage and Tourism
With their beautiful temples, monasteries, mosques, churches, synagogues etc, faiths own many of the most prized tourist destinations around the world. They are also responsible, in terms of pilgrimage, for much of the “tourist” travel in the world. As a faith, have you looked at your role in tourism and pilgrimage within the countries in which you operate and asked if there might be more environmentally friendly ways to run this? Have you thought about how many pilgrims now travel by plane, coach and car where previously they walked, and considered ways of lessening the environmental impact of this?

e) Purchasing Power
Are there areas where you and your faithful can use your joint purchasing power to help the environment?

Hazon is a Jewish environmental organization in New York. In 2004 it launched a Community-supported Agriculture Programme called Tuv Ha’Aretz – which means “Good for the land and best of the land”. It involves a synagogue entering a partnership with a local organic farmer, and committing to pre-purchase a share of the season’s produce. For the farmer this guarantees a market, for members this gives access to fresh, organic produce at affordable prices. In the wider context, it helps to preserve farmland, build community, and protect surrounding wildlife and water systems from pesticides. By 2008 there were nine Tuv Ha’Aretz locations in the US and one in Israel. Hazon also organises an annual Food Conference and a Jewish Farm school. Can the monasteries in Mongolia ask local people to support environmentally friendly farming initiatives like this?

In 2000, the Women’s Division of the United Methodist Church in the US launched an initiative to eliminate chlorine in paper products used by the church – on the grounds that the toxins released into the environment during the production of chlorine-bleached paper causes serious damage to the environment. United Methodist Women in 34 states (plus the District of Columbia) visited Kinko’s stores to request processed chlorine-free (PCF) paper, and to show that there was a demand. At that time only 66 percent had PCF paper at all, staff were badly informed about the product, and there was
Within months, the shop had eliminated the price differential, and had agreed to stock PCF paper in every store.

5. Media and advocacy

a) Subject Matter
To what extent are your media outlets engaging in these issues? Do your newsletters, radios, newspapers, TV stations, websites etc have special sections on ecology? Are they using their editorial authority to promote simpler living, and looking after the natural environment with more care? Could your website have a special section, blog, picture galleries etc on the development of your Eight Year Plan?

b) Influence
How do you influence your government on its environmental priorities? What extra influence could you wield? Do you have any level of media access to national broadcasting networks where you could raise these issues in, for example, a weekly religious affairs programme?

c) Advocacy
Now that you are active, you are in a position to ask others to be active as well and take these issues as seriously as you do. Could you lobby your politicians – whether local, national or regional – as well as your directors, head teachers, and religious leaders to help stop climate change and the destruction of the natural environment

d) Guides and Handbooks
Could you draw together, from your audits and educational materials, guides or handbooks (on paper, on the web, on mobile phones or on audio or video) for the faithful on how to live more simply and environmentally - with practical suggestions drawn from your experience? How could these be developed through your publishing houses or through your websites?

In 2002 the monks of Gandan monastery – helped by ARC, WWF and the World Bank – published a collection of ancient sutras entitled “Sacred Sites in Mongolia”. The texts, which were translated into modern Mongolian, describe the sacred geography and rituals of 80 sacred sites whose use had been suppressed under communism. So far six of the most important Mongolian sacred sites have been reinstated by their local monastic communities – and stupas have been placed to mark
them. Even within 12 months there was a noticeable increase in the number of wild animals, including marmots and birds of prey. It is hoped that in the long term, with nature allowed to take its own course, the vegetation and tree cover will also return. The project has worked because the stupas are backed up by the monks in each area, who carry influence with local government and nomadic communities.

**e) Materials**

What more could your media – your newspapers, newsletters, radio stations, websites and printers of your holy books, pamphlets and brochures – do to protect the natural environment in terms of the materials they use, e.g environmentally friendly paper and ink? If you have publishing houses have you examined their impact on the environment? Could you sometimes provide web content instead of paper publishing, for example?

The Gandan monks have worked with ARC and the World Bank to issue a calendar which marks the old sacred days – on which it was forbidden to hunt or destroy the forest.

