



Message and Recommendations from the FABC OLF Women's Desk Seminar "Women and the impact of Climate Change", 7-11 March 2016, Battambang Apostolic Prefecture, Cambodia

*"O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned
and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes."*¹

"A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings. It is clearly inconsistent to combat trafficking in endangered species while remaining completely indifferent to human trafficking, unconcerned about the poor, or undertaking to destroy another human being deemed unwanted. This compromises the very meaning of our struggle for the sake of the environment."²

The 34 participants gathered in Khemara Hotel, Battambang Prefecture from 6 countries of South East Asia³, agreed without doubt that women and children are the most affected and the most vulnerable among the poor, in rural and small town contexts but also among the urban poor. The effects of Climate Change are directly impacting these two groups who, in many communities are already poor and struggling to obtain the basic necessities of daily living. Powerful storms destroy almost everything along its path, unpredictable rains cause crops to fail and floods or droughts bring disastrous consequences. The poor are badly affected by water shortages, floods, extremes of heat or cold against which they have little or no protection.

The increasing poverty caused by these events raises the risk of human trafficking⁴, forced migrations and hunger. We know from data collected that women are the most trafficked, forced to migrate and face poorer health care, higher child mortality, hunger and water and fuel shortages.

For these and many more reasons we, at the Seminar "Women and the Impact of Climate Change", 7-11 March, 2016 have listed some recommendations and pray that all will be mobilised to act as we are all responsible. We are called to do whatever is in our power to do, as we find in the Gospel of Mark 14:8. The Lord Jesus in the Gospel calls us to hear the cry of the poor and we are impelled to act.

Recommendations:

Inspired by "Care for our Common Home", Laudato Si (LS), by Pope Francis we appeal for action:-

At local, national and Asian levels:

1. To ensure that the document LS and its contents to be made available in local languages.
2. To study the teachings and concepts in LS in the light of local contexts.

¹ Care for our Common Home, Laudato Si, Prayer paragraph 2., Rome, 2015.

² Care for our Common Home, LS 91

³ Countries represented were: Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand.

⁴ Care for our Common Home, LS, 91.

3. That the Prayers included in LS be used widely⁵, and especially on the Day of Prayer for Creation (Sept 1) or any other day in the week or month.
4. That the spirituality of Creation found in Laudato Si⁶ may be understood and practiced.
5. That the relationship between human beings and creation be understood, respected and enhanced.
6. That, out of love for God's creation, we go deeper to discover the root causes of Climate Change and our part in the production of green-house gases etc.

With regards to Climate Change from the perspective of Women:

At Asian and local levels:

1. To create greater awareness of the impact of climate change on women and other vulnerable groups.
2. To understand why gender inequality makes communities more vulnerable to climate change events.
3. To increase action to create greater gender equality and to support women and the poor who are facing the adverse effects of climate disasters and unpredictability of climate.
4. To work with all possible partners to advocate for better policies and legislation in climate change matters.
5. That our social action programmes enable women to become agents of change rather than remaining victims of climate change. We will make every effort:
 - To empower women to use the wisdom they possess in mitigation and adaptation to climate change.
 - To include local expertise and wisdom while providing training in new or original farming methods
 - To engage local communities in education towards conservation of forests and natural resources.
 - To provide literacy and education programmes that are relevant to local needs.
 - To provide a platform for the sharing of information and networking.

With regards to young people and children:

- To educate for greater equality and justice between women and men in our cultures and churches.
- To education about creation in ways that leads people to love and respect all creation and all human persons in creation.
- To provide simple tools and tips for changes in consumption and lifestyle that can make a difference to our environment and counter the throw-away culture.⁷
- To run projects such as cleaning the river regularly, especially collecting the rubbish to encourage an attitude of stewardship and care for our common home.

For our parishes and dioceses:

- To celebrate and pray during the year in praise of God for creation and to act on behalf of justice and peace for all peoples. Some possible occasions are:
 - International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking – February 8 – the feast of St Josephine Bakhita, the African sold as a slave who became a Canossian sister.

⁵ Ibid end of the document.

⁶ Ibid Chapter 6. From para 202

⁷ Some examples are: reducing the use of plastics, energy conservation, reusing and recycling. (cf 20 practical Ways to Live in Harmony with Earth); The 'Go Green' movement: facilitating creative ways and tools to help young people and children plant vegetables, fruit trees and other trees. Not only planting but also maintaining them. It could be implemented from kindergarten where teachers and students learn together.

- Earth Hour – the last Saturday of March – when we cut all energy consumption for one hour as a sign of our willingness to conserve energy to save our planet.
 - World Water Day – March 22 – expressing the sacredness of water, the need to protect our water sources and to ensure fair access to clean water.
 - Earth Day – April 22 when the focus is on tree planting and other such activities.
 - Pesticide free Day – May 27 even one day free of pesticides worldwide will make a difference.
 - Environment Day – June 5 – instituted by the UN.
 - World Day against Trafficking in Persons – July 30 – World-wide awareness and action day.
 - Day of Prayer for Creation – Sept 1 – instituted by Pope Francis since 2015.
- To ensure that our parishes, institutions and dioceses are implementing the call of the Holy Father and the United Nations for a more sustainable energy use, greater food security for the vulnerable, eco-friendlier methods of production and agriculture.
 - To explore ways to conduct a "Green Audit" and even an "Energy and water Audit" to ensure that our practice matches our message.
 - To run training workshops on the root causes of climate change and its effects on daily life.
 - To train local communities in order to strengthen local expertise in disaster management and mitigation measures. The training should include women as key stakeholders.

All the women, religious men and women, clergy and 2 bishops present feel committed to act and invite you to discuss these recommendations and look at how you are able to integrate and connect your ministry to women with the strategies for development and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Let us pray through the intercession of Our Blessed Mother Mary and act in solidarity. We are hopeful that together we can make a difference.

April 4th 2016