

FAITH-BASED ACTION TOWARDS A POLLUTION-FREE PLANET

Catalogue

Version: November 2024



Photo: Ek Onkar Charitable Trust Seechewal

FAITH ACTION TO ADDRESS POLLUTION

Faith actors (this term encompasses faith leaders, faith-based organisations and institutions, faith communities, people of faith, and others) have a **moral duty** of stewardship and environmental care to advocate for balance with nature as an act of reverence. The call to address pollution, and other environmental challenges, is based on core values and principles like **stewardship, compassion, justice, and balance**.

The pollution and waste crises challenges this duty - whether it is roadside dumping and burning of waste to overconsumption of single-use items - such degradation of values and the natural world causes irreparable damage to ecosystems and disproportionately affects the poor and marginalised to respond to the crises. However, “faiths have the solutions to beat pollution”.

Taking **urgent and immediate steps** to fixing the root causes of the crises is a moral imperative.

Since the adoption of the UNEA resolution to establish a international legally binding instrument to address plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, a growing number of faith-based organisations, from diverse religious and spiritual backgrounds, have participated in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution (INC) meetings. Some of these initiatives are specifically targeted at tackling pollution at the community-level while others emphasize the rights of waste-pickers and other key stakeholders impacted.

This catalogue, prepared by the UN Environment Programme’s Faith for Earth Coalition, spotlights how faith actors are addressing the pollution and waste crisis. It demonstrates opportunities to effectively strengthen multilateral dialogue as voices of the marginalised and stewards of the Earth, strengthen technical capacity, shift mindsets and realign values towards nature-positive attitudes, behaviours, and habits.

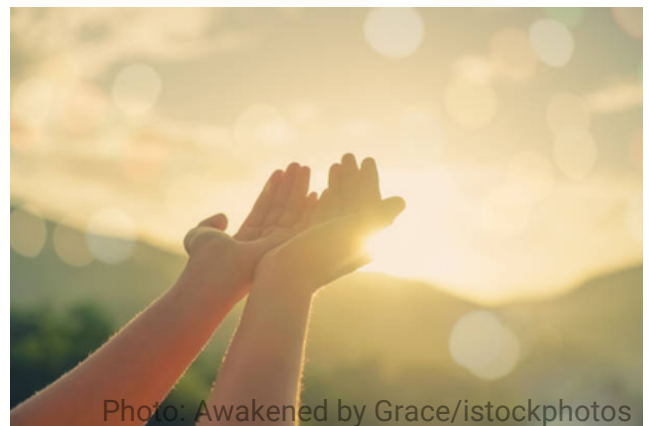


Photo: Awakened by Grace/istockphotos

Leading by example to raise ambition

At the national and international levels, faith leaders, as powerful voices of morality and authority, can advocate for institutional community-wide changes, as well as policies that highlight the plight of their communities. While focusing on the solutions, evidence based approaches influence the suitability of recommendations stemming from localised challenges and community needs across geographies.

Mobilising faith networks to promote knowledge-sharing

Transitioning to a pollution-free planet is a collective effort for change. Faith networks span geographies with volunteers at-the-ready to serve the community and its leaders.

Greater awareness of information on the sources of pollution, the pathways of exposure, the impacts, and solutions is needed in addition to the spiritual dimensions against pollution and waste. While faith actors are aware of some of the impacts of pollution, even living in areas near dumpsites or having to rely on polluted rivers and water systems, the level of information disclosure, and a limited understanding of pollutions social, health and gender dimensions remains to be seen.

Broader public awareness is crucial through awareness campaigns, sensitization training, and opportunities to engage in peer-to-peer learning at an intra-faith level to make informed choices and prevent and mitigate pollution.

A strong intra-community engagement plan will lead to the mobilisation of expertise and resources from within the community. It will also demonstrate the importance of interfaith engagement and collaboration at the local level in order to maintain solutions implemented.

Faith actors are strategic partners to address implementation gaps with the ability to support administrative and technical mechanisms

People-centered Approach

As custodians of values-based perspectives, including on environmental stewardship, faith actors speak to billions of people around the world and are woven into local socio-economic and political realities.

Faith actors are highly engaged in their communities on a daily, weekly, or at least on a monthly basis. This creates a relationship enabling faith leadership to be informed of how pollution affects individuals and the community at large, and the ability to tailor programmes through their own institutions to address them.

They have a potential to use sustainable items when celebrating faith festivals; encourage sustainable practices, methods or items while carrying out ceremonies, rites, and rituals at places of worship; drive social campaigns based on localised needs; integrate awareness programmes in informal education settings; and more.

Informed choices that highlight this spiritual duty to environmental stewardship, and the practical implications of a lifestyle that overconsumes, can drive sustainable behaviour. Implementing community-based programmes in line with faith-based principles can raise awareness and create pathways for action. Mobilising support and action within these established structures or networks demonstrates the potential impact of sustained individual and community action.

This may include advocating for the rights and social protection of workers in the waste management industry, or partnering with local and national authorities to measure the impact of the pollution, efficacy of recycling or water treatment schemes and more.

UNEP PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES

75 to 199 million tonnes of plastic is currently found in our oceans. Worldwide, air pollution causes 6.7 million deaths per year, with less than 20 per cent of the global population breathing fresh air.

