

***LAUDATO SI'***

**IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES  
FOR THE AMECEA REGION**

*LAUDATO SI'* IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES FOR THE  
AMECEA REGION

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Africa – 20<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly of Bishops

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AMECEA Secretariat  
P.O. Box 21191, 00505  
Nairobi, Kenya  
Email: [secgeneral@amecea.org](mailto:secgeneral@amecea.org)



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	3
PREFACE .....	6
FOREWORD .....	9
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	11
ACRONYMS.....	13
DEFINITION OF TERMS .....	15
INTRODUCTION .....	19
About AMECEA .....	19
Statement of Commitment.....	20
GUIDING PRINCIPLES .....	21
CHAPTER 1.....	25
THE RESPONSE TO THE CRY OF THE EARTH.....	25
1.1 Introduction .....	25
1.2 Theological Reflection .....	26
1.3 Conversion Point.....	28
1.4 Guidelines .....	28

CHAPTER 2.....	33
RESPONSE TO THE CRY OF THE POOR .....	33
2.1 Introduction .....	34
2.2 Theological Reflection .....	34
2.3 Conversion Point.....	35
2.4. Guidelines .....	35
CHAPTER 3.....	43
ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS .....	43
3.1 Introduction .....	43
3.2 Theological Reflection .....	44
3.3 Conversion Point.....	45
3.4 Guidelines .....	45
CHAPTER 4.....	51
ADOPTION OF SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES .....	51
4.1 Introduction .....	51
4.2 Theological Reflection .....	52
4.3 Conversion Point.....	54
4.4 Guidelines .....	54
CHAPTER 5.....	59
ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION .....	59
5.1 Introduction .....	59
5.2 Theological Reflection .....	60
5.3 Conversion Points .....	61

5.4 Guidelines and Recommendations.....	61
CHAPTER 6.....	68
ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY.....	68
6.1 Introduction .....	68
6.2 Theological Reflections .....	69
6.3 Conversion Points .....	70
6.4 Guidelines .....	70
CHAPTER 7.....	74
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATORY ACTION .....	74
7.1 Introduction .....	75
7.2 Theological Reflection .....	75
7.3 Conversion Points .....	77
7.4 Guidelines .....	77
REFERENCES AND RESOURCES .....	83



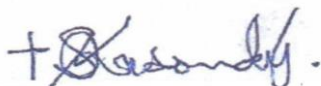
## PREFACE

Our Creator called the human family to be stewards of creation. “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it” (Genesis 2:15). The ecological problems which many parts of the world including Africa are experiencing today are caused by the misuse of land and sea and their natural resources. God’s intention was that human beings should respect and take good care of the environment in order that it may support both them and all the living things.

We have neglected that call, degraded the environment over exploited the natural resources. This has resulted to a planet that is polluted and hotter, fuelling suffering of the living things. This state of affairs challenges us to an honest conversation on care for our common home. The 19<sup>th</sup> AMECEA Plenary Assembly held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (2018) three years after the publication of *Laudato Si'*, resolved that AMECEA Secretariat and member episcopal conferences mainstream integral ecology in all their catechesis, teaching and programs.

The Executive Board of AMECEA in October 2019, adopted a resolution that proposed, **“NURTURING OUR COMMON HOME: Living *Laudato Si'* towards enhancing Integral Human Development in the AMECEA Region”** as the theme for the 20<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly. This theme was chosen to take up the challenge of *Laudato Si'* with regard to ongoing formation of conscience and conversion of heart.

These guidelines provide an opportunity for AMECEA to take up its place in contributing to the implementation of the stated goals of *Laudato Si'*. They challenge us to both a prayerful introspection and a committed response towards care for the ecology. They also affirm the already existent best practices while calling others to transition towards the desired standards for making *Laudato Si'* alive. The successful implementation of these guidelines will highly depend on the openness of the conferences to domesticate and contextualise them. As part of our commitment to implement the *Laudato Si'*, I urge all my brother Bishops, agents of evangelisation and people of good will to take up and implement these guidelines with the enthusiasm they deserve in nurturing our common home.



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**Rt. Rev. Charles Sampa KASONDE**  
**Bishop of Solwezi, Zambia and Chairman of AMECEA**







## FOREWORD

These guidelines have been developed to offer practical and contextual guidance to AMECEA member conferences on the implementation of Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. Through the encyclical, the Holy Father, urgently appeals "for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenges we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all" (LS, 14).

*Laudato Si'* identifies seven priority areas namely: response to the cry of the earth, response to the cry of the poor, ecological economics, adoption of simple lifestyles, ecological education, ecological spirituality and community engagement and participatory action. Consequently, the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform (launched by Pope Francis May, 2021), highlights seven sectors as key to the implementation of the encyclical. It proposes a seven-year journey "to bring the whole human family together to seek sustainable and integral development" (LS, 13).

The AMECEA Bishops, through these guidelines, invite all Catholic faithful to participate in the suggested action within the framework of the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform. Individuals, families, Small Christian Communities, parishes, dioceses and all Catholic institutions have a duty to undertake the proposed seven-year journey of integral ecology.

These guidelines are presented in eight, practical chapters that are adaptable to different contexts. The chapters mirror the *Laudato Si'* goals. It is meant for use by Bishops, priests, religious men and women, institutions, Catholic faithful and people of goodwill in response to the care for the common home.



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**Rt. Rev. Rogath Kimaryo**

**Bishop of Same, Tanzania and Bishop Chair, PIHD  
AMECEA**



## AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AMECEA Secretariat greatly appreciates AMECEA Chairman Rt. Rev. Charles Kasonde, PIHD Department and Pastoral Departments' chairmen; Rt. Rev. Rogath Kimaryo and Most Rev. Alick Banda respectively, for their leadership in the process of writing these guidelines. I am grateful too, to the AMECEA Executive Board for their guidance and support.

I wish to acknowledge AMECEA Secretariat staff and the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) for their technical support in writing the guidelines.

Special gratitude goes to AMECEA PIHD Department through the leadership of Rev. Fr. Paul Igweta Mung'athia, who has coordinated the writing process with his team of drafters. I am indebted to AMECEA Pastoral Department led by Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Chimombo for reviewing the guidelines.

Special appreciation goes to CAFOD, USCCB, Missio Aachen and Fastenopfer for their support towards the development of these guidelines. I acknowledge the technical support from CARITAS AFRICA, CYNESA and *Laudato Si'* Movement.

I am grateful for the valuable contribution of numerous people and stakeholders; whose names we cannot list in this document.



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**Very Rev. Fr. Anthony Makunde**  
**Secretary General AMECEA**



## ACRONYMS

<b>AM:</b>	<i>Africae Munus</i>
<b>AMECEA:</b>	Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa
<b>ACWECA:</b>	Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa
<b>CAFOD:</b>	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
<b>USCCB:</b>	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
<b>LS:</b>	<i>Laudato Si'</i>
<b>DIHD:</b>	Dicastery for Promotion of Integral Human Development
<b>FC:</b>	<i>Familiaris Consortio</i>
<b>IHD:</b>	Integral Human Development
<b>CST:</b>	Catholic Social Teaching
<b>CYNESA:</b>	Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa
<b>PCA:</b>	Paris Climate Agreement
<b>SDGs:</b>	Sustainable Development Goals

<b>JPC:</b>	Justice and Peace Commission
<b>CMA:</b>	Catholic Men Association
<b>CWA:</b>	Catholic Women Association
<b>UN:</b>	United Nations
<b>AU:</b>	African Union
<b>CPLO:</b>	Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Office
<b>DRR:</b>	Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>CV:</b>	<i>Caritas in Veritate</i>
<b>WASH:</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
<b>SILC:</b>	Savings and Internal Lending Communities
<b>PMC:</b>	Pontifical Missionary Childhood
<b>PIHD:</b>	Promotion of Integral Human Development
<b>SCC:</b>	Small Christian Communities
<b>AOSK:</b>	Association of Sisterhood of Kenya



## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Agroecological practices:** Farming practices that reduce emissions through recycling resources and prioritising local supply chains, managing the impact of farming on wildlife and harnessing nature, such as pollinating crops and controlling pests.

