

JLI Climate Webinar Series: Summary

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Introduction

The Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities' (JLI) vision is the full and appropriate engagement of the capacities of faith-based groups in the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The JLI's convenes policymakers, academics and professionals to build and communicate evidence of religions' and faith-based organizations' roles in development work. Because of interest in topics such as climate change, ecology and the environment, JLI created a webinar series to highlight and discuss faith and community work around these topics. Each session focused on specific instances of the intersection of faith, community and the environment.

Local communities globally are increasingly impacted by climate change. Local faith communities are involved not only in building awareness of the impact of climate change but also bringing religious and spiritual understandings of stewardship and care for our planet to the discussion. Additionally, faith-based NGOs are working in climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation support in communities and mobilizing faith communities to advocate for change. These organizations are developing climate-sensitive ways of operating in their humanitarian and development movements.

[Ep. 1: Faith-based Climate Programs and Practice Examples](#)

Key points:

- Understand narratives and language that must be used to clearly explain the project. For example, particular words and frameworks about climate change will be more applicable to certain modes of religious beliefs and practices and therefore make a difference in communications with people.
- Working with religious and community leaders is a key starting point for implementing programs. Having a trusted facilitator or mediator can help to ensure that no information is left behind or

misunderstood – they act as a culture broker between international concepts around climate and local realities and interpretations.

Gopal Patel: [The Bhumi Project](#) – Renewable Energy in Religious Institutions in India

Speaker: Gopal Patel, Director

The Bhumi Project was started as a joint initiative of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies and GreenFaith. While they discuss varying issues regarding climate change and environmental degradation, they have found a lot of success working in the renewable energy sector in India.

India's second largest investment market is renewable energy.

The Indian government claims that India is completely electrified, but because of semantics, this essentially means that if a village has 10% of their needs met, they are considered “electrified.” The Bhumi Project has realized the difficulty of discussing sustainability and clean energy when 200+ million people in India still do not have access to reliable energy.

Notably, many religious institutions were [already using renewable energy](#). To understand the reality of energy use in religious groups in 2018, the Bhumi Project surveyed 30 religious and spiritual organizations, including faiths such as Sikhism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity, to find out what they have done regarding the environment.ⁱ Their report included examples of religious organization participating in clean energy, such as:

- The Golden Temple, for Sikhs in Amritsar, feeds hundreds of thousands of people daily and they completely run on solar power.
- A Hindu Temple in Tirupati and a Mosque in Karnataka both solely run on renewable energy as well.

The report found that most individual places of worship have not shifted to renewable energy to save money but rather to have constant energy sources. Additionally, there is little communication within a religion and across religions on the benefits of renewable energy.

The Bhumi Project introduced four methods to remedy this:

1. *Narrative Development:* Patel described how they quickly understood that certain wording was not beneficial to the renewable energy dialogue. This was confirmed by a report done in tandem with Oxford showing that words, such as “environmental justice,” may turn communities off, but “responsibility towards the earth/others” draws interest towards action.
2. *Training Religious Leaders/Communities:* In India, it is not uncommon that religious leaders also have a very large political role, which is why it is extremely impactful to work with religious groups who can also enact political change.
3. *Build a Collaborative Roadmap:* The Bhumi Project seeks to help connect social, religious and solar companies together to create a lasting impact. In India’s example, all the resources are present, they simply need to be connected.
4. *Connecting with other traditions:* To maximize outreach the Bhumi Project does not brand projects with a particular religion as not to discourage other religions from participating in the future.

Chantal Elkin: [Wildlife Programme at the Alliance of Religions and Conservation \(ARC\)](#) – Protecting Forests and Wildlife with the National Islamic Authority in Indonesia

Speaker: Chantel Elkin, Director

This organization is a British-based NGO whose mission is to help all the major religions develop environmental programs that are rooted in their core beliefs.