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) through the Chemicals and Pollution Action Stream of UNEP's Medium Term Strategy and the UNEP Plastic Initiative is creating an enabling and empowering environment that accelerates market transformation towards a circular economy of plastics.

An Implementation Plan 'Towards a Pollution-Free Planet' was adopted in 2019 at the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-4) took forward pollution-related Environment Assembly outcomes, and proposed action areas with opportunities and solutions to address capacity gaps and challenges. It emphasized wider sharing of the good experience/knowledge on pollution.

#BeatPollution, Beat Waste Pollution, Beat Plastic Pollution and Clean Seas Campaign are aimed at connecting and rallying a wide range of stakeholders to reduce marine litter and plastic; the Plastic Tide Turners Challenge inspires youth action; the Think, Eat and Save Campaign in partnership with FAO, addresses food waste; and the BreatheLife Campaign, on air pollution in partnership with WHO, CCAC and the World Bank, work in harmony Towards a Pollution-Free Planet.

UNEP's ongoing commitment to prevent, control and manage pollution emphasizes working through partnerships at the global, regional, and national level; recognizes the importance of adopting resource-efficient and sustainable production practices; recognizes that global and regional environmental agreements provide collaborative framework for governance; and responding to country priorities and needs to reduce and prevent pollution.

"Responses by governments, business and citizens to pollution exist, but they remain limited in scope and scale. Global and regional environmental agreements provide a partial framework, but there are many gaps.

Voluntary initiatives and global alliances have addressed some of the more urgent issues, yet much more remains to be done to control and prevent pollution".

Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution Toolkit assists legislators and policymakers in developing and strengthening their regulatory frameworks.

UNEP's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific implemented the CounterMEASURE project, identifying sources and pathways of plastic pollution in river systems in Asia, particularly the Mekong and the Ganges.

UNEP has also delivered key publications on pollution, including the background report "Towards a Pollution-Free Planet" (2017) and its implementation plan (2018); partnered with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2018) launching the Global Commitment to the New Plastics Economy to tackle the issue of single-use plastics and promote circular economy; the report "NEGLECTED: Environmental Justice Impacts of Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution" (2021) and "From Pollution to Solution: a global assessment of marine litter and plastic pollution" (2021). See also Turning off the Tap and Chemicals in Products.

The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) established at UNEA 5.2 seeks to develop an international legally binding instrument to address plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

THE INTERFAITH WORKING GROUP ON POLLUTION

Recognising that faith actors have access to a diverse network of local and grassroots actors holding in common religious or spiritual values and beliefs, UNEP's Faith for Earth Coalition convened the [Interfaith Working Group on Pollution](#).

Towards catalysing action to address current environmental challenges, the Working Group seeks to:

- mobilise the power and influence of faith leaders and communities particularly at the grassroots level;
- engage diverse faith actors exploring the extent of pollution-related issues affecting local communities and ecosystems;
- identify critical challenges in implementing scaleable solutions; and
- provide a forum for the exchange of knowledge and learning at a global level; and
- engage in the INC process.

The Interfaith Working Group on Pollution is a product of the dialogue on faith and pollution action at the resumed session of UNEA-5 (UNEA 5.2) in light of the [resolution](#) and in response to the establishment of the INC.

This catalogue aims to demonstrate and uplift the contributions of faith actors, exploring the extent to which faith values, spirituality and actors can shift the needle.



[Stop plastic pollution and restore our world](#)

[Add your voice](#)

[Stay up to date with the Interfaith Working Group on Pollution](#)

CORE TEAM

2022 - 2024

Co-Facilitators



Rev. Rachel Mash,
<rmash@mweb.co.za>
Green Anglicans
(South Africa)

The logo for Tearfund, consisting of the word "tearfund" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font, centered within a solid blue rectangular background.

Jack Wakefield
<jack.wakefield@tearfund.org>
Tearfund
(United Kingdom)

Members



Shantanu Mandal,
<shantanu.mandal@unmgcy.org>
CYMG to UNEP
(India)



Peter Nitschke,
<peter@plasticbank.com>
Plastic Bank
(Canada)



Kamran Shezad,
<kamran.shezad@ifees.org>
IFEES
(UK)



Pinaki Dasgupta,
<pinaki@greenfaith.org>
Green Faith India
(India)



Rabbi Ed Rosenthal,
<rabbied@repairthesea.org> ;
Shayna Cohen,
<shayna@repairthesea.org>
Repair the Sea
(United States of America)

INTERNATIONAL DAYS & OBSERVANCES

The following annual international days and observations present the Interfaith Working Group on Pollution and the faith network with an opportunity to mobilise the momentum of the international community, embracing the annual theme of that observance while using their own experiences to contextualize challenges and opportunities.

Date	Day/Observance
18 March	Global Recycling Day
30 March	International Day of Zero Waste
5 June	World Environment Day
8 June	World Oceans Day
28 July	World Nature Conservation Day
7 September	International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies
18 September	International Coastal Cleanup Day
29 September	International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste
14 October	International E-waste Day
October	International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week
November	World Antimicrobial Awareness Week (WAAW)
10 December	Human Rights Day

Note: this is a non-exhaustive list of suggested annual international days.

