Your Eminences, Dear Friends in the Lord,

Greetings and peace from the FABC Office of Laity and Family and AsIPA, Youth and Women’s Desks.

Dr Bibiana Ro, Fr Gustavo and myself, Wendy Louis have just met in Bangkok together with our Chairman, Cardinal Patrick d’Rosario csc and bishop member Bishop Joel ‘Bong’ Baylon. We met the day before our Joint Planning Meeting when all the offices of the FABC and the Central Secretariat meets up with the Central Committee of FABC which is made up of the President of FABC and all the Presidents of the Member Bishops’ Conferences of Asia.

It is during this meeting that we present our programmes for the coming years as well as our budgets and financial statements which are subsequently approved by the Central Committee during their meeting.

On this occasion we also took the opportunity to meet up with the other offices of the FABC to look at ways to collaborate in our projects and conferences.

We did not receive any negative feedback about the benefits or otherwise of sending the newsletter by email only. During 2016 we ceased to print and post the newsletter and continued with a full colour e-version. We have heard that some of you email the newsletter to more of your contacts for which we are grateful.

In this issue we highlight the ‘Women’s Desk’ as we have had the South Asian Meeting on ‘Women and Climate Change’ in Mumbai. The report and statement from this conference are featured here. Please mark your calenders and raise awareness of all the various seminars and events run by our office which we announce in this issue.

REPORT:

“Climate Change impact on Vulnerable Groups and Women’s Perspectives”

**SOUTH ASIAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE**

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 of Women

**Introduction**

What could be the connection between Climate Change and a poor, blind woman you might ask? Millions of women use open wood or coal fired stoves for daily cooking. The stinging smoke from these fires is the cause of serious health problems for these women, many of whom also suffer irreparable damage to their eyes. These open coal fires produce greenhouse gases and pollution. The gathering of wood for cooking and heating fuel causes deforestation in certain regions.

During the two days of talks and group discussions at the South Asian Regional Conference we heard how women often bear the brunt of the negative consequences of Climate Change disasters, extreme and unpredictable weather. We also heard stories of women who are effective agents for positive change and sustainable development.

44 participants from India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh gathered in Mumbai, India, from 17-19 January 2017, to discuss the issues related to Climate Change in the South Asia region.
Women’s Desk

The two day programme was organised by the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) Climate Change Desk, the FABC Office of Laity, Family, Women’s Desk and the Catholic Bishops Conference of India, Council for Women.

18 January – Day One
Climate Change Science, Laudato Si and Country Reports,
Day one of the programme focused on the science and significance of Climate Change and the Pope’s call to “care for our common home”. Mr Walter Mendoza helped participants to understand the terminology and meaning of the technical words and the concepts of global warming and climate change as well as some long-term consequences. Fr Allwyn D’Silva explained the key points from the Pope’s document on the Environment ‘Laudato Si’, highlighting the need for Catholics to see the environment and creation as their personal responsibility as stewards and disciples.

Following the inputs the three groups from India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh presented their country reports related to the theme of the conference. They explained how they were growing in awareness of the issues and the impact it was having on the poor and especially women. There were many wonderful, moving stories of great work being done in farming, greening the environment, awareness education and lifestyle changes that are aimed at mitigating and adapting to climate change. One key principle that emerged was that local wisdom and women’s views are important components for successful planning and development.

Facilitators during the two-day conference were Ms Wendy Louis of FABC OLF, Sr Talisha SD of the CBCI Council of Women and Ms Deepika Singh of the Climate Change Desk in Mumbai together with some participants.

The day ended on a high note with a Eucharist presided over by His Eminence Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Mumbai who encouraged participants to take seriously the topic under discussion. He emphasised that awareness and action to reduce the effects of Climate Change is part of our Christian responsibility.

19th January - Day Two
Gender concerns in Climate Change and practical responses.
The two presentations on this second day were packed with data and stories that pointed to the importance of including women in the climate change discourse as they are closely connected to Climate sensitive tasks like sourcing for drinking water and cooking fuel, farming, nutrition and child rearing and healthcare.