Islamic approaches in Indonesia:

Indonesia is one of the most biodiverse countries with 90 million hectares of forest. However, they are also the third largest emitter of greenhouse gases. Because 90% of Indonesians are Muslims, Islam is a cultural force that can enact environmental policies. The MUI, which stands for National Islamic Authority, is an umbrella group of Muslims in Indonesia who have influence on Muslims in the country. Islam is deeply rooted in Indonesian culture which means the MUI not only affects the actions of mosques and Islamic schools but also individual choice. With the MUI's help, ARC has been able to start many initiatives on climate change such as the [Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change](#), which calls for Muslims to take a stand against climate change.

Main ARC and MUI partner actions:

- Eco-Pesantren: works with Islamic schools to increase environmental education
- Eco-Masjid: encourages Mosques to go green and raise awareness of climate change
- Green Hajj: hosts an app which facilitates pilgrimages to Mecca to practice zero waste as they travel. This is done by planting trees to offset emissions.
- Interfaith Rainforest Initiative: works to bring faith and indigenous leaders to influence climate action

Fatwas:

Another way ARC has increased Islamic involvement in climate change discussions is by pushing for Fatwas, which are legal rulings for the Muslim community. The first environmental fatwa was 15 pages worth of information showing contextual evidence, from the Quran, that supported a decree against wildlife destruction. Since then, there have been other fatwas including one that warned against the dangers of forest fires and protecting [endangered species](#). These fatwas provide an outline in which environmental protection can be a topic of discussion within Muslim communities.

ARC developed Sermon Guides regarding the Fatwas and seeing impacts:

Today, they have trained over 400 Muslim leaders with these Sermon Guides. ARC has seen the impacts of the fatwas through national observance. From their initial surveying in 2015, there has since been a 30% increase in intention among villagers to support conservation.

Stephen Tasker: [Adventist Development and Relief Agency \(ADRA\)](#) and [Transform Aid International](#) – Climate-aware community development in the Solomon Islands

Speaker: Stephen Tasker, Solomon Islands Director

Tasker now works with ADRA, which aims to implement long-term development solutions and assist in emergency response. However, Tasker mostly shared his work with Transform Aid International which implemented the Model Community Development Program in the Solomon Islands. Due to a recent civil war, communities in the Solomon Islands do not feel empowered to lead their own development, which results in a high reliance on foreign aid and lack of change in communities. To change this, Tasker worked specifically with the South Sea Evangelical Church (SSEC). This religious group represents about 20% of the population in the Solomon Islands and has a high level of influence on what happens in the islands' communities.

When Tasker came to the Solomon Islands, the SSEC sought out evangelical work but was not initially interested in doing development or climate change-oriented work. However, after a tsunami killed over 60 people, the highest in memory on the islands, they wanted to help and understood the importance of the work.

How the Program was Developed:

To create a program that the SSEC could replicate in the future, Tasker asked them to look at their own mission statement and to see how they can implement it. Together they agreed upon creating model communities so that other communities would have a source of guidance on how to help themselves and reduce reliance from the outside.

Beginning of Development:

The church started by raising awareness through spirituality and biblical stories believing that God had given them resources they need to reconsider how they used these resources. Then they changed habits such as using a dryer rack for dishes, protecting cooking areas, using waste pits, using pit toilets and keeping communal areas clean to protect the environment immediately around them and avoid negative health effects.

Phases of Development Explained in a Community Example

- Community organization to build cohesiveness: Since the SSEC is a religious group they felt the need to have a spiritual awakening. Tasker did not participate as a developmental worker but stressed the need for the community to feel united in their actions.
- Community self-awareness, setting priorities: They have realized that there is a need for raised footpaths within the mangrove forests to protect the ecosystem yet not lose accessibility when there is flooding.
- Priorities addressed: After setting their goals, the community made more than 3 kilometers (2 miles) of raised footpaths all over the village. These paths connected the church, community hall, village store, public meeting area and wharf.
- Setting them in the right direction: the creation of these footpaths has inspired the community to build a preschool to increase early childhood education, as well as more paths.

The Results:

With the raised footpaths, transportation was not limited by climate-influenced floods. Additionally, after working with the community, it was clear that they had shifted from seeing development as a wish list to now a group working together to help themselves. They understand that their needs and assets are interwoven and now climate change adaptation is part of their work.