**Biosphere:** Regions of the surface and atmosphere of the earth or another planet occupied by living organisms.

**Church institutions:** Organisations, initiatives and establishments such as schools, hospitals, hospitality facilities, orphans and vulnerable homes - which are either wholly or partially owned and managed by the church or have a direct affiliation to the Church.

**Circular economy:** A model that seeks to balance economic productivity and preservation of natural resources, by minimising the use of raw materials and the creation of waste. It does so by repeatedly and systematically recovering and reusing as many of the products and materials as possible.

**Divestment:** Divestment is the opposite of investment; it means selling or reducing assets in a given entity in order to exert negative pressure on that entity, thus using the marketplace to promote certain behavior or improve certain policies.

**Ecological economics:** An interdisciplinary field defined by a set of concrete problems or challenges related to governing economic activity in a way that promotes human well-being, sustainably, and justly.

**Encyclical:** An authoritative circular letter promulgated by the Pope. Ordinarily addressed to the whole Church or at times more broadly to ‘all people of good will.’

**Ecology:** Ecology is the study of organisms and how they interact with the environment around them. It has four main levels including the organism, population, community, and ecosystem.

**Gift economy:** A form of exchange, outside of traditional economic markets, where goods and services are given freely without monetary exchange or expectations of a return or reward.

**Throw away culture:** It is a consumerism, whereby society tends to use items once only, from disposable packaging, and consumer products are not designed for reuse or lifetime use. The term describes a critical view of overconsumption and excessive production of short-lived or disposable items over durable goods that can be repaired, but at its origins, it was viewed as a positive attribute.<sup>1</sup>

**Hazard:** Any source of potential damage, harm or adverse health and environmental effects on something or someone.

**Biodiversity:** The plurality of life forms including species diversity where every ecosystem contains a unique collection of species, all interacting with each other.



**Frontier states:** A *frontier* is the geographical area near or beyond a boundary of the Saharan and Sub Saharan Africa.

**Biodegradable:** A substance or object capable of being decomposed by bacteria or other living organisms and thereby avoiding pollution.

**Fossil fuels:** This include coal, petroleum, natural gas, oil shales, bitumen, tar sands, and heavy oils. All contain carbon and were formed as a result of geologic processes acting on the remains of organic matter produced by photosynthesis.

**Invasive species:** An organism introduced in an ecosystem and which becomes overpopulated and negatively alters its new environment.

**Organic farming:** A system of agricultural production that seeks to promote and enhance an ecosystem's health while minimising adverse effects on natural resources.

**Wetlands:** Areas where water covers the soil, or is present either at or near the surface of the soil all year or for varying periods of the year.

**Ecumenical:** Any initiative that encourages greater cooperation between Christians Churches.

**Ecosystem:** Interconnected web of various life forms such as forests, wildlife and water bodies.





## INTRODUCTION

### About AMECEA

The Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) is a Catholic service organisation for the National Episcopal Conferences of the nine countries of Eastern Africa, namely Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Djibouti and Somalia are affiliate members. It is one of the regional Episcopal Conferences that form part of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM). Since its establishment in 1961, one of the distinctive characteristics of AMECEA is being an organ of pastoral solidarity and collaboration, whose flagship is building a participative Church which is firmly anchored at grassroots levels in Small Christian Communities.

**Vision:** A Holy Spirit-filled family of God committed to holistic Evangelisation and Integral Development.

**Mission:** To inspire and empower God's family in AMECEA to a credible and prophetic witness to Christ, by promoting unity, justice, peace, and solidarity among its members.

## Core Values

AMECEA is guided by the following set of core values:

1. Dignity of life and human person;
2. Common Good;
3. Solidarity;
4. Preferential option for the poor;
5. Moral Integrity; Integrity of Family; Integrity of Creation;
6. Prophetic Witness;
7. Consciousness of sin.

## Statement of Commitment

Appreciating the integrity of creation and inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, we the AMECEA Bishops affirm our commitment to care for our common home. We commit to shepherd the Catholic faithful and people of goodwill as they take individual and collective responsibility to answer the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor by conserving the environment and sustainably using the natural resources for the benefit of the current and future generations.



## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

These guidelines are anchored on the following set of guiding principles:

1. Human Dignity;
2. Common good of all humanity;
3. Environmental stewardship;
4. Conservation;
5. Simplicity;
6. Participation;
7. Rule of Law;
8. Ecological conversion.

### **Rationale**

Environmental degradation is a result of the dynamic inter play of socio-economic, institutional and technological activities, which among others may be driven by economic growth, population growth, urbanisation, intensification of agriculture, rising energy use and transportation. However, poverty remains a problem at the root of several environmental challenges in the AMECEA region.

Studies show that poverty is both the cause and effect of environmental degradation. The circular link between poverty and environment is an extremely complex phenomenon. Inequality may foster unsustainability because the poor, who rely on natural resources more than the rich, deplete natural resources faster as they have no real prospects of gaining access to other types of resources. Moreover, a degraded environment can accelerate the process of impoverishment, again because the poor depend directly on natural assets.

Many people living in the AMECEA region and Africa at large though experiencing the impact of climate change may not be fully aware of the encyclical *Laudato Si'*. A meeting convened in Lusaka 2020, indicated a very low level of awareness of the encyclical. This may partly be explained by a generally poor reading culture among many people in the region.

Attempts to strengthen the implementation of *Laudato Si'* must therefore address the basic question of knowledge of the encyclical as well the translation of the principles therein into actions for individuals, households and communities. Moreover, the relationship of human beings and environment is an inseparable part of ecology. "The Lord God took the man and settled him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and care for it" (Genesis 2:15). That means, since creation, human beings were instituted as stewards of the earth.

Whereas the principles and values enshrined in any encyclical may be widely applied, there is need to fit them into the local context. In this regard, there is need for contextualisation of *Laudato Si'* for proper and meaningful execution. In this

respect, AMECEA seeks to help the local church reflect on its people's lifestyle and propose mechanisms and actions to restore, balance and envisage harmony in creation.

Furthermore, organisational structure of the Church in the region provides an opportunity for the AMECEA region to leverage on environmental care. From the regional Secretariat, AMECEA connects with member conferences, diocesan secretariats, deanaries, distinct parishes, Small Christian Communities, families and individuals. The structure has the capacity to impact on the hard to reach communities in the region. In the light of this, the guidelines seek to leverage on these expansive church structures to strengthen action *on Laudato Si'*.







## CHAPTER 1

# THE RESPONSE TO THE CRY OF THE EARTH

“Then God said, ‘Let us make human beings in our image and after our likeness ... Then God said, ‘be fertile, multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion ... on the earth” (Gen 1:26-28). “And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:31).

“Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so.” (Gen 1:11).

### 1.1 Introduction

AMECEA recognises the cry of the earth in the region, which is characterised by climate shocks, environmental stress, desertification, air, water and land pollution. Consequently, local communities are vulnerable to natural hazards such as floods, droughts, insect infestation (locusts), landslides, strong winds and lightning among others. The region is equally prone to human-made disasters such as fires, domestic and industrial water pollution and dumping of garbage. Countries including Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti are considered frontier states with the expanding Sahara due to minimal rainfall. Land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry

sub-humid areas are on the increase in the non-frontier states of AMECEA, due to various factors, including climatic variations and human activities. There is a general loss of biodiversity as a result of human activities that are harmful to the environment and the threats are affecting livelihoods and national economies.

Despite increasing recognition of the impact of climate change in our region, actors have not yet harnessed the capacities of faith and local communities, in climate change mitigation and adaptation. International, regional and national actors have allocated inadequate resources towards emergency preparedness and early warning systems. Notably, efforts among actors in response to environmental challenges are uncoordinated. The Church needs to leverage its structures to give voice and dignity to the local communities who are affected by the cry of the earth. This can only be achieved through partnerships with governments, academic institutions, civil society actors and other like-minded stakeholders.

