

# AFRICAN FAITH COMMITMENTS FOR A LIVING PLANET

## NORTHERN DIOCESE OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF TANZANIA

Long-term plan on the environment – summary

### INTRODUCTION

The Northern Diocese is one of the 20 dioceses of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT). It has around 400,000 members divided into 152 parishes scattered on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa, located in the northeastern corner of Tanzania.

The mainstay of Kilimanjaro economy is agriculture. During the past four decades, however, Kilimanjaro region has seen great destruction of its environment, with deforestation and drought leading to poor harvests, famine and rising poverty. Symbolically, the snowcap that has covered the top of Mount Kilimanjaro for the past 11,700 years is disappearing rapidly due to global warming. The loss of the Kilimanjaro ice fields will carry significant climatological and hydrological implications for local people who depend on water from the ice fields during dry seasons and monsoon failures. Tons of vital topsoil are being washed away from upland areas due to bad cultivation habits and there is uncontrolled tree felling for firewood and construction.

The Northern Diocese is divided into various departments which include stewardship, planning and development, women, youth and christian education. In its Synod meeting of June 2006, the diocese adopted a policy on environmental conservation calling for intensive tree planting. As a result all young people attending confirmation classes have to plant 10 trees before they are confirmed.

### SEVEN-YEAR PLAN

This seven-year plan was drawn up by a specially formed committee of the Diocese which consulted with all parishes, church-run schools and hospitals as well as the church's young people and women's groups. It was presented at the ARC Windsor Celebration in 2009 and has been used as a model by other faith groups.

An Environment Department has been introduced into the structure of the Church to implement the plan. In each church district, a special appointed officer supervises the activities of district parishes. At parish level, Parish Environment Committees are implementing the project through the 152 parishes of the region.

The aim of the seven-year plan is the restoration and conservation of the environment in Kilimanjaro region. The heart of the plan is to plant at least 8.5 million trees as community forests during the seven-year period. This plan is one of the projects chosen by the US Interfaith Power and Light Organisation as part of its internet 'Carbon Covenant' project where its members in America are encouraged to offset their carbon footprint by supporting faith-based environmental projects in Africa.

However, most of the measures proposed are set to be carried out by the Church itself. In particular, the Church is determined to play a key role in addressing the lack of knowledge about environmental conservation and the risks of destruction which lead to extensive

deforestation, the destruction of water sources and the degradation of the landscape through extraction of clay soil for brick making and granite and sand for construction. Environment conservation will be a mandatory subject in church schools and colleges as well as in faith classes for children prior to confirmation.

Seminars on the environment will be held in all parishes. These will focus on practical conservation measures such as the introduction of fuel efficient cookers, the promotion of forest harvesting techniques to replace the use of fire, and support for the introduction of burials that neither use wooden coffins nor graves constructed by cement bricks and mortar.

In 2011 and 2012, ARC has supported a programme of establishing women-led tree nurseries to provide tree seedlings for planting to women's groups and young people in the Diocese. Three new women-led nurseries at Sanya Juss, Machame and Mowo parishes have been supported, giving employment to local women. These women have been supported by training in nursery establishment at the Angazsa Women Training Centre. It is hoped to expand this tree nursery model run by women to all 152 parishes in the Diocese.

In June 2012, the President of Tanzania inaugurated the country's Environment Day by planting a tree in the Diocese. HRH Prince Charles also visited in November 2011 to plant one of the trees grown in the women's nursery.

#### MAIN COMMITMENTS

- To implement community education on environmental conservation; • To restore and conserve forests all over Kilimanjaro Region, emphasising waterconserving trees around water sources;
- To introduce and popularise fuel-efficient charcoal cookers and alternative sources of cooking energy to gradually take the place of charcoal;
- To advocate for availability of electricity, LPG and natural gas for domestic use at popular prices;
- To popularise construction material that is not made of wood and to introduce and popularise non-wood alternatives in the firing of clay-brick kilns;
- To introduce and popularise burials which neither use wooden coffins, nor graves constructed with cement, bricks and mortar;
- To introduce and popularise forest honey harvesting techniques that do not involve the use of fire;
- To popularise use of compost and livestock manure in place of chemical fertilizer;
- To advocate for orderly extraction of clay for brick making, and mining of granite for construction;
- To ensure a place for environment conservation education in the curricula in theological colleges, church schools and colleges as well as in faith classes for children prior to confirmation;
- To advocate for a place for environment conservation education in school curricula from nursery school to university level;
- To include the environment conservation in the faith teachings of the Church;
- Establish an environment department in the structure of the Diocese to co-ordinate and supervise conservation.

*This plan has been endorsed by the Bishop of the Diocese, Rt Rev Martin Shao, and the Executive Council of the Diocese.*

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