Questions for the Speakers

Has there been any resistance from religious group/communities against climate change programs?

- Patel says that money can become a factor that prohibits some religious groups from participating in green behavior, even causing some temples to feel as though they do not have the financial resources to achieve change.
- Elkin shares the importance of having a facilitator who can effectively communicate information about conservation to community groups. Without this facilitator, some communities do not feel as if they can trust an outsider.
- Tasker says that small communities have experienced the ways that money leads to tensions or selfishness causing push back on development work. However, once the presence of financial support for climate change adaptation and community development was framed from a biblical stance and as part of the community's work together, they were comfortable with assistance.

Can you elaborate on how you build the capacity of religious groups/communities to address climate change on their own?

Patel, Elkin and Tasker stressed the importance of creating relationships with community leaders who are known and trusted in the area. Once these leaders have been trained or are open to discussion this greatly reduces pressures of misinterpretation and increases capacity for success.

[Ep. 2: Interfaith Climate Initiatives](#)

Key points:

- By looking at issues from various levels (micro, meso, macro) one can gain a better perspective on the different needs at each level and find means of appropriately working on them. There is not a one size fits all option.

- Understanding that science and religion do not have to be opposing forces opens a path to see a way in which one can use both for climate justice. This includes supporting scientists of faith and translating scientific materials into accessible documents for faith communities.

Rabbi Leo Dee: [The Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development](#) – Working on climate across different levels of society in Israel

Speaker: Rabbi Leo Dee, Project Coordinator for Eco Tourism and Eco Bible Commentary

While government can be helpful, this organization was created because governments continuously fail to tackle issues regarding climate change and environmental degradation. The Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development believes working with and [educating religious leaders allows ways to create lasting change](#).

Sustainability at different levels

- Micro – a local level: The Growing Together Project unites women educators from schools in East and West Jerusalem to create vertical classroom and school garden. While the program itself helps to create vertical gardens, its impact stretches further than just the classroom. By connecting women from West and East Jerusalem they can improve collaboration and partnerships among three religions and two nationalities, as well as provide sustainable education.
- Meso – a commercial level: On the surface the Faith Inspired Renewable Energy Project, also known as the F.I.R.E Project. provides renewable energy, but Dee described that it goes deeper than that. Renewable energy is put on land leased from an orphanage of genocide survivors. This enables the community to make change for themselves while providing them with the ability to power their schools, homes, and community centers.
- Macro – a national level: Even before Israel was formally created as the Jewish State, they had to combat the problem of water scarcity. In response, they created a water treatment plant where techniques such

as water desalinization and water recycling are used. Since the 1950s, this technology initiative has trained over 270,000 people in 130 countries helping to prevent water scarcity all over the world.

Increasing religious awareness of sustainability

A recent MORI (Market and Opinion Research International) survey polled science, engineering, medical and technical research professionals and reported that about 50% are religious/spiritualⁱⁱ. This supports the idea that religion and science do not have to be antithetical. Dee sees this demonstrating the importance of religious organizations showing their support of sustainability because this could impact their faith community members who are working in scientific professions and can work on technological solutions to climate change.

Rev. Fletcher Harper: [GreenFaith](#) – Interfaith Leadership and Support for Climate Action

Speaker: Rev. Fletcher Harper, Executive Director

According to their mission statement, "GreenFaith inspires, educates and mobilizes diverse religious communities globally for environmental action." Harper stated that "interfaith work plays a singular and irreplaceable role." Additionally, protecting the environment, from an interfaith perspective, challenges us to push the threshold into territories to which we are unaccustomed. However, there are techniques that have proven valuable in this line of work, which he then described in more detail.

By using values-based learning, environmental information can cross religions making a lasting impact:

- Spirit: traditions see sacredness in nature and proclaim this in text, ritual and teaching.
- Stewardship: consumption habits can heal and restore the earth. He points out how no religious texts say that we should consume as much as we can.
- Justice: mobilizing people of faith to create a healthy environment for all. Almost all religions have an aspect of trying to help the impoverished.