## 1.2 Theological Reflection

*The expression, “it was good” (Gen 1:31) is repeated five times in the previous verses of Genesis 31. However, for the last time, the expression changes: “it was very good”. God evaluated the creation and self-approved it. It leads to the harmony between all creatures. Our expectation is that all creation lives in peace. None shall harm or destroy on all my holy mountain (cf. Is 11:6-9; 65:17-25).*

*Those texts are talking about the new ways of thinking and living. Newness comes in because the original setting went*

wrong. That confirms that God wants a new creation whereby all creatures should not be destroyed. If human beings with their activities are destroying the common home, they are going against the will/promise of God.

Ecology represents a new frontier for theological ethics. Given the complexity of environmental degradation, it is necessary that different regions learn from one another. Therefore, Christians are encouraged within the Holy Scriptures not to pollute the land on which they live: "Do not pollute the land of our habitation so as to stain it with the blood of the innocent" (Num 35:33-34).

It is a known fact that the African continent is experiencing severe environmental degradation, as a result of air, land and water pollution. Pope Benedict XVI in *Africae Munus* (AM) observes, "Serious damage is done to nature, to the forests, to flora and fauna, and countless species risk extinction. All of this threatens the entire ecosystem and consequently the survival of humanity." Further, he "... calls upon the Church in Africa to encourage political leaders to protect such fundamental goods as land and water for the human life of the present and future generations and for peace between peoples" (AM, 80).

Pope Francis makes similar observations in *Laudato Si'*; "Each year hundreds of millions of tons of waste are generated, much of it non-biodegradable, highly toxic and radioactive, from homes and businesses, from construction and demolition sites, from clinical, electronic and industrial sources. The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth" (LS, 21). In solidarity with the current and future

*generations, Catholic Social Teaching encourages us to listen to the cry of the earth, and care for the environment.<sup>2</sup>*

### **1.3 Conversion Point**

Everyone is called upon to take full responsibility for the cry of the earth. Our choices on production and consumption should take care of our common home. We can take a decision to start afresh and commit to responding to the cry of the earth. It is important to desist from lifestyles that aggravate the over exploitation of mother earth. We should resolve to be intentional about restoring the degraded land, destroyed forests and to practice responsible agriculture and industrialisation.

### **1.4 Guidelines**

The Response to the Cry of the Earth is a call to protect our common home for the wellbeing of all, as we equitably address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ensure ecological sustainability. A proposed set of actions to make progress towards this goal includes the following:

#### **1.4.1 Protecting the climate by installing solar panels, insulating buildings, buying renewable energy credits where available, and installing cleaner or more efficient cook stoves or appliances.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, the faithful and Church institutions are to:

1. Be intentional about ecologically sensitive construction briefs to architects and engineering firms they engage.

2. Promote innovative use in biogas, wind energy, energy saving stoves, etc. (this might require that Pastoral Agents, Caritas, Health, Refugees and Seafarers, and Integral Human Development (IHD) to include this in their initiatives.
3. Invest in energy saving technologies for lighting, heating and transportation to reduce the use of fossil fuels.

#### **1.4.2 Protecting biodiversity by planting native trees, planting native gardens, removing invasive species, practicing regenerative agriculture, and protecting pollinators.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, the faithful and Church institutions are to:

1. Develop elaborate plans for agroforestry (agriculture that incorporates planting of trees) and agro-ecology (ecologically sound agriculture).<sup>3</sup>
2. Mobilise, educate and organise farmers towards agro-ecological practices and agroforestry.
3. Eliminate reliance on inorganic farm inputs and replace them with organic approaches that affirm various life forms in the farms.
4. Promotion of farmer wisdom and learning from indigenous seed exchanges.

5. Establish indigenous forests wherever possible or adopt such forests in situations where urban dioceses are deficient of land.
6. Diversify their food menus to allow for the practice of consuming more foods that are diverse wherever possible.
7. Promote the extraction and processing of non-timber products that will affirm the human to forest relationships.
8. Advocate against the replacement of forests with plantations.
9. Invest in innovations towards soil restorations and rehabilitation.

**BEST PRACTICES:****The Response to the Cry of the Earth**

Example of the Diocese of Njombe in Tanzania where the diocese established a forest of approximately 4,000 acres. Through this, the diocese is helping reduce global warming and build a sustainable plan for the diocese.

**1.4.3 Protecting waterways and land by ensuring sensible fertiliser use, instituting drop irrigation and other conservative irrigation models, planting water way buffers, avoiding the installation of impermeable surfaces around buildings, instituting regular litter removal and prevention campaigns, and pursuing conservation schemes.**

National Conferences, Dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, the faithful and Church institutions are to:

1. Be active in educating the faithful to avoid construction in wetlands.
2. Establish the acreage under wetlands in their jurisdiction and establish protection and restoration programs.
3. Collaborate with local authorities and regulatory authorities to protect wetlands and waterways.

**1.4.4 Establishing a *Laudato Si'* implementation structure.**

1. Dioceses are to establish *LS* implementation teams composed of but not limited to the Pastoral Coordinators, Caritas, Health, Refugees and Seafarers, CJPC and IHD program persons and leaders of the youth and lay faithful.
2. Implementation teams shall survey and publish regularly the state of the environment report in their dioceses.
3. The Conference shall establish *LS* implementation teams that shall work collaboratively with diocesan teams to

collate best practices and publish annual surveys on the state of the care for our common home.

4. AMECEA PIHD shall maintain a database of initiatives and synthesise surveys and studies from the region.





## CHAPTER 2

# RESPONSE TO THE CRY OF THE POOR

“(…) the land will never lack for needy persons; that is why I command you: “open your hand freely to your poor and to your needy kin in your land” (Dt 15:7-8; 10-11).

“(…) for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me” (Mt 25:34-36).

The AMECEA region continues to experience poverty, despite the existing poverty eradication efforts through various policies and programs. Increasing debt burden, high taxation and pandemics have further widened the gap between the rich and the poor. Poverty eradication efforts are also hampered by weak governance, corruption and lack of representation of the poor in decision-making processes.

## 2.1 Introduction

The AMECEA region continues to experience poverty, despite the existing poverty eradication efforts through various policies and programs. Increasing debt burden, high taxation and pandemics have further widened the gap between the rich and the poor. Poverty eradication efforts are also hampered by weak governance, corruption and lack of representation of the poor in decision-making processes.

## 2.2 Theological Reflection

*All are commanded to be attentive and respond to the poor and the needy (cf. Dt 15:11).*

*The Early Church stipulated ways to help the needy. The Christians shared their goods generously with the poor. They lived in communion, solidarity and generosity as a way of living together (cf. Acts 2:43-45). As such, there was no needy person among them because the proceeds of the sales were distributed to each according to need (cf. Acts 4:32; 35). This gives the Christians the duty and responsibility to take care of the needs of the poor.*

*Pope Francis observes that seemingly, there is little awareness of problems which affect the poor, despite the fact that they are the majority of the planet's population. The poor are mentioned in international political and economic discussions, but their problems are brought up as an afterthought. Indeed, when all is said and done, the poor remain at the bottom of the pile. This is due partly to the fact that many professionals, opinion makers, communications, media and centres of power, are far*

*removed from the poor, with little direct contact with their problems.*

*The Church stresses that the Christians have a moral obligation to respond to the needs of the vulnerable persons in their communities.*

*This is a call to the people of God in the AMECEA region to listen to the cry of the poor, and accompany them in their quest for human dignity.<sup>4</sup>*

## **2.3 Conversion Point**

Everyone is called to respond to the poor, by creating opportunities for marginalised voices to be heard, and defending the oppressed. It further demands an assessment of lifestyles, policies and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor. The option for the poor does not mean pitting one group against another, but rather, it calls us to strengthen the whole community by assisting those who are most vulnerable.

The Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development in its *Laudato Si'* Action Platform suggests that we promote solidarity, with special attention given to vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, refugees, migrants, and children at risk, analysis and improvement of social systems, and social service programs.

## **2.4. Guidelines**

### **2.4.1 Protecting all life through educational events.**

National Conferences, Dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, the faithful and Church institutions are to:

1. Conduct family advocacy to promote responsible parenthood in reference to the Catholic Social Teaching (CST). Our advocacy messages should speak of the integrity of human life and the need to promote values (LS, 224).
2. Adopt a development approach that embraces human dignity, in collaboration with government, civil society, media and other actors.
2. Promote ecologically sound agricultural practices that protect biodiversity (LS, 155).

