



# CYNESA CATHOLIC YOUTH NETWORK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN AFRICA

## INTRODUCTION

The founding of the Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA), was inspired by Saint John Paul II's message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace, 1990, 'Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation'. In his message, Pope John Paul II stressed "the need for carefully coordinated solutions based on a morally coherent world view" because many of the world's challenges are interdependent. As a faith-based organization, CYNESA is well placed to contribute towards the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as envisioned by Pope John Paul II. Pope Francis re-affirmed the role of young people in his encyclical 'Laudato Si, 'On the Care of our Common Household', reminding all of humanity that "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" (para 13).

In presenting her long term plan on the SDGs, therefore, CYNESA renews the commitment and resolve of young Catholics across Africa, to work in collaboration with others in creating a better world.

## OUTLINE OF THE PLAN

The 17 goals outlined in the outcome document of the Open Working Group on the SDGs are relevant to CYNESA's mission. We will therefore address all 17 goals, either individually or as a cluster, as follows:

- Action Plan A: Goal 15
- Action Plan B: Goal 13
- Action Plan C: Goal 14

- Action Plan D: Goals 1, 2 and 3.
- Action Plan E: Goal 6
- Action Plan F: Goal 7
- Action Plan G: Goal 12
- Action Plan H: Goals 16 and 17
- Action Plan I: Goals 4 and 5
- Action Plan J: Goals 8 and 9
- Action Plan K: Goals 10 and 11

#### ACTION PLAN A:

***Goal 15 - Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss.***

*Desertification, deforestation, biodiversity loss and land degradation pose major challenges especially on the African continent. CYNESA will address these through its ongoing programs and new efforts:*

1. In 2014, CYNESA established working relations with the Catholic Diocese of Murang'a and is now a partner in the Greening Hills Initiative (GHI). GHI specifically aims to contribute to a sustainable environment that empowers youth, women and children economically. Working with government entities such as the Kenya Forest Services and Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI), Murang'a County Government, schools and communities, the specific objectives are as follows
  - To involve 12 schools in environmental conservation around the Kiambichu, Kiamuti, Kangure and Karua hills by the year 2017.
  - To train a minimum of 4,200 direct beneficiaries on environmental conservation by 2017.
  - To train 15 youth, women, and farmers' groups on value addition systems with the aim of establishing 15 sustainable green businesses by 2017
  - To plant a minimum of 180,000 seedlings annually.
  - To forest 36 acres of land annually on the hilltops by engaging schoolchildren, youth, farmer groups, women groups and communities living around the hills.

*CYNESA and the Catholic Diocese of Murang'a will expand and replicate the Greening Hills Initiative model in other regions and African countries. In the long-term the two organisations will develop manuals based on practical experience to guide the replication of GHI by other organisations globally.*
2. Through the Young Christian Students (YCS) CYNESA is working with the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru (CDN) youth department to promote tree planting and growing in schools and neighboring communities. Students plant trees whenever they meet for

school functions, rallies, congresses, games, and festivals to commemorate their presences in the schools. The idea is to scale up this project for replication in neighboring dioceses and across all the CYNESA chapters.

3. CYNESA is working through a model where Christians and people of good will plant trees to commemorate major occasions in their lives such as birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, promotions, confirmations, engagements, life successes, and even deaths. The initiative will be promoted through existing media, social and ecumenical structures.