GreenFaith's interfaith activities include:

- *Training and capacity building:* GreenFaith's fellowship program seeks to bolster education and leadership training regarding the environment through retreats, webinars, reading, writing and public speaking for the last 11 years. They hope to cultivate an equity lens, covering ethnic, gender and economic justice when considering the environment and climate. GreenFaith has created other resources such as [religious teachings, curricula, and books with discussion questions](#).
- *Campaigning, mobilizing, advocating:* GreenFaith tries to support organizations in pursuit of sustainability especially when it might be hard for some religions and denominations to make public statements regarding the climate. GreenFaith also works with religious partners around the world and aims at worldwide divestment from fossil fuels and access for renewable energy with the Divest and Shine project.
- *Local organizing on an interfaith level:* GreenFaith Circles gives support to local faith and spiritual communities. These circles provide a space for those who are deeply passionate about sustainability to get inspiration from others as well as connect with SBNRs (spiritual but not religious groups).

Iyad Abumoghli: UN Environment – [The UN's Faith for Earth Initiative as an international, interfaith example](#)

Speaker: Dr. Iyad Abumoghli, Principal Advisor for Strategic Engagement with Faith-based Organizations

Faith for Earth Initiative

The UN's Faith for Earth Initiative was established in 2017 to get faith-based organizations engaged in environmental degradation issues. The initiative recognizes that we are in the fourth industrial revolution of the modern world with cyber technology meaning we can no longer continue development as we have. To preserve our earth, we must change the way we see economic growth.

Goal 1: Leadership for Policy Impact

Abumoghli stated that empowerment of all faith leaders to speak out on climate change must occur. The UN has held forums in the past for faith-based leaders and other community members to discuss and adopt resolutions about the environment. This specifically takes place every two years at the UN Environmental Assembly. Once the UN has mobilized these faith-based leaders and their communities together they can campaign using their influence to create impact in the fight against climate change.

Goal 2: Greening FBOs assets and financing the SDGs

Currently, faith-based organizations are one of the largest economic powers, often building schools, hospitals, and other infrastructure for the benefit of their communities. Unfortunately, this money in the past may have come from investing in fossil fuels. Regardless, Abumoghli believes now is an opportunity to reinvest in sustainable practices.

Another way to “green” faith-based organization is to install solar panels on places of worship. There are currently 37 million Christian churches in the world, 3.6 million mosques in the world, 20,000 synagogues, and countless temples around the world and if each building had one solar panel there would be over 60 million solar panels.

Goal 3: Science – Faith-Based Evidence.

The UN and other transnational and national organizations produce hundreds of documents relating to climate change and methods of reducing its impact. However, these articles are not used by faith organizations because they are not accessible or comprehensible for daily use. This initiative strives to better communicate scientific evidence so it can be shared within faith-based communities.

Questions for the Speakers

How would better evidence of faith engagement in climate action strengthen faith-based advocacy? What are the evidence gaps?

- Referring to the MORI study, Dee noted that we need to hear more from religious engineers and other technicians in the environmental science field. This would tell a story in an area we have little knowledge about.
- Harper questioned the efficacy of multifaith advocacy groups as compared to work done by secular partners and climate education taught by a faith-based educator as compared to other environmental education. If we learn from other efforts, faith-based actors may learn more about existing good practices in the environmental science and education world.
- Abumoghli took the question in a different turn claiming that there is already a lot of evidence and research done by faith-based organizations. As there are many organizations with overlapping work, instead organizations must work together to ensure that limited resources are used well.

What kinds of work are you all doing in terms of influencing theological narratives into educational institutional and everyday places of worship on the issues of environmental sustainability?

- To prepare clergy and other faith leaders to be able to discuss issues of climate change and affect theological narratives, The Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development holds conferences frequently. Furthermore, to connect with everyday faith, The Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development has begun creating a commentary on the bible to show how sustainability plays out in religious works.
- Harper explained GreenFaith's work with Climate Outreach in the UK through professional communications research to see what narratives work in the theological arena. To avoid the current divergence of formal theological narratives from what everyday people of faith experience, Harper recommends that congregations of all faiths must listen to their leaders, but leaders also must listen to members who may have a deep intuition about sustainability.