#### **2.4.2 Delivering WASH services by ensuring access to clean water, sanitation and training on hygiene.**

National Conferences, Dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, the faithful and Church institutions are to:

1. Conduct environmental impact assessments to inform the design of water projects, e.g. digging boreholes and shallow wells. All interventions should factor in the use of less polluting forms of energy, and promote better management of marine and forest resources, and ensure universal access to drinking water” (LS, 164).
2. Lobby the government and other stakeholders to factor in budgets for dignity and hygiene kits for school going children in an effort to address absenteeism in schools due to lack of sanitary towels.

3. Promote child friendly schools that have adequate water sanitation and hygiene facilities.
4. Facilitate awareness creation of waste management and personal hygiene practices e.g. on the health effects of open defecation. Establish a community-led total sanitation initiative, which shall produce reports on the impact of open defecation - soil pollution, water pollution, water borne diseases and engage county, district and national governments on how to counter environmental pollution.
5. In collaboration with government actors, to facilitate the installation of irrigation systems. To address the food insecurity situation in our region we should promote family farming and encourage bottom-up participation of smallholder farmers in decision-making processes.
6. Promote climate smart technologies in construction. This may include setting up of rainwater harvesting systems and construction of water tanks.
7. Lobby their respective governments to control excess borrowing by the state and over taxation of citizens.
8. Facilitate community participation in policy development and implementation. Local communities shall be supported to participate in decision-making processes on the conservation of the environment.

### **The Revised Customary Land Act in Malawi of 2018 now promotes indigenous leadership**

Source: <https://malawilii.org/mw/legislation/si/9a>

In Malawi, Customary land is all land held, occupied, or used by community members under customary law. According to section 25 of the Act, The previous Land Act vested both public land and customary land in the President where Section 8 the previous Land Act provided that “all public land is vested in perpetuity in the President”.

Following lobbying and advocacy actions by different actors, The new Land Act vests all land in the Republic Section 8 of the new Land Act provides that “All land is vested in perpetuity in the Republic”. This includes customary land.

#### **Read More:**

[https://www.canr.msu.edu/fsp/countries/malawi/MoLHUD\\_-\\_2017\\_Malawi\\_Land\\_Symposium\\_-\\_James\\_Namfuko.pdf](https://www.canr.msu.edu/fsp/countries/malawi/MoLHUD_-_2017_Malawi_Land_Symposium_-_James_Namfuko.pdf)

### **2.4.3 Promoting and protecting indigenous leadership by ensuring their communities have the rights to their land and other natural resources by elevating indigenous leadership**

National Conferences, Dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, the faithful and Church institutions are to:

1. Promote the respect of community land, factor in indigenous knowledge in planning and promote

indigenous leadership, pursuant to the commitments to the Paris Climate Agreement and Aspirations of the UN agenda 2030.

2. Advocate for land policy reforms that take cognisance of indigenous land rights and support group-based rights structures.

#### **2.4.4 Delivering access to land and clean air by ensuring community members have free access to green space and that children's spaces are free of air pollution.**

National Conferences, Dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, the faithful and Church institutions are to:

1. Collaborate with National Environmental Bodies to champion the clean-up and relocation of dumpsites in the AMECEA region. Notable sites include the dumpsite in Dandora/Korogocho, Kenya.

#### **2.4.5 Growing in solidarity with vulnerable people by doing an audit of community challenges, delivering programs to address basic needs, and delivering programs to address failed systems.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, the faithful and Church institutions are to:

1. Address issues of corruption and encourage community participation in decision making processes.

2. Train communities on budget monitoring and contribution to policy formulation. Conferences shall encourage the establishment of referral systems for reporting on corruption and illicit financial flows.
3. Encourage communities to engage in income generation activities, such as Village Savings and Loans Associations, Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC).
4. Train local communities on entrepreneurship initiatives that protect the environment, for example sale of tree seedlings by women and youth groups.
5. Facilitate the assessment of the impact of development programs on the environment and human life, e.g. the effects of oil mining in South Sudan.

### **Oil Mining in South Sudan: Cordaid Report**

Source:

[https://www.cordaid.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/06/Oil\\_Production\\_in\\_South\\_Sudan\\_Summary\\_Report\\_DEF\\_\\_LRS.pdf](https://www.cordaid.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/06/Oil_Production_in_South_Sudan_Summary_Report_DEF__LRS.pdf)

Cordaid commissioned a study to assess oil production in South Sudan and how to make it a benefit for all.

According to the study:

1. Oil production pollutants are suspected by communities to have caused many new health problems, such as increased infertility in women, a



higher number of miscarriages, and eye and skin problems.

According to medical staff in Melut and Koch, a link between the pollution caused by oil production and some of these health problems cannot be excluded. Communities are not made fully aware of hazards associated with the production of oil.

The report recognises that a constructive and inclusive dialogue between communities, state institutions and oil companies is possible and urgently needed to prevent further social tensions and renewed conflict and to contribute to sustainable development.

6. Collaborate with other faith communities to promote civic/voter education to inform choices made by vulnerable communities and the poor as they navigate political processes.

#### **2.4.6 Sharing resources and wisdom by learning from elders, sharing social resources, sharing monetary resources, and holding community-wide action days.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, the faithful and Church institutions are to:

1. Provide soft loans for small businesses. Initiatives will include support towards income generating activities, facilitating linkages to financial services such as credit

and savings and training of local communities on entrepreneurship skills.

2. Collaborate with stakeholders to establish scholarship funds to support orphaned and vulnerable children within the dioceses.
3. Continuously support and strengthen Catholic institutions of education, to provide quality education for holistic development pursuant to the goals of Sustainable Development Goal 4.
4. Convene forums for intergenerational dialogue to facilitate learning exchanges among various age brackets including; youth, children and elders.
5. Provide guidance notes and reference documents for marking of international days including: World Day of the Poor. These days may provide opportunities for domestic fundraising initiatives in aid of the needy people in the local communities.
6. Raise awareness on the achievements of the different commissions and provide platforms for advocacy by faith actors on matters of sustainable development.
7. Dialogue and share experiences, through Catholic media, and various other platforms and formats to our times.



## CHAPTER 3

# ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS

“For six years you are to sow your fields and harvest the crops, but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what is left. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove” (Ex 23:10-11).

“Hear another parable, there was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it and built a tower...when vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenant to obtain his produce. But the tenants seized the servants, one they beat, another they killed and the third they stoned...” (Mt 21:33-46).

### 3.1 Introduction

The economic challenges in the AMECEA region have been worsened by many factors; including natural resources exploitation, bad governance, and inequalities in resource distribution. The global and regional methods of production and trade have kept AMECEA countries in the category of the poorest nations in the world.<sup>5</sup> This brings about economic inequality and mostly affects the poorest in the region, making

them economically disadvantaged and increasing their suffering through resource exploitation and carbon emission by the north. A true “ecological debt” exists, particularly between the global north and south (LS, 51).

### 3.2 Theological Reflection

*Man has been established as a guardian and caretaker of creation. The ecological problem Africa is experiencing is caused by the misuse of natural and other resources.*

*We are called to take care of the human dignity and the whole of God’s creation because we are working for God and with him (1 Cor 3:9).*

*It is a moral duty for humans to work together, to create environmental protection networks and task forces. The Pope invites us to sincere openness and self-restraint in our use of the earth’s limited resources, as well as tolerance with one another as humanity seeks to heal the planet. Pope Francis warns that if we are truly concerned to develop an ecology capable of remedying the damage, no branch of the sciences and no form of wisdom can be left out, and that includes religion and the language particular to it. In the encyclical letter Laudato Si’ Pope Francis calls for ecological economics capable of appealing to a broader vision of reality (LS, 141). He says that the protection of the environment is in fact “an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it.”<sup>6</sup>*

*The Catholic social teaching calls for the dignity of work and the rights of workers. In this teaching, the Church in AMECEA should work to ensure that common good and just living for all are upheld. We are called to be good stewards for the common good (Num 35:33-34).<sup>7</sup>*

### **3.3 Conversion Point**

The people of God in the region are called to ensure that their economic engagements and investments take into account ethical practices/issues to ensure the care for the common good of each citizen of mother earth.