Image / www.hopecathedral.no/



HOW THE FAITH NETWORK IS ADDRESSING POLLUTION AND WASTE



Image / Green Anglicans
Green Anglicans organised a Big Beach Clean Up Day in December 2021 in Cape Town area.

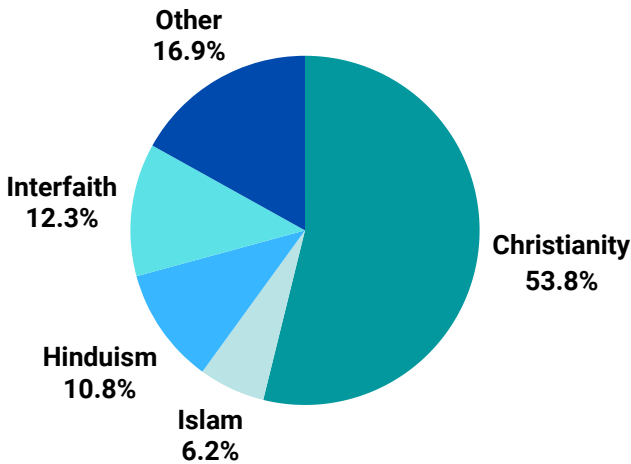


Image / EK Onkar Charitable Trust
Sant Seechewal along with volunteers cleaning the Holy Kali river.

*Note: Information on each Project or Programme was provided by the organisations listed.

The Interfaith Working Group on Pollution undertook a mapping exercise to identify worldwide projects and programs to address pollution and waste. The mapping was based on an online survey sent to Faith for Earth’s Network which received 65 responses. This section will showcase survey findings of current work in faith-led projects to tackle pollution. Actions taken by faith leaders were also shared in the survey and will be presented in the remainder of this Catalogue to inspire action.

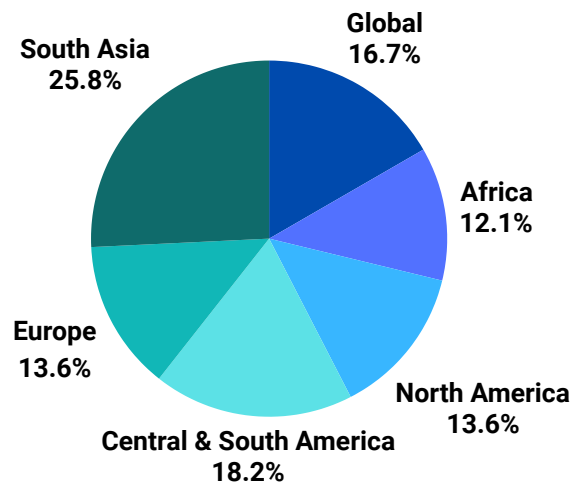
Religious Affiliation



Of the 65 projects and programmes surveyed, 53.8% were affiliated with Christianity, specifically Catholicism. 16.9% of the projects affiliated with Judaism, Sikhism, Candomble and Spiritism.

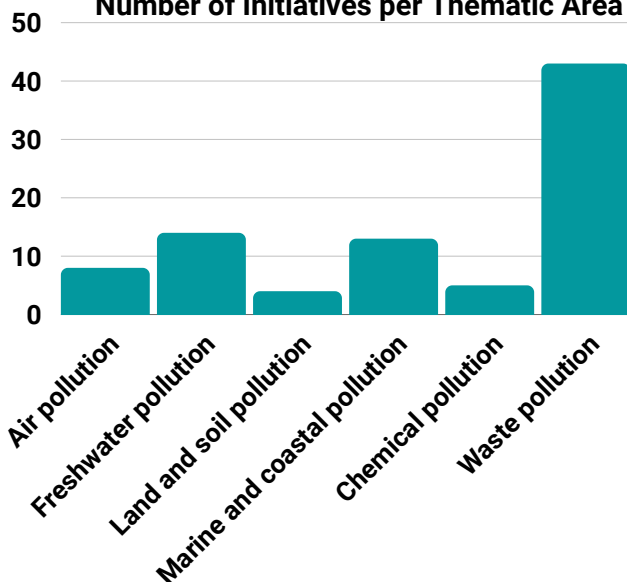
The projects surveyed demonstrate an even spread of projects and programmes globally.

Region



Waste pollution featured as the most addressed thematic area, followed by freshwater pollution, marine & coastal pollution, and air pollution. This will continue to shape the objectives and areas of focus of the Interfaith Working Group on Pollution.