Ep. 3: Applied Academic Climate Research

Key points:

- Research has focused on male religious leaders and is led by institutions in the Global North. There is a need to bring forward the voices of other types of climate change leadership, such as women and young people, foregrounding examples from and with researchers in the Global South.
- At all times a critical lens must be worn when looking at climate change research – is religious engagement effect and, if so, why?

Dr. Evan Berry: An overview of religions and climate research

Assistant professor of Environmental Humanities in the School of History, Philosophy, and Religious Studies at Arizona State University.

In the past five years, Berry worked on two projects regarding the intersection of religious actors, theological ideas, and environmental politics. The first project discussed environmental justice in Latin America resulting in the book "Church Cosmo Vision and the Environment." The second project draws together researchers from a wide variety of fields including political scientists, scholars of religion and anthropologists. The "Religion and Climate Change in Cross-regional Perspective" project looked at climate change and environmental problem solving at the local and national level. Berry shared some findings from that project.

Questions about the Big Picture

Before Berry shared some of his findings from the "Religion and Climate Change in Cross-regional Perspective" project he emphasized how academic research can be helpful to draw out the big picture situation. The questions that we must ask are:

- Is religious engagement with climate change expanding?

- Is religious engagement effective? If so, where and why?

The answers to these questions are examined in several case studies done by colleagues of Berry described below.

Gangotri Valley: Debates about Causes of Climate Change

David Habermen, a researcher at Indiana University, has observed the changing narrative in the Gangotri Valley through ethnographic interviews. Through these interviews Habermen has seen, as compared to 30 years ago, communities now understand the science behind climate change and want to mobilize. Since this valley is a pilgrimage site there is a large network of infrastructure hotels and transportation. The people of Gangotri have seen the effects of pilgrimage specific infrastructure on their environment and wish to remedy the effects for the future. This situation draws out the importance of understanding how climate change discussions at a local level are different than those at a national level.

Fiji: Religious Actors Broker Relocation Planning

Another colleague of Berry, Amanda Pertana of the University of Maine, researched a situation where the government of Fiji was hoping to resettle a community further inland. While the government was only trying to ensure the safety of its people, the community felt an attachment to their land and did not wish to leave. Local religious groups were able to broker the situation, weighing the wishes of the affected community and the government. Pertana's study demonstrates how religious groups have an important function in building trust between groups.

Tobago: Local Participation in Coral Reef Management

Roger Mark Desueza, who is now the executive director of Sister Cities International, investigated local participation for coral reef management plans. The youth prayer group involved was a part of a community-based research project that was then passed to officials as a report on the condition on the reef. Together the

youth and the officials were able to find ways to manage tourism without disrupting the natural ecosystem. Here, Desueza was able to see that religious groups frequently play the role of helping decide local action.

Recommendations based on Research

- Faith-based groups play an important role in translating scientific information into political and ethical concepts for the local level and to share a local concern with international policy makers
- Faith-based groups are well positioned to facilitate culturally appropriate adaptation projects. They can help communities build projects that not only suit their needs but also are within the communities' religious, cultural, and moral frameworks.

Ulil Amri: Primary Research on Climate and Education with Indonesia's *Pesantren*

University of Washington/Indonesian Institute of Science

Originally from Indonesia, his PhD research is based on an Indonesian Pesantren's religious environmentalism and renewable energy project.

Pesantren

A Pesantren is an Islamic education institution in Indonesia. In the past, a pesantren was purely an education institution but today it is also seen as more of an economic institution and more environmentally friendly. Indonesia has about 30,000 pesantrens around the country.

Pesantren Sunan Rajth Case Study

A pesantren in Sunan Rajth created a committee to plant candlenut trees and research alternative energy sources. In a partnership with a private company, this pesantren has initiated a biodiesel project using the candlenut. Not only do these trees serve as a source for candlenuts to research their potential biodiesel fuel but also as biophilia by bringing the faculty and students of the Pesantren joy.

