

AFRICAN FAITH COMMITMENTS FOR A LIVING PLANET

NATIONAL MUSLIM COUNCIL OF TANZANIA (BAKWATA)

Long-term plan on the environment – summary

INTRODUCTION

The National Muslim Council of Tanzania (BAKWATA) is a well-established faith-based Islamic organisation registered since 1968. The Council has branch offices all over Tanzania with a network from the national to grassroots level with 22 regional and 113 district offices served by over 700 sheikhs.

Around 2,800 mosques run under its co-ordination. It owns around 40 acres of land in each of its 22 regions and it has 20 secondary schools, two teachers' colleges, two theological colleges, and a radio station and support numerous madras schools. From the late 1990s, BAKWATA has organised and facilitated trainings for its Muslim scholars on environmental issues.

Ongoing work on environmental issues includes: environmental education for madras pupils in 10 coastal districts, environmental education and management clubs in 10 secondary schools owned by BAKWATA and spreading the use of environmental theological materials in religious ceremonies and sermons on Friday prayers for more than 80 imams and sheikhs throughout Tanzania.

A handbook for madrasahs on Islamic teachings on environment management has been drawn up with support from the US-based Jane Goodall Institute for use in 10 coastal districts in Tanzania.

THE LONG-TERM PLAN (2012-2018)

The National Muslim Council of Tanzania (BAKWATA) developed this long-term plan after consultation with its sheikhs, imams and the Muslim community. A draft plan was shared and revised by Muslim scholars and then presented to the National Muslim Ulamaa Council for discussion and approval.

It is planned to implement the long-term plan in 16 districts and to ensure that it complements wider government initiatives on environmental management and sustainable use of natural resources.

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

To reverse the negative impact of environmental mismanagement, destruction, improper use of natural resources – as well as contribute to the mitigation of the negative impact of climatic change. BAKWATA will work with other faith groups as well as local and national government organisations to achieve this.

The programme will:

- Use religious teachings to promote sustainable environmental management and sustainable use of natural resources and other environmental issues;
- Mainstream environmental education into the curriculum;
- Use extra curriculum activities to promote environmental protection and promote alternative technology.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES

Lobbying and Advocacy

- Prepare, print and disseminate popular versions of environmental policies and national strategies to increase community understanding;
- Conduct advocacy forums bringing together stakeholders to identify and address policy issues around environmental protection and management;
- Facilitate community involvement in implementation and monitoring of environmental policy and other legal frameworks in all project districts;
- Document and disseminate policy implementation success and challenges, including lessons learned, to environmental protection agencies and the general community;
- Develop and adopt a Muslim Environmental and Natural Resource Policy to provide a framework for the Muslim community all over the country to legally and lawfully take part in environmental management and sustainable use of natural resources;
- Engage in ARC's education network to draw up a toolkit on environmental education for use in faith schools.

Sustainable Community Capacity Building, Livelihood and Protection

- Build the capacity of grassroots community environmental protection and establish watchdogs that will oversee appropriate and sustainable use of natural resources and promote community involvement in preserving the environment;
- Provide basic skills in manufacturing environmentally friendly cookers;
- Train women and young people in marketing skills;
- Facilitate and build the capacity of environmental youth clubs in and out of schools;
- Facilitate identification, printing and dissemination of religious teachings that discourage pollution, promote environmental protection and management, and the sustainable use of natural resources;
- Maintain training on the environment to madrasa pupils in 100 madrassas;
- Mainstream environment and climate change issues in Islamic preaching during prayers and religious occasions;
- Reprint 500 madrasa Environmental Education guides;
- Participate in National Environment Day.

Environmental Impact Mitigation and Reforestation

- Support and facilitate establishment of community-owned tree nurseries in all project districts and train women and young people to manage the tree nurseries;
- Conduct an environmental impact mitigation and reforestation campaign twice a year;
- Promote use of alternative energy instead of firewood and charcoal through community education and awareness raising;
- Promote protection and management of water sources using water user groups;
- Promote rainwater harvesting and use especially in primary and secondary schools.

This plan is the result of consultation with BAKWATA officials and the Muslim community, and has the support of Sheikh Shaaban bin Simba, the Grand Mufti of Tanzania, and the Ulamaa Council of the National Muslim Council of Tanzania.

This plan was launched at ARC's Many Heavens, One Earth, Our Continent celebration held in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 2012