### **3.4 Guidelines**

Ecological economics acknowledges that the economy is a sub-system of human society, which itself is embedded within the biosphere our common home. AMECEA calls for the people of God to implement the following guidelines:

#### **3.4.1 Building and supporting the circular economy by launching trading communities and purchasing from retailers that use recycled materials**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, Church institutions, Small Christian Communities and the faithful are to:

1. Reduce available waste material, i.e. intentional use of *Mlaza, Kikapu, Kiondo*, etc. instead of polythene bags.

2. Re-use or recycle available waste material i.e. tracking of waste, by waste generating manufacturers and use of kitchen waste in the garden.
3. Minimise use of resources such as printing papers during meetings, plastic water bottles, etc.
4. Create awareness on circular economy through training, homilies, catechetical sessions, workshops and sensitisation sessions.

### **A BEST PRACTICES IN CIRCULAR ECONOMY**

A religious congregation in AMECEA/ACWECA region is rearing chickens as a social enterprise for the sustainability of their institute and a school they manage. These sisters grow maize to feed the chicken and the chicken waste is used as fish feed and as fertiliser for the maize plantation. The sisters have intentionally invested in a biogas plant to process the manure from the cows into cooking gas and for lighting. By doing this the sisters organically produce enough food for their own consumption and surplus for sale. In this way the sisters also replace conventional fertilisers with farmyard manure and protect their land from acidification. The biogas project solves the energy concerns.

### **3.4.2 Ensuring financial investments are ethical and sustainable by divesting from fossil fuels, investing in socially responsible enterprises, and choosing ethical banking and insurance companies.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, Church institutions, Small Christian Communities, and the faithful are to:

1. Divest from fossil fuels to renewable energy investments. Faith based investments in petrol stations could upgrade to solar plants or wind energy.
2. Champion for an authentic and just transition to renewable and green sources of energy.
3. Carry out background checks/due-diligence to ensure ethical banking and insurance. Entities with which insurance policies are held or where money is saved ought to be vetted on the basis of their investments in projects that respond to the cry of the poor and cry of the earth.
4. Ensure that the formation process of priests and agents of evangelisation is grounding them in the ethical administration of the temporal goods of society.
5. Affirm and participate in campaigns and governance liaison initiatives to discourage prospecting and further investments in fossil fuels such as coal and oil.

### **3.4.3 Practicing fair and sustainable purchasing by supporting ethical businesses, taking a “total cost of ownership approach” to purchases, making a sustainability shopping list, and purchasing from local retailers.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, Church institutions, Small Christian Communities, and the faithful are to:

1. Work towards collective consumer patterns like cooperatives that promote conscious purchasing.
2. Purchase from local retailers, i.e. consumption from local retailers practicing organic farming.
3. Promote use of locally available resources; such as agricultural produce, animal waste, etc.
4. Conscientise the society on sustainable production and consumption. Through ethical production, people are to choose only those production approaches that are ecologically sensitive. Through critical consumption, people are to be invited to think about what they buy, what buying it does to others elsewhere and mother nature as a whole (CV, 66).
5. Form and empower the young people to avoid impulse buying, consumption of local sustainably produced products and moral business practices.



### **3.4.4 Ensuring the dignity of workers by supporting good jobs with liveable wages and benefits, supporting cooperative management practices, supporting those who perform “care labour,” and buying from cooperatives and other ethical enterprises.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, Church institutions, Small Christian Communities, and the faithful are to:

1. Ensure payment of labour based on job group or grade and where it is not measured, use the legally defined minimum wage consistent with the teaching on just wage.
2. Establish harmonised remuneration schemes for all those involved in ministry as employees or independent contractors. The dignity of sacristans, catechists, gardeners, domestic workers, whether lay or religious as workers is to be protected.
3. Ensure payment of employee benefits including pensions and insurance schemes.
4. Protect and affirm workers' unions and unionisation within and without the Church institutions.

### **3.4.5 Participating in the gift economy by teaching gift economy values.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, Church institutions, Small Christian Communities, and the faithful are to:

1. Practice the innate African traditional culture which embraced the spirit of sharing and communal support to each other and harnessing social capital.
2. Promote communal events and activities that are geared towards social bonds and trust in the society.

### **BEST PRACTICE: A GIFT ECONOMY**

A project by sisters whereby they rear goats mainly to empower the women in the society. One is given a goat, then once it reproduces, they handover the kid/billy to the next woman in the group.

### **AFRICAN GIFTING**

It is common for an African household to share a portion of their harvest with neighbours. One grows beans or groundnuts and prepares packages for neighbours and distant relatives. In some communities the practice had to be modified with religious nuances. For instance, a Christian family in some countries would invite a Muslim to participate in the slaughter of an animal partly because the gifting would include packages to Muslim neighbours. In many homes, visitors used to carry gifts and would return with gifts. This gifting is done not because the receiver is needy but because it is the norm, the human or the good thing to do.



## CHAPTER 4

# ADOPTION OF SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES

“For the land, into which you are entering to possess it, is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you used to sow your seed and water it with your foot like a vegetable garden. But the land into which you are about to cross to possess it, a land of hills and valleys, drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning even to the end of the year” (Dt 11:10-12).

“Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vain glory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but every one for those of others” (Phil 2:3-4).

### 4.1 Introduction

AMECEA recognises that if we are to care for our common home, we must decide to live simply. The throw away culture is responsible for the losses to biodiversity, deforestation (due to farming and charcoal burning), land degradation, the pollution of land, air and water. The use of artificial fertilisers, the herbicides, and non-biodegradable materials such as plastic bags and bottles continue to pollute the land.

## 4.2 Theological Reflection

*Human beings received blessings from God that empowers them to transmit life they received from God. That means they are involved in a big and serious responsibility. They have been made “little less than a god” (Ps 8:6): From the “likeness” to God to stewards responsible for the maintenance and well-being of what He created. We are called to carry out God’s blessings on the earth.*

*The adoption of sustainable lifestyles is grounded in the idea of sufficiency, and promoting sobriety in the use of resources and energy. Pope Francis proposes in the document that the Church and the people need to be cognisant of improving sustainability in buildings by installing cleaner or more efficient lighting, reducing use of heating and air conditioning, and installing low-flow taps, and improving transportation by increasing use of electric vehicles or bicycles and by replacing auto trips. We should live humbly, simply. Paul tells us there is great danger in riches: “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction” (1 Tim 6:9). We find in the First Letter of John, “But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech but indeed and in truth” (1 Jn 3:17).*

*The world’s wealth is growing in absolute terms, but inequalities are on the increase. Peripheral countries sometimes enjoy a sort of “super-development” that is wasteful and consumerist, which forms an unacceptable contrast with the ongoing*

*situations of dehumanising deprivation. "The scandal of glaring inequalities" (CV, 22).*

*It is good for people to realise that purchasing is always a moral and not simply an economic act. Hence, the consumer has a specific social responsibility, which goes hand-in-hand with the social responsibility of the enterprise. Consumers should be continually educated regarding their daily role, which can be exercised with respect for moral principles without diminishing the intrinsic economic rationality of the act of purchasing (CV, 66).*

*Pope Benedict XVI said: "I ask all the members of the Church to work and speak out in favour of an economy that cares for the poor and is resolutely opposed to an unjust order which, under the pretext of reducing poverty, has often helped to aggravate it. ...Given the chronic poverty of its (Africa) people, who suffer the effects of exploitation and embezzlement of funds both locally and abroad, the opulence of certain groups shocks the human conscience" (AM, 79).*

*Pope John Paul II said: "Children must grow up with a correct attitude of freedom with regard to material goods, by adopting a simple and austere lifestyle and being fully convinced that "man is more precious for what he is than for what he has" (FC, 37).*

### 4.3 Conversion Point

Ecological conversion challenges us to consciously choose to live differently. Our life choices can be simpler than they are. We can buy only what we need and not what we want. Adopting sustainable lifestyles contributes to protecting our common home from “falling into serious disrepair” (*LS*, 61).