*Concerning reversal of land degradation, CYNESA will promote the farming God's way project in partnership with organizations like Care for Creation and agricultural departments of the Caritas offices with whom we already share work relations. In Kenya, the National Youth Centre already has a demonstration plot on farming God's way and this will be scaled up to local communities in the various countries where CYNESA has established chapters.*

## **ACTION PLAN B:**

### **Goal 13 – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts**

*CYNESA's mission anchors on helping young people in Africa to respond to the twin challenges of environmental degradation and climate change from a faith perspective rooted in Catholic Social Teaching. In executing its mandate, CYNESA has adopted the papal encyclical on the Care of our Common Home, 'Laudato Si', as a guide to spiritual and social response to climate change and environmental degradation. The following actions are core to CYNESA's contribution towards this urgent need to combat climate change:*

1. CYNESA will launch a climate change toolkit that will draw from Catholic Social Teaching, Ignatian Spirituality and Science for adoption in Jesuit institutions that serve young people in Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The toolkit will be essential in promoting awareness and action towards the fight against climate change. CYNESA will work towards promoting the Climate Change Toolkit in other Jesuit-run youth centres across Africa.
2. CYNESA will enhance its partnerships with local Bishops and clergy to prioritize the need to "Care for Our Common Home" through sermons, speeches, and write-ups. When communities are sensitized through faith leadership, the likelihood of response through responsible stewardship is greater.
3. CYNESA will continue to work with global organisations such as the Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM) to petition leaders and policymakers to make tangible commitments and take action against climate change.
4. Interfaith and secular cooperation with organisations such as the Lutheran World Federation-Youth (LWF), Our Voices, SAFCEI, and the Young Green Anglicans will be instrumental in encouraging the formation of eco-communities and eco-congregations

to promote response to climate change at individual and collective platforms.

#### **ACTION PLAN C:**

##### ***Goal 14 – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development***

CYNESA began working with its teams stationed along the coastal regions of Tanzania and Kenya to promote waste management projects. CYNESA has been able to lobby support from political representatives (for example the Member of Parliament for Jomvu Constituency in Mombasa, Kenya) and corporate goodwill (Twiga Plant in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania) to work towards protection of beaches and oceans through waste management projects.

In the future, CYNESA hopes to commence mutually beneficial relationships with communities living around lakes, rivers, and seas with a view to encourage responsible consumption and conservation. CYNESA will work with governments at various levels, faith communities near wetlands and other NGOs in African countries, to seek provision of modern fishing equipment to young fisher folk on condition of responsible fishing and management of corals and mangroves.

#### **ACTION PLAN D:**

*In this section of her long term plan, CYNESA will tackle the first three SDGs:*

- ***Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere;***
- ***Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture;***
- ***Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.***

CYNESA participated at the Second Ecosystems-based Adaptation for Food Security Conference (EBAFOSC) that led to the establishment of the Ecosystems-based Adaptation for Food Security Assembly (EBAFOSA). EBAFOSA aims at providing a framework for ecosystem based adaptation that ensures food security in Africa. To ensure the success of this mission, EBAFOSA is in the process of establishing National Branches with delegates in each country in Africa. In Kenya, CYNESA has been invited to take up a lead role in the establishment of the national office. CYNESA will be working with other organisations in Africa towards promotion of sustainable and restorative agriculture, mitigation of climate change impact, and increased food

security. CYNESA will endeavor to promote the voice of young Africans from a faith platform at EBAFOSA to ensure responsible policy formulation and negotiation. We make reference to the declaration of the Nairobi Agenda in undertaking this course. As highlighted at Action Plan F (1), the Greening Hills Initiative project incorporates economic activities where communities around the target hills will be assisted in establishing non-extractive economic use of the forests to ensure that the forested hills remain protected as well. Specifically, the following activities address these 3 SDGs:

- Training (on environmental conservation, sustainable agriculture, value addition) – shall be a crucial aspect of the project. Various stakeholders shall be involved in training and carrying out demonstrations to schools, farmer groups, women groups and the youth. Training will be a continuous activity throughout the project period.
- Establishment of common marketing groups – the farmers. Youth and women groups shall be engaged to form common marketing groups that will assist in marketing their farm produce as well as the value addition products.
- Providing processing equipment for value addition – the project intends to provide these equipment to facilitate value addition activities, such equipment would include honey processors, briquette machines and milk processors. The communities will have the liberty of deciding the value addition activity most appropriate to them and getting it.