Bow, they extract the oil from the candlenut to use as fuel. However, they are still developing the candlenut oil extraction technique and are confident that they can refine the oil through procedures to extend the efficiency of the oil.

To maintain the supply of the oil, the pesantren plant trees as they research to maintain and eventually increase the supply of the trees. They have planted as many as a few thousand trees throughout Indonesia.

Thoughts and Recommendations:

- Global, national and local focus have led to the emergence of religious environmentalism in Indonesia. An example of this is the global demand for alternative energy or action on climate change and how a local pesantren responded to make change. There are multiple reasons for creating alternative energy sources from candlenuts such as saving the environment and persevering it for the future, but the global demand pushed this local community to act.
- Future work should be focused on the connection between Ecology and Economy. The ecology-economic connection can drive initial interest for those who may not be environmentally inclined to become involved in sustainability.
- By creating biofuel, the Sunan Rajth pesantren has the potential to lessen their financial burdens. The Sunan Rajth pesantren could become a model for other educational institutions to ease economic pressures through climate-aware innovation.

Vanessa Pizer: [Research on climate resilience in food security in Zimbabwe and Tanzania between Episcopal Relief and Development and Cornell University](#)

Senior Program Officer for International Programs at Episcopal Relief & Development

Episcopal Relief & Development partners with local communities, specifically Anglican and Episcopal churches, to tackle issues that affect women, children, and the climate. In the communities that they work in, they are seeing increasingly more droughts, floods and other climate-induced disasters. Therefore, Episcopal

Relief & Development has partnered with Cornell's School of Agriculture and Life Sciences Global fellowship program. Vanessa Pizer worked closely with professors Terry Tucker and Peter Hobbs to research food security in Zimbabwe and Tanzania.

Research

For this partnership, they mainly focused on the effects of droughts in the region. While the two communities, Zimbabwe and Tanzania, had similarities, the scoping study was meant to show what differences between the two were. The in-country study took one week in each country and all data collected was qualitative. The results are described below.

- *A focus on partnership*

One key learning from the experiment was a focus on partnership and striving for mutual benefit. This was done by balancing all shared interests, priorities and skillsets. Thus, it was important to have local partner staff be a part of the research. The local staff was also able to bolster their own leadership, networking and learning opportunities.

- *A focus on process*

By focusing on process, Episcopal Relief & Development was able to reorient farmers to the new and changing climates and to better equip them for the future. One technique taught was creating calendars that mapped the recent weather patterns to help predict upcoming ones and start a conversation on weather patterns.

- *A focus on learning*

The researchers, farmers and community members learned from each other. By understanding the transfer of information researchers connected better with the community.

Key recommendations from Research

The partners found team-based research to be worthwhile. Their team noticed that by having multiple levels of education including master's students, community members, professors and others they were able to draw more knowledge of all aspects of the project.

Other technical recommendations to build resilient rural communities affected by climate change included having youth inclusion and diversifying income to make sure that farmers have more than one source of income.

Questions for the Speakers

Where are the research and knowledge gaps? Where should JLI focus?

- Berry stated how most of the research that he shared was weighed to the global north, even when the subjects of the studies may be of the global south.
- Amri discussed his constant challenge – how does academic discussion bring real impact for the people who are facing these everyday issues at the local level? During his PhD, his interlocutor questioned his own reasonings for helping Amri with his research.
- Pizer shared her wish to see more case studies and see how multifaceted teams, with faith and non-faith partners, affect the research.

How can we see these through a gender lens?

Berry, Amri and Pizer agreed that it is important that we look at every study through different lenses. Berry mentioned how we hear a lot about male religious officials and their role in climate change discussion, but this is not the whole picture. This does not allow us to see what is happening in conversations on the ground with the whole community, including women.

According to Pizer women are frequently left in underdeveloped countries as caretakers and farmers while men go to urban centers to find other jobs. This means that in some places women are facing climate change and environmental degradation more directly than men.