### 4.4 Guidelines

The adoption of sustainable lifestyles is grounded in the idea of sufficiency, and promoting sobriety in the use of resources and energy. AMECEA calls for the people of God to implement the following guidelines:

#### **4.4.1 Improving sustainability in buildings by installing cleaner or more efficient lighting, reducing use of heating and air conditioning, and installing low-flow taps.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, Church institutions and the faithful are to:

1. Carry out regular energy audits to establish the amounts of energy consumed per unit or per capita, and establish where energy consumption could be reduced.
2. Actively advocate for the supply or subsidy of green energy such as wind or solar energy especially for Church institutions in communities that are not yet on the national energy grid.

3. Form themselves into advocacy teams for the most vulnerable in society to improve equitable access to energy through *Laudato Si'* implementation teams.
4. Create awareness to the faithful for alertness towards constructing energy and water efficient and disaster resilience homes/infrastructures.

**BEST PRACTICE: Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles**

The Archdiocese of Mombasa in Kenya has built a pastoral center and on the rooftop installed solar panels for a solar energy system, which produces enough power to sustain the pastoral center and the surplus is shared with the national grid for revenue to the institution.

**4.4.2 Improving sustainability in transportation by increasing use of electric vehicles or bicycles and by replacing air and auto trips.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, the faithful and Church institutions are to:

1. Prioritise electric and ethanol powered vehicles or hybrid vehicle purchases, i.e. both fossil fuel and electric in motor vehicle purchases wherever applicable.
2. Promote, whenever possible, the rule of walking for distances under 5 km, cycling for distances under 15 km and driving only for distances above 15 km.

2. Encourage the faithful who own or are involved in the motorcycle or tricycle enterprises to migrate to sourcing electric motorcycles and tricycles. This could include having them organised into collective purchasers and advocacy entities to engage the related tariff and nontariff challenges.
3. Advocate for infrastructural developments that are appropriate for pedestrians and cyclists. This could be an additional function for Caritas, CJPC and IHD in their programing in the dioceses.
4. Encourage the faithful to use common transport (car-pooling, public transport) when attending group events at all levels.

**4.4.3 Improving sustainability in diets by reducing food waste before and after market, composting, buying food from local producers when possible, and transitioning from meat-based to plant-based meals.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, the faithful and Church institutions are to:

1. Donate surplus food to those in need and vulnerable who are always with us.
2. Diversify their food items to include locally available and indigenous food items in their homes.
3. Consume organically grown foods with preference to vegetables.



4. Organise themselves into sustainable consumers in sourcing and processing of food.
5. Replace disposable cups, plates and silver with washable or compostable items at events where food or beverages are consumed, and in cafeterias.
6. Grow their own produce, whenever possible, and help the poor in their communities to access the optimum nutrition with regard to protein, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals.
7. Practice farming interventions that prioritise, agroecological practices, solar pumps for irrigation, etc.
8. Create awareness on healthy eating habits, e.g. avoid the consumption of junks, fast food and carbonated drinks.

**4.4.4 Improving sustainability in consumer purchases by eliminating the use of disposable plastic and styrofoam, correctly recycling as much as possible, and reducing purchases of new consumer goods.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, the faithful and Church institutions are to:

1. Eliminate the use of single use water bottles and adopt more sustainable water dispensing gadgets.
2. Mobilise themselves into sustainable consumer groups, buy local and promote sustainable businesses within their localities.

3. Implement paperless events, whenever possible, by using digital platforms in advertising, registration, handouts, etc.

The CYNESA initiative dubbed #UnbottleMyEvent complements and extends other similar systems-change approaches. During workshops, events and training sessions organised by the Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA), a water dispenser is always provided, from where participants refill their re-usable water bottles, hence making the events free of plastic water bottles. Although similar in outcome, the #UnbottleMyEvent campaign is unique in terms of its inspiration and conceptualisation.



## CHAPTER 5

# ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION

“To get wisdom is better than gold; to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver” (Pro 16:16).

“Do not let this book of the law depart from your lips. Recite it by day and by night. That you may carefully observe all that written in it. Then you will attain your goal, then you will succeed” (Jos 1:8-9).

### 5.1 Introduction

Re-thinking and re-designing curricular and institutional reforms in the spirit of integral ecology is critical in fostering ecological awareness and transformative action. This includes a re-look at how the richness of our African cultures can be passed on to promote environmental awareness and preservation.

According to the Africa Union, African Environmental Education and Training Action Plan 2015-2024, environmental education and training is critical for acquisition and application of knowledge skills, values and action competencies for participation as active and informed citizens in the development of an ecologically sustainable, socially just, economically viable and sustainable society.

## 5.2 Theological Reflection

*Studying and keeping the law led the people of Israel to recognize God as the creator of the universe and humankind. Humankind must continue to understand the law of God, the natural law and seek to safeguard the environment.*

*Ecological education is about rethinking and redesigning curricular and institutional reform in the spirit of integral ecology in order to foster ecological awareness and transformative action. Pope Francis proposes that there is a need for developing Laudato Si' learning opportunities by implementing a Laudato Si' education plan, and by ensuring that members of the community are familiar with the local ecosystem, the science and social dimensions of the ecological crisis, and ecological virtues. Furthermore, Pope Francis, observes that education in environmental responsibility will encourage us to adopt practices and lifestyles which directly and significantly affect the world around us. Aware of her evangelising mission, the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa recognises the need to incorporate African Traditional Values, wherein the education system is crucial for the deepening of her identity (LS, 211). This is in view that the pre-colonial education system in Africa encouraged a learning of cultural values that were imparted by grandparents, parents and siblings. The values taught included honesty, obedience, generosity among others including the care and protection of the environment. In this sense, it is important to factor indigenous knowledge within our initiatives and to show special care for local communities and their cultural traditions because to them, their natural resources such as land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their*

*ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values (LS, 146).*

*We all have a duty to disseminate environmental education, taking into account our African values, via the variety of channels and platforms provided to us within the Church structures and beyond. The end result would be adopting ecologically sound practices such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating waste, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, etc.*

### **5.3 Conversion Points**

As the Church, we all have the right and a duty to participate in governance of the society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially poor and vulnerable people. So what we all need is an “ecological conversion”, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in our relationship with the world around us. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience (LS, 217).

Community engagement and participatory action, encourages the development of cultures and policies that protect our common home and all who share it.

### **5.4 Guidelines and Recommendations**

**5.4.1 Developing *Laudato Si'* learning opportunities by implementing a *Laudato Si'* education plan and by ensuring that members of the community are familiar with the local ecosystem, the science and social dimensions of the ecological crisis, and ecological virtues.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, the faithful and Church institutions are to:

1. Conferences in collaboration with the Catholic institutions of higher learning shall conduct research on the environmental crisis and its impact on natural resources such as forests, pastures, water, extractives, air and soil pollution.
2. Dioceses shall create awareness forums on local ecosystems and the ecological crisis in learning institutions targeting environmental clubs, wildlife clubs, scouts, girl guides, clubs within universities and formation houses.

In the University of Nairobi (UoN), Kenya there is a group centred around cycling, it is also involved in other activities such as waste management and tree planting. At the Chiromo and Law Faculty (UoN) – a student can hire a bicycle.

**Advantages of cycling:** Health benefits from exercising and this is a mode of transportation that is friendly to the environment, reduces air pollutants (walking and biking emit no greenhouse gases); reduces noise pollution and congestion; reduces the need for new parking lots and roadways; saves valuable green space from development.

3. Conferences shall form and train Community Resource Management Groups which could include: Water Users Management Associations. This model is a people-centered approach to the integration of conservation of the natural resource base (water, soil, trees and local biodiversity) and development to overcome poverty, hunger and disease.
4. The model of *Competency Based Curriculum by the Kenyan Government provides an opportunity for Ecological conversion through engagement of the PMC*, all conferences through the education commissions shall use this avenue to engage government actors and teachers to roll out responses to *Laudato Si'*.
5. All conferences through the education commissions shall ensure that environmental education is practical and not limited to classroom-based lectures.

6. The commission responsible for Catholic development shall take lead in environment activities including the commemoration of the Earth Day, World Environmental Day, *Laudato Si'* Week, Season of Creation and any other relevant local initiatives.