The innovative replication of the project in all other CYNESA chapters will see GHI transform into Greening Lakes/Oceans/Rivers Initiative based on context.

#### **ACTION PLAN E:**

**Goal 6 on ‘Ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all’ will be exclusively addressed in the third section.**

CYNESA plans to utilize the existing structures of the Catholic Church to promote projects that ensure education and awareness on the need for proper water management and protection of existing catchment areas. In the Church structures, CYNESA will engage with Caritas offices in the respective countries where CYNESA has established chapters.

Focus will be paid to the younger generations through the already existing networks with Jesuit high schools and other Catholic-run schools. CYNESA will include sections on sustainable management of water and sanitation through responsible water usage in

the climate change toolkit that is underway rooted in the special place for water in both science and scripture.

#### ACTION PLAN F:

**Goal 7 on ‘Ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all’, will be covered in the fourth section.**

CYNESA will continue to support initiatives that promote efficient energy for all. Working through local authorities, church structures, and ecumenical partnerships with other faiths, CYNESA will unveil campaigns aimed at sensitizing the society through congregations on the importance of shifting to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy. CYNESA through its national chapters, will promote the engagement of young people in leading energy audits of Church buildings and facilities.

As sensitization without support could prove futile, CYNESA will work with local governments and the Caritas offices of the Catholic Church to provide affordable, efficient and renewable energy through already existing programmes in different countries. A case in point is Caritas Zambia that has already worked with communities to provide them with energy-saving cookers at reduced costs.

#### ACTION PLAN G:

**Goal 12 – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns**

Inspired by Pope Francis’ message on changing the ‘throw-away culture’, the CYNESA core teams in all 8 countries where we have presence currently, has already started personal behavior and attitude change in matters concerning consumption as a prerequisite for continued volunteerism in the team. Rooted in Scripture as greed, CYNESA is supporting the local core teams in promoting consumption on the basis of need as opposed to want. As an organization, CYNESA does not invest or expend available resources when salvage is possible. Therefore, optimum usage of existing resources including food and stationery is adhered to even at our various chapters, workshops, and programmes. In the schools CYNESA partners with, for example, administrators and students will be urged to develop a culture of consumption based on need and minimize on wastage. By encouraging consumption on need, CYNESA hopes to impact on overproduction and development of sustainable consumption of resources. CYNESA will also continue working within the church and other ecumenical structures to promote the creation of eco-congregations, which are communities bound by a faith that commits to environmental action through ecofriendly lifestyles and advocacy for eco-justice traceable to scripture and eco-spirituality.

## ACTION PLAN H:

Goals 16 and 17 will be covered under this action plan:

- **Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels**
- **Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.**

CYNESA will continue establishing new chapters across Africa to strengthen its presence and representation of the voice of young people of faith in calls for ecological stewardship and care for creation. It is our hope that we will be in a position to acquire adequate resources to register formally and support the individual chapters. The plan is to form 5 regional offices in Africa with distinctive country chapters to ensure local-based action that is contextualized to the different local contexts as much as possible.

In 2016 CYNESA in collaboration with other partners, will offer an ecology program as part of the official World Youth Day program, in Krakow, Poland. Previous WYD events have attracted up to 4 million young Catholics from all across the world. CYNESA is currently working with the WYD local organizing committee to ensure that the event itself is sustainably managed, and to provide opportunities for young people at the event to network and build partnerships on caring for our common home.

CYNESA is working towards establishing partnerships with organizations operating from global platforms and is currently a co-founding member of the Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM). CYNESA is also working with other regional bodies such as the South African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI) and will continue to establish ecumenical links with other faith-based organisations that stand for similar cause as CYNESA to ensure global impact. CYNESA will also continue to support global campaigns aimed at increasing awareness and action to fight climate change and promote environmental stewardship and goodwill. Examples of global campaigns that CYNESA is championing include the #fastfortheclimate and the Catholic Climate Petition.