Professor Dr Vibhuti Patel, Head, P.G. Dept of Economics, SNDT Women’s University, Mumbai in her presentation addressed the theme of the conference and explained the symbiotic relationship between women and the environment. She gave many scenarios where there had been Tsunamis, floods or droughts where women were the main victims. While they suffered the most, women usually had the least say in what was being done to solve the problems and very poor access to credit or resources to rebuild, start businesses or farm more sustainably. Despite all the limitations it is also true to say that women are often the main agents for sustainable development.

We heard that in areas where there had been major disasters there was a marked reduction in girls and women’s access to education, healthcare and nutrition, compared to their male counterparts thereby affecting negatively their life expectancy.

If Climate change affects the poor and women disproportionately, it makes sense that women should be involved from the start in decision-making concerning development and climate change adaptation or mitigating activities in their regions.

Dr Priyadarshini Karve, the second speaker, runs her own company that provides very practical solutions as well as training, towards cleaner and more efficient energy consumption. An example would be the easy-to-make bio gas from waste device and cleaner cooking products.

Her presentation “Alternatives/concrete steps to combat climate change” was clarifying and practical. She began by helping participants understand the concept of the ‘carbon footprint’. When we consume 100gms of rice we calculate the carbon footprint of that 100gms of rice by adding up all the energy, water, labour, resources and services that went into planting, growing, harvesting, storing, transporting and processing it up to the point that it arrives on our plate. It was mind boggling to think of how easily we waste food, energy and consumables with so little thought for the earth’s resources used in its production.

Participants sitting in country groups deepened their understanding of the topics and explored ways to bring the ideas and suggestions back to their organisations, local churches and regions.

Bishop Jacob Mar Barnabas The Chairperson of CBCI Council for Women guided the participants in his talk on “Climate change impacts on vulnerable groups and response of the Catholic church”. Bishop Jacob called Climate Justice a moral and ethical Issue. He said that we lack the culture to attack this issue and that we need new paths that will bring healing at all levels for integral
and harmonious growth. “Only a genuine Christian Spirituality will be of service to us”, he said, and added that we are ‘stewards’ not ‘owners’ and we need to keep the ‘Common Good’ in view.

**Conclusion**

The conference concluded with a plenary discussion which articulated three common goals for the conference participants and reported on their country plans. This can be found in the ‘Final Statement’ of the conference.

The conference can be said to have fulfilled its objectives which were:

i) To understand the impacts and critical issues related to climate change and its influence on vulnerable groups, in south Asia.

ii) To reflect on the impacts of climate change on women, their perspectives and contribution in creating an environmentally sustainable world.

iii) To share successful programs/good practices.

iv) To develop a common regional action plan to combat climate change and protect the most vulnerable in the region.

We wish to thank our benefactors Misereor and CAFOD who have supported us financially to run this conference. We want to put on record our gratitude to the FABC OLF Chairman, Cardinal Patrick d’Rosario csc for his support. We also wish to thank all the sisters and staff who ensured we were comfortable and welcome to the conference centre. We thank the Climate Change Desk of Mumbai Archdiocese for providing the coordinating and secretariat services during our conference and especially Bishop Theotinius of Bangladesh for accompanying us during these days and presiding at our Eucharist on subsequent days. Finally, we congratulate Fr Allwyn D’Silva who has since been ordained auxiliary bishop of Mumbai.

---

**STATEMENT FROM THE 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.

---

**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 waste water 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 in catechism classes.**

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 wells 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 forestation 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; promote that we leave sufficient open space and avoid cementing entire campus pavements or open areas 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 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
1. Create awareness through emphasis in humanities studies side by side with major courses of Business and Science in higher education, especially, in Catholic institutions.
2. Undertake sensitization programs for Dioceses.
3. Teach families to be eco-friendly at home and in their daily life.
4. Form a Climate Desk with adequate resources.
5. Undertake Awareness Programs in Schools, Colleges, Madrasa and at the University level, on climate change and adaptation.
6. Ensure Youth participation in bodies and campaigns dealing with climate change and environment issues.
7. 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.

Indonesian Aleta Baun gives prize money for women working for the environment. UCANEWs 15/03/17

An Indonesian Christian woman who received an award for her work in environmental protection has established a new foundation using her prize money to support women working for the environment.

Aleta Baun, 53, an indigenous woman from East Nusa Tenggara province, received the Goldman Environment Prize in 2013 and a sum of US$150,000. She has used this money for her newly established Mama Aleta Fund foundation launched in Jakarta on March 11..."Women are among the most vulnerable groups because environmental destruction," she said.