The Benedictines have produced *Listening to the Earth* – a handbook for their monasteries in Latin America – explaining theologically and practically how to take action on environmental issues. The text can be found on ARC’s website, in English, Portuguese and Spanish.

**6. Partnerships, Eco-twinning and creating your own environment department**

**a) Dedicated staff**

Do you have staff dedicated to developing environmental work? If not, could you consider developing an environment office?

Buddhists in Cambodia have set up their own environmental organisation – Association of Buddhists for the Environment (ABE). It is staffed and run by monks, while being assisted by many secular agencies in projects such as reforestation, environmental education and sustainable housing. At first it seemed quite expensive and time consuming to create an office, but the Buddhists have realised that it is an important
element of reaching out to young people. Living their faith in this way has required new skills, like making films, developing websites, as well as old skills like growing and caring for trees and having compassion for people and nature, and that this is now an important way for the faith to live its ancient beliefs, and to live in the modern world at the same time.

In China, a new Daoist alliance of temples has been established, with its headquarters at Louguandai temple and its daughter shrine of Taibaishan where ARC and the Dutch environmental foundation EMF have helped them build their first "eco-temple".

b) Lay people
Have you tried to involve lay people who are active in environmental fields to help you develop appropriate ecological responses to issues? Lay people often want to contribute but no-one asks them to do so. Try establishing an Advisory Group of members of your faith who are specialists in different fields related to the environment – law, water management, land management, education, waste management etc. The Advisory Group will not only offer you the most professional advice; it can also link your programmes into the wider work of local, national or international agencies and governments, and mean that your own efforts are multiplied, or leveraged.

The Board of Deputies of British Judaism established an environment group which drew together some of the greatest minds and most professional environmentalists in the UK. They had never before been asked to think about how their faith shaped their work or how their work could shape their faith. It led to many new initiatives throughout the UK. Are there prominent Buddhists in Mongolia who, although not monks, would be interested in thinking about how their faith can shape their work?

c) Other Partnerships
Look around and see who might partner with you because they share the same interest in organic farming, clean energy usage, recycling etc. There is no need always to reinvent the wheel. Have you made links with secular bodies that are working, environmentally, in the field? Have you made links with other faith bodies in your region that are interested in improving their environmental impact? Are
there areas where you can share expertise and experience and avoid duplication? Are there any commercial groups involved in the environment who would work with you, and who might give you a significant discount because you would give their product a greater profile?

7. Celebration

a) Traditional Festivals
Have you set aside a specific festival to focus on the natural environment – for example a tree festival or a Celebration of Creation?

In Judaism, the festival of Tu B’Shvat – the New Year of Trees – has become a major environmental festival with education kits, new prayers and projects helping to mobilise Judaism every year. Meanwhile the day of mourning – Tisha B’Av – marked every summer to mark the destruction of the two ancient Holy Temples in Jerusalem, has been extended in some Jewish traditions as a lament for the destruction of the earth.

b) New Festivals
If you have not got an existing festival of creation in your tradition, could you take an existing festival or custom and adapt its practices and rituals so that there is a deeper environmental message?

c) Introduce new traditions and create a platform
Many religious leaders value tradition so much that they have no hesitation in introducing new ones. Perhaps you can introduce a new practice, which will be wonderful for Creation, as well as for people. Many faiths are expert at bringing people together: and their places of worship are often wonderful buildings for holding forums for events. Open up your place of worship for a party or fete on environmental issues; create a forum for debate; issue an invitation to people in your wider community inviting them to come and tell their story.

The Northern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania now has a programme of tree planting linked to key life events. For example, trees are presented to children at their baptism, for their parents to plant. Those children in turn must plant a number of their own trees before they can be
confirmed. Can Buddhists similarly introduce tree-planting for key life events in Mongolia?

