

KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Faith-Based Stakeholders & Sustainable Futures:

The Role of Religious Communities and Multi-religious Cooperation for Influencing and Implementing Policy on Climate Change.



UNIVERSITY OF
WINCHESTER
CENTRE OF RELIGION,
RECONCILIATION AND PEACE



Faith-Based Stakeholders & Sustainable Futures:

The Role of Religious Communities and Multi-religious Cooperation for Influencing and Implementing Policy on Climate Change.

The insights and recommendations presented here are the result of an evidence review and consultations held with senior professionals, practitioners and academics working in the fields of multi-religious action and climate change.¹

The evidence review focussed on two key and largely under-examined areas: **clean energy** and **consumption and waste**.

The review examined the beliefs and practices of communities from 6 major world religions, and work of numerous Faith-based Organisations (FBOs), to understand how religion influences approaches to clean energy, and consumption and waste.

Case studies were also sought to showcase significant faith-based and multi-religious achievements.

This resulting policy brief highlights some of the key findings from the evidence review, and is of significant value to policy makers, and the international development and environmental sectors, to help improve dialogue between FBOs and policymakers.

This project is the result of collaboration between the *Centre of Religion, Reconciliation and Peace at the University of Winchester* and the global development NGO *Global One*.

¹ Winchester University and Global One 2015, 'Evidence Review on the Scope of Religious Communities and Multi-religious Cooperation for Influencing and Implementing Policy on Climate Change', London: 2021

Key Findings and Recommendations

- A. Whilst there is already some recognition of the key role religion plays in tackling the climate crisis, more Faith-sensitive and pluriversal approaches to development are crucial to enhancing the effectiveness of policy and practice. There is significant differences between many of the world's religious traditions, and belief systems prevalent in the Global South, which include indigenous and traditional practices, which must be integrated within discourses around environmentalism. Any blanket 'faith-based approach' must be avoided.**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Policy makers should adopt 'pluriversal' approaches in environmental strategies, recognising the uniqueness of faith-based actors, and considering indigenous and non-mainstream worldviews.
2. Policy formation should involve diverse faith actors, from all major faiths and indigenous belief systems, to ensure an inclusive, representative, and values-based approach to addressing the climate crisis and reducing consumption and waste.
3. The UK Government should enhance their emphasis on FBO engagement by creating a standing committee which focuses specifically on enhancing work on engaging religious organisations and communities in tackling the climate crisis.

- B. The negative impacts of consumption and waste on the planet's ecosystems and climate have now reached unsustainable levels.² Religious communities have historically been significant innovators in supporting social justice, challenging inequity, and bringing about social change. Numerous case studies demonstrate abundant evidence of innovation and good practice amongst FBOs, faith communities, and congregations in managing waste consumption and tackling climate change, and many of the most effective initiatives around the world draw on religious values and principles for changing people's attitudes and behaviours on the environment.**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Policy makers should offer specific opportunities and support to FBOs and religious actors for scaling up innovative solutions from local to regional and national levels.
2. Further research and studies should be supported to help capture the excellent work being done by religious actors across the globe. This knowledge can in turn be disseminated to encourage and support the development of faith-based initiatives in the UK.

² Dipak Pant, 'Managing Global Waste in the 21st Century: As an Anthropologist Views It', *Economia e Impresa* 68, no. 263 (March 2013), 2.

- C. The causes and effects of climate change are inherently unequal, with richer industrialised countries having higher GHG emissions per capita as well as more resources for mitigating the effects of climate change. Many religious traditions have a long history of championing social justice, and FBOs would make trusted and authoritative partners for the UK government in examining how the legacy of colonialism, and uneven global distribution of power and wealth, impacts on eco justice.**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Loss and Damage and the 'Polluter Pays Principle' should be taken into account in all UK domestic and international policies designed to address the climate crisis.
2. Inclusion of diverse faith representation on initiatives and committees to address the inherent inequity in the climate crisis would help with engagement and legitimacy, and ensure justice remains as a central pillar of UK policy and practice.

- D. Making up over 80% of the global population, FBOs and religious communities can have a significant impact on the global supply and waste management chains, by encouraging a change in habits based on teachings from their respective faith traditions. This impact can be further multiplied when leaders from different religions and faiths speak in unison.**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Recognise the global agency of FBOs and faith communities, and engage them in respectful and collaborative exchanges to help influence consumption patterns and contribute to a more sustainable waste-management chain.
2. The UK Government should recognise in policies the primacy of religious beliefs and practices for many people in the UK and beyond.

- E. Prohibitive costs can mean that sustainable practices are often out of reach for smaller faith communities and organisations. Whilst many FBOs and religious leaders are encouraging more green practices, robust green environmental legislation should help create the conditions where religious leaders and communities see green alternatives as the best option, morally, ethically, environmentally, and financially.**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Create further subsidies or large grants for faith communities, institutions and organisations for the installation and maintenance of renewable energy sources such as solar panels and wind turbines to ensure affordability.
2. Nurture and support the excellent work many young people of faith are already doing and create specific opportunities and funding streams to enhance their excellent work.



The Centre of Religion, Reconciliation and Peace is a world leading research centre dedicated to better understanding religion's role in peacebuilding and development. Since its creation in 2010, the Winchester Centre of Religion, Reconciliation and Peace has striven to bridge the gap in current research and knowledge exchange between communities affected by conflict and their leaders, practitioners of reconciliation and peace, and academics.

Global One 2015 is a UK faith-based international NGO focused on sustainable development, the improvement of women's livelihoods, and Islamic faith-based principles. Since its inception, Global One 2015 has promoted interfaith collaboration, working with people of all faiths and beliefs to establish constructive dialogue and action in the field of sustainable development.

Representatives from the following organisations took part in a consultative and data collection process and we thank them for their contributions-

Interfaith Rainforest Initiative, GreenFaith, Faith for the Climate, COP26 Cabinet Office, Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, Faith Invest, Bhumi Global, Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, ISKCON Hungary, African Council of Religious Leaders- Religions for Peace, University of Winchester, University of Bahrain.

This project is part of a broader programme of work at the Centre of Religion, Reconciliation and Peace (CRRP), University of Winchester and we would be pleased to connect with further potential collaborators in this area.

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