Number of Initiatives per Thematic Area



TAKING A STANCE AGAINST POLLUTION: ONE PERSON, COMMUNITY, AND INSITUTION AT A TIME

Faith actors, including faith leaders, faith-based institutions, faith-based organizations, and others can demonstrate their [leadership](#) by:

- Supporting governments by working within programmes at the national and local level with evidence to better inform, develop and implement policies to address pollution.
- Transition from unsustainable business practices within their own landholding and operations, and investments, and mobilising the financial sector in support of community-based projects.
- Mobilise philanthropy and local business to collaborate and co-create sustainable solutions to reduce high-polluting behaviours and activities as an institution and to spur individual behaviour change.
- Mobilise faith-owned schools, academia to support strong evidence-based solution, spur innovative approaches, and record the impact of pollution on local communities.
- Work with Local Government to address pollution at the community level in partnership with other stakeholders like NGOs, business, financial institutions, and others.
- Mobilise regional faith networks to promote peer-to-peer learning with an outlook to leverage expertise across geographies to address transboundary issues, and to participating in public participation forums (nationally, regionally)

Hope Cathedral

Religious Affiliation: Interfaith

Location: Norway

The [Hope Cathedral](#) is an interfaith environmentally friendly art project based in Norway. Inspired by the leadership from the Borg Diocese of the Church of Norway, the project was developed through an open invitation across national identities, ages and faiths.

The community organised beach clean ups sourcing 1,000+ fish boxes, collected from the ocean that were washed, granulated and turned into 4,000 roof tiles in more than 50 different colors.

Inspired by Norway's famous stave churches, the structure rises majestically on its 120m² floating barge made of timber and roots. The roof is a 300m² multi-colored mosaic and involved 11,000 hours of voluntary service.

The Hope Cathedral represents a safe space for open dialogue, community gathering, and spiritual upliftment, a symbol for communities to innovate and collaborate to protect the environment. Thousands of children and youth have contributed through school workshops at Hope Cathedral, to create [Bee Cathedrals](#) to help solitary bees survive.

Contact: Tone Langvik, tone@hopecathedral.no and Solveig Egeland, solveig@hopecathedral.no



Fatwa prohibiting destructive mining operations

Religious Affiliation: Islam

Location: Indonesia



Image / Harvard

In 2011, Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) issued a fatwa (religious decree) declaring that destructive mining operations are haram—or strictly forbidden—according to Islamic law.

They stated that classical Islamic sources clearly prohibit mining companies from damaging and polluting ecosystems, destroying biodiversity, or causing poverty in local communities. The fatwa recommended that the Indonesian government be far more selective with their permitting, and more strongly enforce existing law, including major penalties for big polluters. This is one example among several fatwas that MUI has issued in favor of environmental protection.

Contact: Hayu Prabowo, hayu.prabowo@gmail.com,
ecomasjid@gmail.com

Rubbish Campaign

Religious Affiliation: Christian

Location: Global

Launched in 2019, the Rubbish Campaign targeted a group of companies to take responsibility for their plastic waste in poorer countries, as the leading manufacturers of a range of products.

Participants were encouraged to sign a petition demanding four 'Not Rubbish' commitments from these companies: Report, Reduce, Recycle, and Restore. By 2022, all of the companies had made new commitments related to the Rubbish Campaign's asks.

The Rubbish Campaign was relaunched in 2023-2024 to influence negotiations for a global plastics treaty. Sign the Plastic Pledge to give up at least one type of single-use plastic for 40 days and have a look at the campaign that offers a range of resources to equip faith leaders to raise awareness on the plastic issue and inspire action.

Contact: Lucy Tanner, lucy.tanner@tearfund.org



Image / Tearfund

Conversion of Cow Dung into Mini-Logs, and Soil BioTechnology

Religious Affiliation: Jainism

Location: India

The Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur (SRMD) is a global movement that enhances the spiritual growth of seekers and benefits society, fostering the 'Culture of Compassion' that permeates all activities and life forms.

The majority of rural India still depends on firewood as a source of energy, SRMD started using cow dung collected from cattle at their animal shelter to make an alternative to firewood. Mini-logs are made using cow dung, and these logs are eco-friendly, lightweight, and economically affordable and are being sold to local families for household purposes as well as businesses such as crematoriums, manufacturing industries, etc. This initiative will go a long way in conserving the environment and reducing air pollution.

In the sphere of water recycling, Ashram has invested in making green sewage treatment plants through a technology called Soil BioTechnology (SBT). This is a patented process of India's premier engineering institute, IIT Mumbai, which helps clean sewage water. The clean water is then used for maintaining the landscape of the Ashram, thereby saving water. The nine SBT plants at the Ashram have a capacity to save up to 285 million liters annually. Additionally, the site has 925 kW solar panels installed to reduce dependency on non-renewable sources of energy and avoid air pollution generation through it.

Contact: Atmarpit Vidhiji, interfaith@srmd.org

Dia da Geral (Clean-up Day) at the Santuário Cristo Redentor (Christ the Redeemer Sanctuary)

Religious Affiliation: Christian

Location: Brazil

The Sanctuary, managed by the Archdiocese of São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro, houses one of the most emblematic symbols of Brazil: the Christ the Redeemer, which is not only a major tourist attraction, but also an important place of pilgrimage, prayer and religiosity, with daily celebrations. The institution has a sector responsible for sustainable actions, the "Sustainable Christ", which promotes the "Clean-up Day" campaign, held for the first time on World Environment Day (5 June) 2021. This campaign mobilises volunteers to collect recyclable waste throughout the city of Rio de Janeiro. Participants are encouraged to pre-register as "eco-leaders" on the official website of Christ the Redeemer Sanctuary and receive training prior to the event.