Source: Aljazeera:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/11/ghana-plants-5-million-trees-to-battle-forest-depletion>

A massive drive to plant five million trees in Ghana began in June 2021 as part of a nationwide campaign to save depleting forest reserves. Under the “Green Ghana” programme, the government provided free seedlings to people from all walks of life, including celebrities, officials, parliamentarians, traditional leaders and schoolchildren.

In 2021 The Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference announced plans to spearhead the planting of one million trees, as part of their response to the Seven-Year *Laudato Si'* Action Platform announced by Pope Francis.

“We wish to reiterate the Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference’s commitment to plant one million trees during this year’s rainy season as announced during our Plenary Assembly in early May,” read a statement made available to Vatican News and signed by the Metropolitan Archbishop of Tamale who is also Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference President, Archbishop Philip Naameh.

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/africa/news/2021-06/ghana-catholic-bishops-to-plant-one-million-trees-in-2021.html>



**5.4.2 Ensuring that environmental education is community-led by creating ways for educators to undergo ecological conversions, creating opportunities for youth-led events, and developing mechanisms to publicly recognise young people for their leadership, regardless of location or community.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, the faithful and Church institutions are to:

1. Ensure development commissions incorporate the youth in Catholic environmental care activities.
2. Facilitate capacity building of youth leadership on environmental issues.
3. Give youth leadership opportunities and support for youth-led events (refer to the Model of CYNESA in Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia).
4. Amplify information on response to environmental care initiatives led by the youth within Catholic/ Catholic sponsored schools and parishes.
5. Support youth-led environmental campaigns such as tree planting initiatives, concerts, poems, etc.
6. Engage parents through the pastoral commission on environmental initiatives that are led by children and youth, to get their support and encouragement at the family level.

7. Promote social media-based environmental campaigns among the youth.

**5.4.3 Weaving *Laudato Si'* themes into the community's communications by regularly highlighting them in newsletters/bulletins and on social media and by encouraging community members to develop *Laudato Si'* plans.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, the faithful and Church institutions are to:

1. Encourage Catholic media to take lead in dissemination of information on environmental awareness using the most relevant platforms and formats.
2. Mandate dioceses through their respective Catholic liturgy commissions to encourage choirs to compose songs on environmental related themes.
3. Share best practices to be published on regional, national, diocesan and parish media. *Laudato Si'* excerpts can be included. These bulletins should be shared via *non-print media* to avoid wasting paper.
4. Use notice boards and social media, to post information on environmental issues.

**5.4.4 Delivering equitable access to education by ensuring under-represented groups are educated, shaping education programs with a wide variety of people, offering culturally appropriate and/or alternative forms of education.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, the faithful and Church institutions are to:

1. Encourage use of the creative arts for environmental education, such as participatory theatre, use of films, songs and poems.
2. Encourage recycling of paper.
3. Champion ecological conversion nationwide and ensure that these guidelines are integrated in the SCCs, school curriculum, catechesis and Catholic media programming.
4. Take lead in environment activities including the commemoration of the Earth Day, World Environmental Day, *Laudato Si'* Week, Season of Creation and any other relevant local initiatives.
5. Organise from time to time a cultural and environmental event to encourage and foster respect for nature-biodiversity.
6. Work closely with indigenous communities to engage, dialogue and learn from them on environmental issues.



## CHAPTER 6

# ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY

“When I see your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars that you have set in place. What is man that you are mindful of him? And the son of man that you care for him, yet you have made him little less than a god; crowned him with glory and honour ...” (Ps 8:4-7).

“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being” (Rev 4:11).

### 6.1 Introduction

Ecological Spirituality intends to recover a religious vision of God’s creation and encourages greater contact with the natural world in a spirit of wonder, praise, joy and gratitude. Through this, the effects of our encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in our relationship with the world around us, as we seek to protect our brothers and sisters by protecting the home we share (LS, 217).

## 6.2 Theological Reflections

*The nature/creation is full of God's marvellous and praise. The harmony in the universe, the regularity of season, stars, etc. in the whole creation, shows the nature of the creator. Therefore, the works of His hand should be praised and respected.*

*African Traditional Religion seeks to link the African person to the ground of all that exists; God by means of African patterns of life or culture as its starting point. Ecological spirituality recovers a religious vision of God's creation and encourages greater contact with the natural world in a spirit of wonder, praise, joy and gratitude.*

*The AMECEA proposes that celebrating the Season of Creation by co-hosting a Season of Creation event with another community, publicly praying for our social and ecological redemption during the season, developing an annual Season of Creation practice, and publishing annual statements of support for the Season of Creation.*

*Furthermore, AMECEA proposes that the Church needs to encourage community reflection on Laudato Si' themes by having the leader(s) of the community speak about them, including them in the celebration of liturgical moments, and making study and prayer guides available. The AMECEA Church also suggests that praying itself is by nature blessing a natural space as a reflection/meditation area and regularly praying there, hosting an outdoor prayer service, and creating a prayer journal, bulletin board, or other way of recording and sharing prayers made in nature. The Church offers thought of*

*the environmental crisis by recognising a moral and religious obligation in safeguarding the environment.*

*In the discussion on land the four pastoral dimensions of the Church's action will be the basis of the reflection namely: koinonia (communion), diakonia (service to God) martyria (witness), and liturgical worship (sense of the sacred).*

### **6.3 Conversion Points**

The people of God in the AMECEA region are called towards an “Ecological Conversion.” This implies an awakening to consciousness of any offence against the environment, ‘sin against Creation’, as an ecological sin i.e. “an action or omission against God, against others, the community and the environment”.

Religious institutions are urged to promote creation-centred liturgical celebrations, sharing themes on the environment in our Small Christian Communities, developing ecological catechesis, retreats, formation programs for seminarian and religious communities, and praying in and with nature.

### **6.4 Guidelines**

The following are proposed points of actions to address the above stated goal:

**6.4.1 Celebrating the Season of Creation by co-hosting a Season of Creation event with another community, publicly praying for our social and ecological redemption during the season, developing an annual Season of Creation practice, and publishing annual statements of support for the Season of Creation.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, the faithful and Church institutions are to:

1. Encouraging conferences and dioceses to plan an annual pastoral letter on the Season of Creation.
2. Celebrate the Season of Creation (*September 1<sup>st</sup> to October 4<sup>th</sup>*) every year with liturgies to guide meditation topics for each week, and environmental related national and international day such as World Environmental Day.
3. Encourage CJPC, Caritas and LS implementation teams to prepare and publicise the Season of Creation at all levels of the Church, including Small Christian Communities.
4. Develop homily guides that are geared towards environmental justice.
5. Formation of conscience of the people of God on environmental justice.

**6.4.2 Encouraging community reflection on *Laudato Si'* themes by having the leader of the community speak about them, including them in the celebration of liturgical moments, and making study and prayer guides available.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, the faithful and Church institutions are to:

1. Encourage choirs to compose hymns that are themed on the praise of the creator and creation.
2. Prepare catechesis on the importance of the environment.
3. Encourage leaders at the local pastoral council to understand and inform others about *Laudato Si'*.
4. Encourage and hold ecumenical prayer sessions on our common home.
5. Prepare common prayers to be used for different moments like *Laudato Si'* Week, Season of Creation, and by different ecclesiastical groups (Catholic Men Associations, Catholic Women Associations, Youth, PMC).



**6.4.3 Praying in nature by blessing a natural space as a reflection/meditation area and regularly praying there, hosting an outdoor prayer service, and creating a prayer journal, bulletin board, or other way of recording and sharing prayers made in nature.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, the faithful and Church institutions are to:

1. Strengthen retreat centers that provide natural spaces for prayer; example of *Resurrection Garden (Kenya)*, *Subukia National Shrine (Kenya)* and *Namugongo Shrine (Uganda)*.
2. Prepare prayer guides with ecological themes starting from the families, Small Christian Communities, taking into account the local languages (translations), local context (ecosystems such as rivers, forests, savannah, arid and semi-arid areas, ecological issues like pollution and waste, urban vs. rural areas). Share prayers made about nature through social media channels.