## ACTION PLAN I:

This section of CYNESA's long term plan combines addresses SDGs four and five:

- **Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all;**

- **Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**

One of CYNESA's main area of activity is education, training and awareness that draws from science, history, scripture, and Catholic Social Teaching. Accordingly, CYNESA will continually promote all-gender-inclusive education for its core team, associates, and affiliates to build capacity in African human capital. In addition, CYNESA is partnering globally with organizations that provide training and education in various aspects to ensure education for its core team and partners. For example, CYNESA also established working relations with the South African Faith Communities' Environmental Institute (SAFCEI) who have provided training and capacity building on eco-justice advocacy through the Faith Leaders Environmental Training Initiative (FLEAT) to five CYNESA team members drawn from Kenya, Tanzania, and Zambia. This has enhanced CYNESA's voice for young faith leaders in Africa in matters of environmental justice advocacy from a faith-based platform. For young people, the Climate Change Toolkit under preparation will be crucial in improving curriculum in environmental science and Christian environmental stewardship.

CYNESA seeks to promote female and male representation in the establishment of all its chapters and in all programmes. Currently, six out of seven of our Country Directors are female. CYNESA commits to sustain this momentum by ensuring gender equality and empowerment of girls and young women is reflected in the face of her leadership. We will continue to encourage and facilitate the participation of girls and young women in all of our programs. CYNESA will pay attention to gender equality when working with communities across Africa.

#### ACTION PLAN J:

This section will combine SDGs Eight and Nine:

- **Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;**
- **Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.**

By virtue of being EBAFOSA members and delegates, CYNESA will fervently negotiate for policies that guide governments and other stakeholders in promoting sustainable economic growth. Through promotion of agriculture and especially farming God's way, CYNESA hopes to reform the lost appeal of agriculture among young people by projecting the opportunities in agribusiness. This would help curb unemployment rates

while simultaneously enhancing restorative land use and ecofriendly activities.

CYNESA seeks to establish innovative means for waste management and technology adoption across Africa. The first successful project is expected to be on e-waste management where CYNESA is working towards establishing links with social entrepreneurs with interest in collecting e-waste for recycling purposes. The need to work with foreign social entrepreneurs is based on the fact that most African countries lack incentivized systems that promote recycling innovations through entrepreneurship.

Subject to availability of resources, CYNESA will also be providing decent employment opportunities to young people in the different countries that we will establish chapters. In addition, CYNESA will encourage international partners to recruit workforces from the CYNESA team. One successful case has been the employment opportunity offered to CYNESA Burundi's Country Director to promote the Catholic Climate Petition in Francophone countries from the CYNESA office in Nairobi.

#### ACTION PLAN K:

This section captures SDGs ten and eleven:

- **Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries**
- **Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**

CYNESA will continue to pursue partnerships which ensure that we help to address the needs of communities that have the greatest needs. We will aim to empower young people to enable their constructive involvement in building their societies and nations, through care of creation.

Through afforestation, waste management, training and awareness creation, and encouraging and supporting concrete action plans at the local level in an effective, coordinated, evangelical, culturally sensitive, and spiritually grounded manner, CYNESA will work to promote changes in attitudes, mindsets and behavior among the African people for better cities and human settlements that are inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

#### *Acronyms used in the document:*

ARC – Alliance of Religions and Conservation

CYNESA – Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa

EBAFOSA - Ecosystems-based Adaptation for Food Security Assembly  
EBAFOSC - Ecosystems-based Adaptation for Food Security Conference  
FLEAT – Faith Leaders’ Environmental Advocacy Training  
GCCM – Global Catholic Climate Movement  
GHI – Greening Hills Initiative  
CDM – Catholic Diocese of Murang’a  
CDN – Catholic Diocese of Nakuru  
KEFRI – Kenya Forestry Research Institute  
LWF – Lutheran World Federation  
SAFCEI – Southern Africa Faith Communities Environment Institute  
SDGS – Sustainable Development Goals  
UN - United Nations  
WYD – World Youth Day  
YCS – Young Christian Students