

AFRICAN FAITH COMMITMENTS FOR A LIVING PLANET

SAMMANIYA SUFI SECT, SUDAN Long-term plan on the environment – summary

INTRODUCTION

Under the leadership of Sheikh Mohammad Alshaikh Gariballah, the leader of the Samanniya Sufi sect in Sudan, this long-term plan is to create awareness of environmental issues and climate change for members of the Sammaniya Sufi Sect in Sudan, within the context of Islam's teachings on preservation.

The Sammaniya has a following of more than one million members in all parts of Sudan, with the largest density being in Khartoum State, especially in the Omdurman area where the Sheikh Gariballah mosque – the Sammaniya headquarters – is located. Almost every large city in Sudan has a Sammaniya mosque. Each mosque usually has a Khalwa – a Qur'an teaching school. The Sheikh Gariballah mosque alone, for example, houses around 500 students.

There is also the Alihsan organisation which is part Al Sammaniya's charity and humanitarian work. This organisation provides health care services through its health centres all around the country. The main target groups for this long-term plan are elementary and high schools, beginning with those in Khartoum State. Khartoum State has a huge number of schools but the target project in its first cycle is around 30 schools in Khartoum State and around another 30 in Aljazeera State and Red Sea.

THE PROJECT INCLUDES:

- Awareness workshops for schoolteachers – educating them on the environment, climate change and Islam's views on the issues;
- Providing lessons and activities for school children on the importance of conserving the environment;
- Teaching recycling methods to students and teachers;
- Growing seedlings for planting all around Khartoum;
- Providing water coolers for schools made out of natural materials.

The next step for the project would be to increase the numbers of schools and expand it to more states. Phase three of the project would be to target university students as educated youth play an important role in environmental conservation.

In March 2012 Sheikh Gariballah organised a conference on global warming, its effects and Islam's views on the environment, in collaboration with the British Council in Khartoum. The event was hosted in the Friendship Hall in Khartoum and was attended by around 1,300 people. It was led by Sheikh Mohamed Gariballa, with Bishop Philisouth, Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Khartoum, providing the Christian perspective on environmental conservation in Sudan. The Minister of the Environment also attended along with the leaders of some of the largest Sufi sects in the country.

The British Council also sponsored the publication of a guide, Environment in Islam, written by Sheikh Gariballa. This was launched at ARC's meeting in Nairobi, Kenya in March 2011 for faith leaders in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Sheikh has also established nurseries in several mosques in Khartoum and has distributed trees to mosques and worshippers as well as holding lectures about Islam and the Environment in some of the country's largest mosques.

This plan is endorsed by Sheikh Mohammad Alshaikh Gariballah, the leader of the Samanniya Sufi sect in Sudan

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