100 tons of recyclable waste collected by volunteers in the streets, squares, beaches and lakes of Rio de Janeiro, under the coordination of 400 registered eco-leaders. The materials collected was then sent to 25 local recycling cooperatives

Contact: curadoria@santuariocristoredentor.com.br

Christ the Redeemer Monument in Rio de Janeiro
Source: Unsplash



THE BEST AVAILABLE SCIENCE AND EVIDENCE FOR LASTING SOLUTIONS

Faith actors rely on [evidence-based approaches](#) to drive their programmes globally. Two major faith leaders call for the [relationship between faith and science](#) to drive solutions to climate crises.

- Support data collection and sharing in collaboration with local authorities with the full consent of the data subjects/communities (where relevant). Houses of worship and faith-based institutions are often strategically placed to measure pollution levels in often congested and hard-to-reach areas while providing the security required for the equipment.
- FBOs and faith institutions may be highly concerned about pollution's economic and health-related effects, changing demographics, and increasing health-related risks and costs. As such, advocating for the economic benefits of pollution reduction and the health improvements that result from these actions would be in the interest of the religious and spiritual community.

Studying the impact of air pollution on Faith-Based Monuments in India

Religious Affiliation: Interfaith

Location: India

The Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), in partnership with GreenFaith India and United Religions Initiative, studied the impact of air pollution on Faith-Based Monuments, and surrounding communities in India.

EDF conducted emission inventory and hyperlocal air quality monitoring in and around the FBMs and understand the impact of pollution sources in the immediate surroundings, both on the monument and on the visitors and communities.

This study demonstrated that: “it is clear that there is a growing need to implement strict measures on air quality standards for heritage sites to keep the structures and objects safe for the years to come” and “An immediate action plan based on an integrated implementation of technical and administrative solutions is proposed in this study for the protection of indoor and outdoor environments at heritage sites. Considering the social and cultural significance of this historical evidence, more detailed research should be encouraged in this direction”

Contact: Pinaki Dasgupta, pinaki@greenfaith.org; Swagata Dey, sdey@edf.org

"Reverse Tashlich" and the Blue Green Initiative

Religious Affiliation: Judaism

Location: USA/Global

Tikkun HaYam (Repair the Sea) aims to raise awareness of and encourage action to address the many threats facing the marine environment, by sharing the spiritual wonders of the Sea from a Jewish perspective.



Image / repairthesea.org

Scuba divers collect marine debris as part of the "Reverse Tashlich" in Florida, USA

The "Reverse Tashlich" movement calls on Jewish communities around the world to stop pollution by removing "sins" (man-made debris) from local beaches, waterfronts, parks, and piers. Their Blue Green Initiative helps faith-based organizations and institutions switch from single use plastic cutlery and plates to earth-friendly

options, by offering a beautiful line of easily compostable products at a highly discounted price.

The sixth annual "Reverse Tashlich" in 2023 involved 4,000+ registered participants in 300 locations across 23 countries, a 240% increase compared to the previous year. Participating communities were encouraged to log their collected litter in an international debris database by using the Marine Debris Tracker app. In total, approximately 23,274 pounds of debris were collected around the world.

The Blue/Green Initiative began with Hillel Jewish Student Centers at Universities in the USA. In the first year, 53 Hillels switched from plastic to compostable cutlery and plates. In total, they removed 183,000 pieces of single use plastic from production. They have since opened the program in North America. Their goal is to help every FBO in North America off single use plastic cutlery and plates.

Contact: Rabbi Ed Rosenthal, rabbied@repairthesea.org, Shayna Cohen, shayna@repairthesea.org

Interfaith Oceans

Religious Affiliation: Interfaith

Location: Global

This multifaith campaign by the NRCCC (National Religious Coalition on Creation Care) encourages religious and spiritual communities to work alongside scientists to protect and restore ocean ecosystems, species, and coastal communities such as undersea oil drilling pollution, plastic pollution, sonar pollution and wildlife distress, coastal pollution from agricultural run-off.

The campaign raises awareness about the aforementioned ocean issues and invites the public to sign a pledge to care about our Creator, the oceans, the marine species, and vulnerable people suffering from ocean destruction. In September 2020, the Interfaith Oceans Chapter at San Diego State University (USA) promoted the "Sea Cleanse" event which included coastal clean-ups and a "trash-to-art" contest with the collected litter.

Contact: interfaithoceans@gmail.com

Global Plastic Cleanup: Oceans of Hope not Plastic

Religious Affiliation: Christian

Location: Global

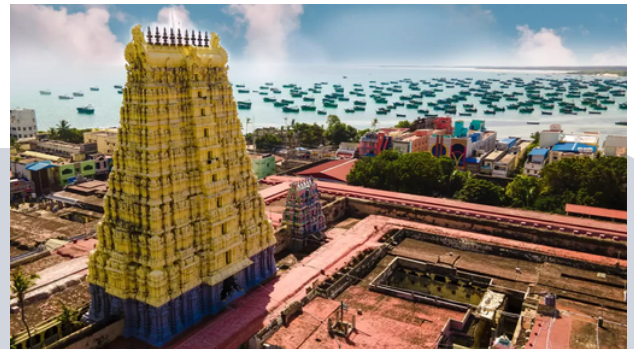
A Rocha International's projects on marine plastics help people understand the extent of plastic pollution in the Oceans, involving local civil groups and providing them with different resources and expertise to help be part of the solution.