Baun won the Goldman Environment Prize for her work in fighting against marble mining companies in South Central Timor district, which began in 1980.

The mining has caused deforestation, landslides, water pollution and other ecological problems, she said.

She organized more than 150 women to quietly occupy mining sites and weave traditional cloth there, which eventually saw the mining firms abandoned their operations in 2010.

Her new foundation, she said, also aims to support uneducated women from eastern Indonesia get an education and access to mentoring programs...
UP COMING EVENTS

FAMILY

East Asian Meeting on the Family
East Asian Regional Conference on Family
Family, Living A Mission of Love, as Hope for Society.
May 15 - 19 2017
St Teresa Centre, 2, Sanmin Rd, Sec 1, Taoyuan 33049, Taiwan.
Organised by FABC OLF and Taiwan Catholic Family Commission.

Study Days on the Family
A study of Amoris Laetitia and the FABC XI document on family.
8-11 October 2017, Camilian Pastoral Centre, Latkrabang, Thailand.

AsIPA(BEC) DESK

BEC Exposure Programme
66 Thai Participants from 8 dioceses will visit Korea for a BEC Exposure Programme. From April 24 – 28, 2017.
They will visit the island Diocese of Cheju, Korea. Participants includes 1 Archbishop, 21 Priests, 20 Religious Sisters, 24 Lay persons and 20-30 Korean Representatives

Coming in 2018

VIII AsIPA General Assembly
Date: October 17th – 24th, 2018
To be held on the island of Batam, in the Diocese of Pangkalpinang, Indonesia.

YOUTH DESK

Asian Youth Day 2017 and Asian Youth Ministers’ Meeting
2017
Jogjakarta Archdiocese, Indonesia
The theme is: “Joyful Asian Youth! Living the Gospel in Multicultural Asia”.
To build a spiritual and human life according to the Gospel of Christ.
Specific Objectives:
- To explore, reflect on and share our faith experiences as local churches living as culturally diverse communities in a multicultural Asia.
- To introduce and share, the testimony of faith of the local Church of Indonesia in the context of her socio-cultural-religious diversity and care for creation.
- To promote youth involvement in the evangelizing mission of the Church so that they may share the values of the Kingdom of God as joyful witnesses in multicultural dialogue and work for social justice and peace.

What we want to share is a belief that: living the Gospel in multicultural Asia needs open hearts of all of us to communicate the narratives of faith, hope and love of every Asian youth community so that we can joyfully inspire each other united by the Holy Spirit, to do God’s will as Jesus did to create a world which is a home for every creature.

See you in Jogja…

2019 SYNOD on YOUTH

I’m writing to you, dear young people, with paternal affection

Pope Francis has addressed a letter to young people on the occasion of the presentation of the preparatory document for the coming XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the theme “Young people, faith and vocation discernment,” a document intended to be “like a compass along this path.” These are some of the Pope’s beautiful words.

Dear young people,
“I wanted you to be the centre of attention, because you are in my heart, as a Father who invites you to ‘go’, to set out towards a future which is unknown but one which will surely lead to fulfilment, a future towards which He Himself accompanies you. I invite you to hear God’s voice resounding in your heart through the breath of the Holy Spirit.”

Following the example of Abraham’s call, the “new land for us today” is “a more just and friendly society which you, young people, deeply desire and wish to build to the very ends of the earth.”

“Jesus looks at you and invites you to go with him…. This will be possible to the extent that, even with professional guides, you will learn how to undertake a journey of discernment to discover God’s plan in your life.”

“I asked you several times: ‘Can we change things?’ And you shouted: ‘Yes!’ Listen to the cry arising from your inner selves!”

“The Church also wishes to listen to your voice, your sensitivities and your faith: even your doubts and your criticism. Make your voice heard, let it resonate in communities and let it be heard by your shepherds of souls.”

“I entrust you to Mary of Nazareth, a young person like yourselves, whom God beheld lovingly, so she might take your hand and guide you to the joy of fully and generously responding to God’s call with the words: ‘Here I am’.”

FRANCIS

Read the entire letter at:

Press Conference for the presentation the Preparatory Document of the XV General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on young people, 13/01/2017

SYNOD OF BISHOPS – XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Young people, faith and vocation discernment
PREPARATORY DOCUMENT