Ep. 4: Advocacy on Faith and Climate

Key points:

- Between faiths and cultures, we may not agree on everything, but we have a responsibility to keep the climate change conversation going.
- It is the responsibility of those with a voice to speak up for those without one. This is the only way in which unjust practices and policies can be diminished.

Isaiah Kipyegon Toroitich: [ACT Alliance's Advocacy Work](#)

ACT Alliance in Geneva, Head of Advocacy and Development Policy

ACT Alliance in Geneva is a network of 156 churches and affiliates working in 120 countries. Since 2010, ACT has taken on several climate change advocacy initiatives. Toroitich works on their initiative called "Act Now for Climate Justice." This program includes the mobilization of faith, policy work and a wide variety of advocacy.

Justice as their basis for Climate Change Advocacy because:

- The most vulnerable countries have contributed the least yet are still affected the most by climate change
- Most countries affected by climate change are poor and do not have the capacity to respond to climate change impacts alone

For these reasons, ACT Alliance has decided to make vulnerable communities their main concern and put them at the forefront of all discussion. This helps hold countries, companies, and people responsible and accountable for carbon emissions.

Policy Priorities

- *Support climate resilience of the vulnerable* – This considers the fact that individuals affected must adapt regardless of resources left. ACT understands that for these individuals to properly adapt to climate change and environmental degradation, they will need support.
- *Without financial/technological capacity, the poor and vulnerable cannot respond to climate change* - This goes hand in hand with the previous point. It becomes especially difficult when there is little technology and financial resources to solve these issues. ACT focuses on how resources can be made available to those who need it.
- *Our survival depends on low carbon development* – The IPCC report states that our economy, as it is today, does not support sustainability. Everyone on Earth must work together to make active change considering we have no more time for avoidance.
- *Ambitious policy and action at all levels with gender justice and human rights* - ACT advocates for the intersectionality of human rights, gender justice, and climate change for long term change.

Part 1: Capacity Enhancement

This organization strives to build the capabilities of faith groups around the world to increase their local, national and global advocacy abilities through training over 200 people all over the world and creating a virtual academy.

Part 2: Faith Actors' Mobilization

Here they take two approaches: religious and political. ACT encourages religious congregations to start climate change dialogue within their own community and participate in political actions including local and national demonstrations.

Part 3: Lobbying and Dialogue

There are several ways in which ACT get their members to be involved:

- Create technological papers with a focus on climate change effect and equity issues.

- Create opportunities for stakeholders, government offices, and themselves to have discussions that otherwise do not happen in the open.

Part 4: Research and Evidence

By creating research papers and providing evidence they can link issues that are frequently overlooked by religious groups when reading other climate change papers.

Successes

Government actors and other organizations now recognize the knowledge and power that faith-based actors have. This enables faith-based actors to increase their involvement and enact change.

Sarah Wiggins: [Tearfund's Movement Building Approach to Climate Advocacy](#)

Tearfund, Global Advocacy Team Co-Leader

Tearfund is an international humanitarian and development organization that draws from their evangelical roots to work in over 50 countries around the world. Though the organization began considering climate in 1992, in 2009 they redefined their commitments to prioritize climate action after the failure to reach an international agreement in Copenhagen.

The challenge

Within the last five years, Tearfund has changed its avenues for advocacy to gain maximum results. After realizing that the main problem is that the economy is not delivering for the poorest communities, they wrote a vision document, "A Restorative Economy," which took the attention away from singular issues and to a larger scope of issues.

Change Requires

- *Critical Mass*: They understand that governments know what to do but will not act until there is a critical mass, at least 25% of the general public, speaking out on an issue and 3.5% of the population protesting.

- *Alternative, Contextualized Narratives:* Currently in Africa there is a group, Abundant Africa, that is working to create an economic narrative that is contextualized for their environmental issues.
- *Clever or Reactive Thinking:* By getting involved with other programs or using celebrities, an organization can get sustained public engagement.

What works

Sharing other stories: For example, many countries do not have electricity. When it is shown that school children cannot study after sunset or that production is reduced due to manual machines, investors are more likely to invest in alternative energy sources and support these communities.