In order to assist people in creating projects to stop plastic pollution in the oceans, A Rocha has created a Plastics Toolbox. It consists of different kinds-resources as videos, questionnaires and information sheets and presents both, in separated sections, scientific and religious knowledge and notions about the environment.



A Rocha's marine conservation globally has developed projects to study nurdle pollution using methods that also non-scientists can join in by partnering with The Great Nurdle Hunt, a platform that documents citizen science regarding nurdle hunts.

Contact: Dr Robert D. Sluka, bob.sluka@arocha.org



Green Rameswaram Project

Religious Affiliation: Interfaith

Location: India

Launched in 2014, the Vivekananda Kendra Natural Resources Development Project aims to bring a

clean environment to Rameswaram Island, which hosts the Ramanathaswamy Temple in Southern India, by promoting a Sustainable Green Pilgrimage Model.

This model is based on several different dimensions related to sustainability and protection of the environment including Marine Biodiversity, Renewable Energy, Rainwater Harvesting and Solid Waste Management (SWM).

The solid waste management dimension of the project strives to facilitates partnerships with local bodies to handle the garbage menace. Activities include an awareness campaign, live demonstration of various technologies for solid waste management, distribution of solid waste management tool ward-by-ward, vermi-compost, bio-methanation, pellet making, shredding of plastic/paper, use of plastic in road making, paper pulping etc.

They also conduct monthly mass cleaning activities of the coastal areas. Achievements include 1,460,000 kg of waste recycled, 264,000 hours of employment created and 50,000 kgs of compost generated in a year. 185 cubic meters of gas are produced every day through installation of 125 kitchen waste-based biogas plants for households and 10 larger plants for Schools. Every year, 2,100,000 pilgrims were reached through various activities to sensitise on responsible tourism. Moreover, the project has published ten books on environmental themes, including one Manual on Solid Waste Management in partnership with Hand in Hand.

Contact: G. Vasudeo, vknardep@gmail.com

COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION AND AWARENESS FOR GREATER IMPACT

Faith actors convene hundreds if not thousands of spiritual adherents weekly, monthly, yearly. Recognising that stewardship and compassion are important tenants of the faith tradition, they therefore have the potential to promote **awareness and outreach campaigns**:

- Mobilise the community through targeted communication campaigns raising awareness about local, national, regional and global challenges and their vision for change.
- Build capacity about pollution-related challenges, how to address the root causes, and supplement the same with continuous education programmes.
- Hold focus group discussion to promote consumer, particularly the impact of single-use items on local ecosystems, sustainable alternatives, and the well-being of local communities and at-risk groups.

Call to Support a Global Plastics Treaty

Religious Affiliation: Christian

Location: South Africa

In 2021 the Anglican Church of Southern Africa passed a resolution that calls for a ban of the use of polystyrene at all church events and requests the Archbishop to write to the Ministers of the Environment in each of the countries within ACSA (South Africa, Lesotho, Eswatini and Namibia), encouraging them to support a Global Plastic Treaty.

In November 2021, Green Anglicans co-authored a letter along with Greenpeace, groundwork, IUCN, and WWF addressed to the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) of South Africa encouraging the country to co-sponsor the Rwanda-Peru Draft Resolution on marine pollution negotiated at UNEA 5.2 in February 2022. Moreover, Sunday School materials have been produced on ocean plastic, a Lenten Plastic Campaign was held in 2019, and beach and river clean-ups have been held at many churches. The research was conducted on a plastic recycling project in a township church as part of the Valuing Plastic Project. The study found that the cost of recycled plastic is so low that without subsidies it is unrealistic to expect that people can make enough money from collecting bottles to start their own business, as recycling plastic beverage bottles generates plenty of work but little income.

Contact: Rev. Rachel Mash, rmash@mweb.co.za



*Image: Green Anglicans
Green Anglicans organised a Big Beach Clean Up Day in December 2021 in Cape Town area*

Reduce, Reuse and Recycle

Religious Affiliation: Islam

Location: United Kingdom

This project by the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science (IFEES) aims to raise awareness on the issue of waste pollution (paper, food and packaging) and invites us to take responsibility for our surroundings and help make our communities cleaner, safer places to live in. It induces reflection on our “throw away society” and proposes steps that everyone can take to making a difference: reduce, reuse and recycle.

IFEES provided consultancy to the Faith Recycling project, initiated by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (where 45% of the population are Muslim) in partnership with the London Sustainability Exchange and focused on the East London mosque. IFEES also produced the Clean Medina video-based campaign, which depicts a battle against litter in the City of Birmingham (UK) as well as the Plastic Free Iftar Guide.

Image / IFEES



Contact: Harifiyah Haleem, harfiyah.haleem@ifees.org.uk

Image / Ek Onkar Charitable Trust
Sant Seechewal along with volunteers cleaning the Holy Kali river



Restoration of the Holy Kali Bein River

Religious Affiliation: Sikhism

Location: India

The Kali Bein, associated with Guru Nanak Dev Ji, is a river of great historical, religious, and economic significance in Punjab, India, which has suffered serious deterioration as a result of encroachment and pollution.