In 1987, WWF-UK worked with a number of churches around the UK who wanted to make the Harvest Festival into a celebration of Creation. Many decided to invite the managers of their local supermarkets to give a sermon on everything their company was doing to help the environment. It was reported that head office telephones were ringing off the hook as regional managers called to find out what they should say. By the following year, they had programmes in place, and had something to talk about and be proud of. By 1993 it was estimated that around one-quarter of schools and 1000 churches around the country were doing Creation Harvest Festivals.

d) Celebrate beautiful places and new developments
The world, despite all its problems, is still a beautiful place. Sometimes it is the role of faiths, within all the doom and gloom of ecological predictions, to remind people to celebrate the beautiful, good, heroic and brave things about the world and about life. Celebrate good new developments, the potential for better protection of habitats and eco-systems, and give thanks.
II. WHAT NEXT?

Over the next eight years we are inviting the Buddhist communities in Mongolia to draw up their plans, and start to put things in motion.

Once you have explored some or all of the topics above, we invite you to start creating your own Eight Year Plan for Generational Change.

The Plans will take many different shapes as they are taken up by different communities in different countries. What we are interested in is the shape that makes best sense for you and your faith tradition. We have indicated the seven key areas we believe are important. It is likely that of these two or three will be central to your own situation and the others more peripheral.

Be adventurous but also think about how you will fund, manage and sustain this plan – not only over the eight years that it will probably take to initiate new ways of doing things, but over the following generations as well, when the changes in ethos will really start being seen and felt.

To what extent can you build this into existing jobs, staffing or structures? Will you need to appoint or recruit new people to manage this?

We would like you to tell us about your Eight Year Plan by the end of July 2009 at the latest. We have a steering group of representatives from major environmental organisations who will then, if that is appropriate, help you ensure that your Eight Year Plan is as environmentally significant and practical as possible. We would also like to help you think about how to communicate your Plan as widely as possible within your community and tradition, as well as to the wider community.

In November 2009 we hope to announce the number, nature and extent of the Seven and Eight Year Plans around the world. You will be invited to join us either virtually, or in person at your own cost.
III. RESOURCES AND CONTACTS

The Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC)
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Website: www.arcworld.org

IV. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Audits

Many faiths have now created audit kits to help their communities assess how to cut energy use, organise more environmentally-friendly transport, buy greener and more fair-trade products etc.

This Guidebook assumes that you have either done this or have access to such audit kits. If not then you might like to look at some of the audits that have already been produced by environmental organisations, faith groups and governments:

* The Big Green Jewish website www.biggreenjewish.org/

* Or the Church of England’s Shrinking the Footprint audit list, at http://tinyurl.com/5blalw

* A New Zealand audit for churches, parishes and agencies, is at http://tinyurl.com/4ss77q

* Go to http://tinyurl.com/4skxe2 on the ARC website, or download the Climate Change Partnership Handbook from our downloads section.

* Also on the ARC website download and read about the Benedictine Ecological audit, Listening to the Earth. http://tinyurl.com/5wts5y, also available in Portuguese and Spanish.
Appendix 2: Sacred Gifts

The Eight Year Plan is not just about new initiatives: we are also keen to celebrate and acknowledge existing environmental projects and ongoing work on climate change-related issues.

At a major meeting of faiths and environmentalists in Kathmandu in 2000, ARC and WWF created a special term of recognition for significant environmental projects carried out by the world’s religions.

“Sacred Gifts for a Living Planet” highlighted both the theology and the practice of caring for the environment that every major religion now advocates and undertakes. The first 26 gifts were recognised internationally in November 2000 and a further 14 were added in November 2002.

As the then Director-General of WWF International, Dr Claude Martin said: ‘Sacred Gifts are catalysts for action. They are conservation templates for religious followers around the world’.

The gifts ranged from a Cairo rubbish dump made into a public park, to the work of Cambodian Buddhists protecting their forests, to an initiative for Jewish organisations to run environmental audits, to the work of the Episcopal Power and Light Ministry in promoting renewable energy. Please see http://tinyurl.com/5w968 on ARC’s website for more details We will continue this tradition of ‘Sacred Gifts’ in this Seven/Eight Year Plan process and invite you to be part of that.

If you have a current project that you would like to see honoured, and which you believe would be inspirational to others, please let us know, by e-mailing us at info@arcworld.org, calling us at +44 1225 758004, faxing us at +44 1225 442962 or writing to us at ARC, The House, Kelston Park, Bath BA1 9AT, UK. We look forward to hearing from you.