

CONFERENCE STATEMENT

SOUTH ASIAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE on
"Climate Change Impacts on Vulnerable Groups
& Women's Perspectives"
January 17-19, 2017
Sarvodya St Pius Campus, Aarey Road,
Goregaon Mumbai 400 063, India
Jointly Organised by :
FABC Climate Change Desk,
FABC Office of Laity & Family, Women's Desk, &
Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, Council for Women

We the 44 participants from Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka at the recently concluded South Asian Regional Conference on "Climate Change Impacts on Vulnerable Groups & Women's Perspectives", held at St. Pius Campus, Mumbai, India from January 17-19, 2017, renewed our commitment to support and initiate climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies with a perspective on the poor and on women.

We drew up plans to be implemented in our South Asian nations and made three resolutions as a community committed to furthering awareness and concrete action on this critical and urgent issue.

A. Planning reports from India

Laudato Si is a reminder to the whole world of the need to care for 'our common home' and is our inspiration.

1. We will propagate the information on climate change in our National and Diocesan newsletters and in our schools as follows:
 - a. Identify the issues in our regions.
 - b. Develop kitchen gardens in schools.
 - c. Encourage the use of public transport.
 - d. Dialogue with other faiths on the topic of the environment.
 - e. Ban the use of plastic carrier bags in Church institutions.
 - f. Teach children not to waste food, electricity and water.
 - g. Collect wastewater and water the plants.
 - h. Use last rinse water of dishes for plants.
 - i. Work towards a healthy environment.
2. Promote awareness about the effects of Climate Change and environmental issues in all institutions of the church and in catechism classes.

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3. Identify problems of water, soil and waste management in each area and look for solutions.
 - a) Water: Awareness on decreasing level of ground water; teach and motivate people to preserve rainwater by digging ponds and wells utilizing government programs. Promote pani-panchayat (Water Users Associations) in every village. Educate people on efficient ground water management with emphasis on avoiding and strictly restricting the digging of too many bore well in a village. Creating awareness and educating people about purifying drainage water before draining it into the river.
 - b) Forestation: Plant local indigenous medicinal and fruit trees like Neem, Karanj, Charaigodwa, Papaya, Lemon, Drumstick, Custard apple, Guava etc. close to the house. Connect forestations campaigns with local traditions, sacraments, ceremonies and rules in the society. Conduct training programs and seminars to empower communities to sustain healthy ecosystems; support forest protection (Van-surakhya Aviyan) committees in every village.
 - c) Pollution: Motivate NGOs and communities to check pollution levels in the local areas. Take up campaigns to say “no to fire crackers” in our celebrations. Use more compost/organic manure, fertilizers and pesticides instead of chemical ones. Encourage public interest in keeping public spaces clean and useable. During festivals and events instead of “use and throw”, plastic plates and glasses use biodegradable ones.
 - d) Concrete surfaces and pavements choke mother earth; propagate to leave sufficient open space and avoid concretizing entire campus, pavements or open area at home and in our institutions.
4. Energy: Encourage energy efficient practices like switching to LED and other efficient energy solutions and appliances with 3-5 star rating and opting for solar energy.
5. Transport: Avoid private transport and promote use of public transport
6. The CBCI Gender Policy: Implement the strategies of the Gender Policy (p. 24) by integrating women’s perspectives and indigenous knowledge in the policies and programs of environmental conservation and restoration.

B. Planning report from Bangladesh

- Create awareness through emphasis in humanities studies side by side with major courses of Business and Science in higher education, especially, in Catholic Institutions.
- Undertake sensitization programs for Dioceses.
- Teach families to be eco-friendly at home and in their daily life.
- Form a Climate Desk with adequate resources.
- Undertake Awareness Programs in Schools, Colleges, Madrasa and at the University level, on climate change and adaptation.

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- Ensure Youth participation in bodies and campaigns dealing with climate change and environment issues.
- Appoint Youth Ambassadors to take up climate change issues and concerns.

C. Planning Report from Sri Lanka

1. Help families to become more environmentally responsible when hosting First Holy Communion celebrations so that food is not wasted and garbage especially with plastics is not created.
2. Make the document of Pope Francis, Laudato Si, better known.
3. In rural communities, support the government programme to distribute saplings by disseminating the saplings through the parishes and encouraging parishioners to plant more trees.
4. Encourage more men to be involved in the process of climate change awareness so that all are engaged, not only women.
5. We see the Holy Father in the role of St Francis and so would like to make the feast of St Francis more meaningful by celebrating it as an Environment Day. Also create a society of St. Francis of Assisi which can promote environmental issues.
6. Make Valentine's Day a 'lovers of nature' day.
7. Explore avenues for greening our parishes.

D. Our Common Resolutions:

1. To raise awareness of this topic in all our various areas of influence especially among the young in our schools and colleges. This will be done by producing study modules on this topic with Laudato Si as our reference.
2. To translate where needed and study in small communities the Exhortation of Pope Francis on Creation – Laudato Si – “Care for our Common Home” with a view to implementing certain aspects of the teachings contained therein.
3. To meet personally with communities and women who are poor and experiencing some of the effects of climate change and encourage others to do the same. We believe the face-to-face encounter and relationship will bring real transformation of hearts.

We pray, through the intercession of Mary our mother, for the courage to act on our inspirations and insights gained during these days in Mumbai and we invite you to join us in prayer and action on behalf of Women and Creation.