Most villages near the river had been dumping untreated sewage directly into it. Aware of this issue, Balbir Singh Seechewal, head of Ek Onkar Charitable Trust Seechewal, embarked on a mission to restore the purity and pristine beauty of this sacred river.

Mobilising volunteers kar sewa of the river. Sant Seechewal cleared hyacinth and silt out of the riverbed restoring its flow of clean water. To stop the wastewater from being thrown into the river, Sant Seechewal implemented the ‘Seechewal Model’ to treat and use wastewater for agriculture. As a result, thousands of hectares of land have been reclaimed from water-logging in Tehsil Dasuya of Hoshiarpur District, from desertification in the Kapurthala district, and floods in the Mand area of the confluence of Beas and Satluj rivers.

Contact: Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal, santseechewalji@gmail.com

Planet A Working Group

Religious Affiliation: Jewish

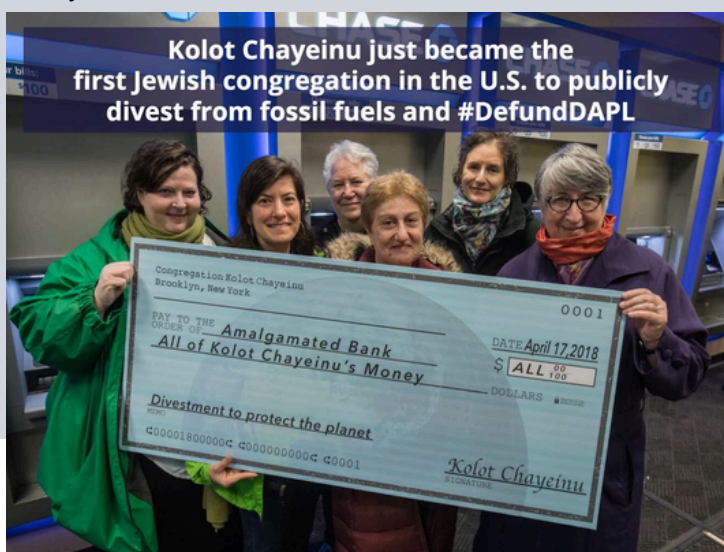
Location: USA

Kolot Chayeinu's "Planet A Working Group" focuses on environmental issues, thinking of ways Kolot can mobilize the community and resources to protect the planet.

In ongoing solidarity with the water protectors of Standing Rock, the Working Group led Kolot Chayeinu in divesting from Chase Bank to avoid supporting the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL).

The DAPL was acknowledged as a threat to the local freshwater supplies and native sovereignty. In April 2017, Kolot Chayeinu announced plans to move their money to Amalgamated Bank because of their sustainable investment practices, becoming the first Jewish congregation in the country to officially divest from a financial institution in order to #DefundDAPL and to explicitly oppose the funding of fossil fuel projects. With their announcement, Kolot joined a long list of individuals and institutions, representing over \$4 billion in assets, who have pledged to leave banks that finance DAPL.

Contact: Rabbi Miriam Grossman,
rabbimiriam@kolotchayeinu.org



Fergs Environmental Knowledge Management Program

Religious Affiliation: Spiritism

Location: Brazil

The Fergs Environmental Knowledge Management Program sensitizes the Spiritist Movement on the need to take care of planet Earth since 2010.

In 2014, the Program published the book "Spiritist Centers and Environmental Preservation: Solid Waste Management Guide" highlighting the responsibility to improve the quality of the environment that feeds us, welcomes us, and provides us with cultural, affective and spiritual experiences.

In 2023, the FEB - Brazilian Spiritist Federation, launched the Permanent Spiritist Campaign for Ecological Awareness (CEPCE), aiming to improve individual and community health and well-being. "Spiritism and Ecology are related, synergistic sciences that suggest systemic approaches to reality", awakening an integral vision of Nature, material and spiritual, and of the interdependence between all beings.

Contact: ambiental@fergs.org.br, programaseprojetos@fergs.org.br, vpinst@fergs.org.br;
www.fergs.org.br/saberambiental

SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION REQUIRES CAPACITY, PARTNERSHIP, AND COMMUNITY

Sustainable or long-lasting projects are essential for behaviour change and the **implementation** of projects and programmes should consider capacity needs, incentives for change, and ways to integrate policies:

- Pollution Toolboxes of guides tailored to local contexts will provide practical solutions.
- On-going capacity building and institutional strengthening programmes enhances the community's resilience, with the backing of institutions that serve other socio-economic needs.
- Faith actors advocate for policies that align price signals and fiscal policies with environmental goals, helping to correct market failures.
- FBOs contribute to the development and implementation of national action plans for pollution control.
- Legal frameworks and regulatory approaches are supported and promoted by faith groups to ensure compliance and enforcement.
- Faith-based organizations often mobilize financial resources to fund pollution control projects and initiatives, including programmes that create jobs in the collection, sorting, recycling industry.