## CHAPTER 7

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATORY ACTION

“Eliashib the high priest and his priestly kinsmen took up the task of rebuilding the Sheep Gate. They consecrated it and set up its doors, its bolts, and its bars, then continued the rebuilding to the Tower of the Hundred, the Tower of Hananel. At their side the men of Jericho were rebuilding, and next to them was Zaccur, son of Imri. The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the people of Hassenaah; they timbered it and set up its doors, its bolts, and its bars (...)” (Neh 3:1-38)

“(...) Now the body is not a single part but many. If a foot should say because I am not the hand, I don’t belong to the body, it does not for this reason belong any less to the body (...) (1 Cor 12:12-31)

Other references: Gen1:27-28; Mk 1:16-20; Mk. 1:16-20; Mt. 28:18-20; Gen 1:28

## 7.1 Introduction

The Catholic Church in Eastern Africa recognises that the call to community engagement and participatory action is one of the 7 themes of the Catholic Social Teaching. As an expression of our faith, Christians in the AMECEA region are called towards community engagement and participatory action. This is in view that the human person is inherently social and that how we relate to each other in society impacts human dignity and our ability to grow in community.

## 7.2 Theological Reflection

*St. Paul compares the Church as a body with many parts. Each part has different functions, but for the benefit of the whole body (Rm 12:4-5; 1Cor 12:25-31); so we shall live and engage ourselves in the activities of the Church.*

*In the Gospel of Mark, the disciples were sent two by two (Mk 6:7-13).*

*In the Gospel of Mathew, the commission to the world is entrusted to the eleven disciples. As a community they are entrusted to move into the world, to support each other, and to benefit from the everlasting presence of the master in their daily activities (Mt 28:18-20).*

*So the faithful are called to act in harmony with each other as members of one Body whose head is Christ.*

*Community engagements and participatory action encourage the development of cultures and policies that protect our common home and all who share it. The AMECEA Church*

*encourages the engagement of the wider public by organising social/ecological events, regularly exploring the local ecosystem as a group, and writing for local newspapers or commenting on local news stories related to Laudato Si' themes. Further, the AMECEA Church needs to develop a social response to shared challenges by collaborating with leaders to identify ways the Church can support ecological programs and developing community coalitions to prepare for and respond to emergent social crises. In Laudato Si', Pope Francis observes that, "A consensus should always be reached between the different stakeholders, who can offer a variety of approaches, solutions and alternatives. The local population should have a special place at the table; they are concerned about their own future and that of their children, and can consider goals transcending immediate economic interest" (LS, 183).*

*The idea of community comes from the sense of responsibility we have for each other. In the Bible, God encourages us to take care of our brothers and sisters, whether friends or enemies. We must remember the importance of maintaining the connection with each other and focusing on building a community of love, in word and actions (1 Cor 1:10). AMECEA encourages the conferences to develop resilience by analysing the physical, social, and spiritual ways in which communities are likely to be affected by climate change and biodiversity loss. Further, communities need to make plans to prepare for those changes, ensuring buildings are prepared for changes in heat, storm intensity, and sea-level rise, and ensuring members of the community are able to travel to other locations in the event of a weather emergency.*

### 7.3 Conversion Points

As Catholics, we all have the right and a duty to participate in governance of the society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially poor and vulnerable people. This community spirit will encourage greater contact with God and neighbor with a spirit of joy and gratitude. Through this conversion, the effects of our encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in our relationship with the world around us, as we seek to protect our brothers and sisters by protecting the home we share (LS, 217).

Thus, community engagement and participatory action, encourage the development of cultures and policies that protect our common home and all who share it.

### 7.4 Guidelines

#### **7.4.1 Caritas, CJPC and education commission to conduct a community needs assessment and the extent of community participation on environmental and social issues in their locale.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, Church institutions, Small Christian Communities, and the faithful are to:

1. Translate policy in a way that communities can understand and push for adequate budgets to respond to emergencies, in line with commitments made by governments at sub-national, national and regional level.

2. Integrate advocacy in planning for environmental education and disaster risk reduction.
3. Conduct lobbying and advocacy to push for implementation of policy and international commitments (Paris Climate Agreement, national policies on climate mitigation and adaptation, UN Agenda 2030, Africa Agenda 2063, County/District Integrated Development Plans) at sub-national and national levels.
4. Promote meaningful participation in decision/policy making processes at sub-national and national levels, paying attention to the most vulnerable, including people living with disabilities.
5. Set environmental related targets, e.g. growing a million trees a year.

**BEST PRACTICES:** Church entities may borrow from the actions of organised local communities such as the Kaya in Kwale, Kenya, who have conserved the Kaya Forest for over 50 years. These forests are revered as sacred sites and special prayers are held within these sites.

**7.4.2 Engaging the wider public by organising social/ecological events, regularly exploring the local ecosystem as a group, and writing for local newspapers or commenting on local news stories related to *Laudato Si'* themes.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, Church institutions, Small Christian Communities, and the faithful are to:

1. Establish a budget for media engagement (social and mainstream media).
2. Raise awareness and visibility of environmental related activities, especially on international days such as World Environment Day (June 5<sup>th</sup>), Earth Day (April 22<sup>nd</sup>).
3. Prepare communication strategies that incorporate/integrate environmental concerns, which may be disseminated via Catholic radio, television and other channels (*Laudato Si'* messaging via SMS, websites, social media).
4. Conduct training on environmental journalism to build their capacity in capturing success stories on ecological concerns.
5. Encourage exchange visits to ecosystems in the region, to document and share success stories and learn from each other.<sup>8</sup>

#### **7.4.3 Developing a social response to shared challenges by collaborating with leaders to identify ways the Church can support your social/ecological programs and developing a community coalition to prepare for and respond to emergent social crises.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, Church institutions, Small Christian Communities, and the faithful are to:

1. Enhance dialogue and collaboration with parliamentarians and other stakeholders on socio-ecological concerns.
2. Work closely with lay movements including men, women, youth, children and professionals movements, community-based organisations, ecumenical and interfaith groups, and other professional associations to highlight ecological issues of national and regional concern.
3. Support and highlight community programs that call for environmental stewardship and just social structures in their localities.



**7.4.4 Developing resilience by analysing the physical, social, and spiritual ways your community is likely to be affected by climate change and biodiversity loss and deciding to resiliently prepare for those changes, ensuring buildings are prepared for changes in heat, storm intensity, and sea-level rise, and ensuring members of the community are able to travel to other locations in the event of a weather emergency.**

National conferences, dioceses, parishes, institutes of religious life, Church institutions, Small Christian Communities, and the faithful are to:

1. Facilitate the process of conducting hazard, vulnerability and capacity assessments, and train local communities on community managed disaster risk reduction.
2. Liaise with government and local communities to document early warning signs and prepare early warning systems.
3. Develop emergency response preparedness plans.
4. Train communities on disaster risk management, establish disaster risk management committees.
5. Prepare disaster risk analysis matrices and plans.

6. Department heads should facilitate continuous capacity building of staff and employ measures to retain them. This may be achieved by establishing standing teams from various institutions to facilitate dialogue on concerns of staff retention.
7. Establish endowment funds to respond to emergencies.
8. Encourage establishment and training of community savings groups.
9. Promote agro-ecological approaches that support biodiversity conservation and build community resilience to climate shocks.



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## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Use of products and services in a manner that is socially beneficial, has minimal negative effects on the environment over their whole life cycle.
- <sup>2</sup> Other references: Gen 9:9-11; Col 1:19-20; Ez 34:18; Dt 20:19.
- <sup>3</sup> Agricultural practice that increases yield while minimising environmental impact.
- <sup>4</sup> Other references: cf. Gen 1:17; Is 58:7; Sir 4:1-5; 2 Cor 8:13-15.
- <sup>5</sup> Global Finance, *Poorest Countries in the World 2021*  
<https://www.gfmag.com/global-data/economic-data/the-poorest-countries-in-the-world>
- <sup>6</sup> Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (14 June 1992), Principle 4.
- <sup>7</sup> Other References: Ex 23:10-11; Lk 12:13-21; Mt 25:14-30.
- <sup>8</sup> Interconnected web of various life forms such as forests, wildlife and water bodies. <https://www.google.com/search?q=ecological+sin+by+pope+francis&oq=ecological+sin+by+pope+francis&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j33i21.20715j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>