Transforming Hearts and Minds: By changing the lifestyles of individuals, they can implement long term success. Tearfund's program tailors learning to each country/region. They are given an example of people whose lifestyles are similar to their own and stories from the bible to renew their values and faith. Once individuals change, there is a chance for societal change.

Building Movements: As a faith-based organization they can get their constituency involved. They have had success giving theological education on climate to young adults who take that back to their congregations.

What does not work

- Conferences: after some days the momentum is lost.
- Small steps on their own: there is nothing to ensure long-term engagement
- Lifestyle changes on their own: nothing is holding people accountable to continue with these changes.

Helen Mugo: [Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa \(CYNESA\)](#)

Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA), Acting Director of Research and Partnership

CYNESA is a youth founded and led NGO that works to address the challenges of climate change and environmental degradation in Africa, specifically Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Zambia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Why Youth?

In Africa there are over 1.8 billion people between the ages of 10-24 and that number is growing – meaning that they are the largest part of the population in Africa. However, it also means that the youth population will experience climate change to the fullest extent.

“Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future, without thinking of the environmental crisis, and the sufferings of the excluded.” (Pope Francis, Encyclical Laudato Si)

As a youth group, CYNESA draws inspiration from this quote. Mugo notes that even the Paris Agreement acknowledges that climate change as a common concern of humankind and identifies intergenerational equity as one of the issues that parties should consider when acting.

Example of Youth Advocacy

In Africa, people rely on farming for income and food and that can become a vulnerability. People are starving because rain patterns have changed, and crops have failed season to season. Unfortunately, they do not know why they are experiencing these drastic changes in climate. CYNESA explains climate change to these farmers and helps them cope with what they are going through. At the community level, they work with governments and other civil society organizations to advocate for those who cannot for themselves. At an international level they work with UN Environment and UNFCCC.

Examples of Global Climate Advocacy by Youth

- Climate Strikes – These strikes are inspired by Greta Thunberg, a teen from Sweden. Every Friday youth around the world protest government inaction.

- Laudato Si Generation – This movement, started by Catholic youth, participates in climate strikes and other climate change related activities. One goal is to get the Catholics Church to reduce its emissions and become a world leader against climate change.

Questions for the Speakers

Could the speakers, noticing that they are all from Christian organizations, speak about efforts to collaborate with other faith groups?

Toroitich has worked with the Brahma Kumaris and the Islamic Relief Organization for political motivation in the Human Rights Council.

Wiggins explained how Tearfund is a part of an interfaith group planning for the future UN Climate Summit and a secular group called the Climate Coalition.

CYNESA has also worked with the Brahma Kumaris to train women of different faiths in waste management.

How can you identify the impact of your work?

All speakers stated it is difficult to measure the exact impact of their respective organizations. Toroitich noticed a shift in language shift from the Kyoto Protocol to the Paris Agreement believing that faith-based organizations like ACT implemented this.

Wiggins said that while Tearfund can pull quantitative data from the number of petitions signed and events attended, however it can be more meaningful when their work is shown through anecdotal evidence. For example, a member of the World Bank referencing Tearfund.

Mugo said CYNESA's impact is usually through chain reaction. When they host a training, participants can go back to their home and train others and so on and so forth. When this information is dispersed far, they are seeing the change that they have implemented.

Any clear examples for financing for climate action?

Each speaker uses individual supporters for a large amount of their funds. Toroitich and Wiggins mentioned that depending on the activity it can be beneficial to use countries for funding; however, their agendas need to be considered then.

All webinar episodes are recorded and available on [JLI's YouTube channel](#) and additional resources and information can be found on [JLI's website](#).

Endnotes

ⁱ The Bhumi Project, GreenFaith, Shine, Economic Policy Group ("EPG"). Rise to Shine. UK: EPG Economic and Strategy Consulting, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://jliflc.com/resources/rise-to-shine-the-role-of-indian-religious-institutions-in-closing-the-energy-access-gap/>

ⁱⁱ MORI (Market and Opinion Research International). The general public who hold science/technical occupations (UK, France, Germany). Commissioned by The Scientific and Medical Network. 2017