Plastic Bank Faith Program

Affiliation: Private

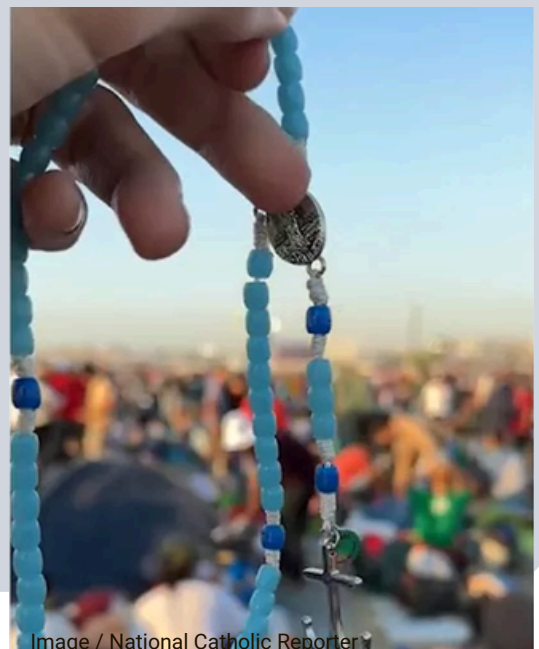
Location: Global

The Plastic Bank builds ethical recycling ecosystems in coastal communities and reprocesses the materials for reintroduction into the global supply chain.

Local waste collectors receive a premium for the materials they collect to help them improve their livelihoods. The plastic collected is recycled and sold as Social Plastic® to organisations who want to create a more sustainable and socially responsible supply chain for their products.

Although not a faith-based organisation per se, Plastic Bank has a dedicated Faith Program which engages faith-based communities by providing the tools and resources to respond to the call to become stewards of creation by lifting people around the world out of poverty. The program is offered with no cost or obligation and is available for members of any faith tradition.

Contact: Peter Nitschke, peter@plasticbank.com



Eco-Masjid Initiative

Religious Affiliation: Islam

Location: Indonesia

In 2017, Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) launched the EcoMasjid (Eco-Mosque) initiative, seeking to help mosques to source renewable energy, manage their water and food needs sustainably, reduce and recycle waste, and provide environmental education. The EcoMasjid initiative educates people on the fatwas issued by MUI, and mosques are the central activities to engage people through a religious approach.

The initiative targets three components for tackling pollution: mosque management, congregation, and physical mosque. The first two components are done through socialisation and education (soft skills) and the third component is based on action (hard skills). With a focus on water conservation, as Muslim tradition requires ablution before praying, a program was launched that seeks to save water and protect it from pollution through liquid and solid waste management.

To promote a circular economy, they initiated a national waste donation program through the mosque, requiring people to sort waste at home. This program has motivated a great number of people. Moreover, the EcoMasjid YouTube channel features videos showing how to “do-it-yourself”.

Contact: Hayu Prabowo,
hayu.prabowo@gmail.com, ecomasjid@gmail.com



Image / Eco Mosque

The Environmental Justice Project

Religious Affiliation: Christian

Location: USA

The Environmental Justice Project uses its Catholic voice to improve air quality, slow global warming emissions, for more sustainable community growth, and to reduce the impact of climate change in the San Joaquin Valley, California.

The organization has successfully advocated for the adoption of laws and policies for addressing air pollution and the protection of disadvantaged communities or improving everyday sustainable lifestyles. They have successfully advocated for the reduction of greenhouse gas pollution to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050, created a program to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and make California more pleasant to walk and bike, and supported bills to provide economic help to communities to accelerate different sustainability plans and to raise the percentage of Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds spent in disadvantaged communities, and directs a percentage of the GGRF to be spent for the benefit of low-income households.

Contact: Jonathan Pruitt, jpruitt@ccstockton.org or ej@ccstockton.org

CONCLUSION

This catalogue emphasizes how the faith network is strategically positioned as partners and implementers of evidence-based solutions to address the pollution and waste crisis. It presents a sample of the wider ongoing movement and yet, these good practices illustrate the versatility of faith-based environmental action:

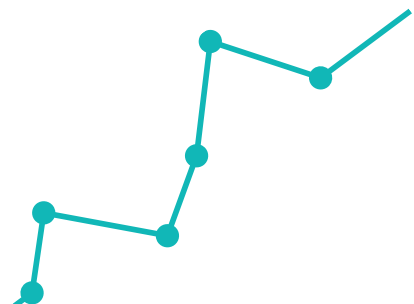
- FBOs' efforts span a wide range of activities, which include global and local campaigns, policy advocacy, fossil-fuel divestment, research & citizen science, compilation & dissemination of best practices, efforts to green faith festivities, construction of infrastructure for waste treatment, and hands-on cleaning drives.
- Action against pollution is being taken across several regions of the globe, at local and global levels, and led by various faiths, including interfaith organisations, of varied sizes.
- FBOs have the ability to mobilise a large number of material and human resources, especially volunteers, and are using it to deliver significant impact.

THREE WAYS TO ENGAGE

Endorse the [Interfaith Statement](#)

Have your Project featured on the [Faith Action on the UN Sustainable Development Goals Database](#)

Join the [Interfaith Working Group on Pollution](#)



In case of any queries, please contact Azmaira Alibhai <azmaira.alibhai@un.org> or visit the [Faith and Pollution Action](#) webpage.