

# **Policy Brief**

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# Summary

- Nigeria, like many developing countries facing the effects of climate change, has designed and implemented key climate adaptation and mitigation policies. However, with regards to education, mobilisation, and messaging for climate action, the strength of faith has yet to deploy. Using religion and inter-faith dialogue can improve message delivery and simplify the context climate of change.
- With the increased recognition of the strategic importance of faith in driving climate action, messaging, and partnerships, the 28th edition of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in 2023 included the "Faith Pavilion," which aimed to, among other things, "encourage faith-based organizations (FBOs) to engage with their country delegates and increase their capacity to advocate for human and nature-centered negotiated outcomes at COP28 and beyond," for the first time in the conference's history.
- There is evidence which suggests that knowledge gaps in faith-based organisations' understanding of climate science, policies, and the implications of climate change significantly limit

the potential of faith as an effective communication strategy for behavioural change as well as a means of driving climate action.

- Community knowledge gaps can be reduced when faith-based communities leverage already existing knowledge about physical and environmental changes as well as the genuine recognition of the risks associated with the decline in sources of livelihood.
- Speaking up against climate injustice requires the use of moral suasion and advocacy as a strategy for faith-based organisations, while also amplifying the voices of vulnerable communities and working closely with civil society organisations and other stakeholders.
- While poverty remains a challenge to effective climate change communications, many faith-based organisations are already leading the way by providing alternatives for families affected by the global climate crisis.
   Support for such efforts also serve as valid entry points for effective behavioural change and education about climate change.

# Introduction

This policy brief is based on the work of Connected Development (CODE) concerning climate justice and interactions with different communities, including religious groups, government, and civil society organizations (CSOs) engaged in climate action in Nigeria. It comprehensively analyzes an approach to effective communication in climate messaging and how the pertinent issues here are often associated with faith. Accordingly, the brief sets forth a new approach towards climate communication and messaging within the context of religion to enable greater effectiveness and outreach, as well as to improve vulnerable groups' understanding of climate science and its attendant effect on their everyday lives. This endeavor is driven by the assumption that religious groups and their leadership structures can have a more meaningful and sustainable impact when it comes to climate messaging and congregation communication in consonance with other relevant stakeholders. The premise also rests on climate challenges affecting all (including members of religious groups).

Changing climate patterns have led to increased instances of extreme weather events, such as flooding and drought. In Nigeria specifically, these directly impact upon agriculture, a sector closely linked to not only foundational traditions but also the economic livelihoods of many religious persons. Moreover, the depletion of natural resources due to climate change has triggered conflicts over land, water, and other essential resources, exacerbating existing social and economic disparities within religious communities. Furthermore, issues like flooding damage Nigeria's limited infrastructure and extend coastlines, leading to erosion and an overall loss in federal and state revenue, currently costing the Nigerian government about 100 billion USD annually. 'Globally, it is expected that the development of policy frameworks in alignment with international climate change agreements (like the nationally determined contributions (NDCs)) and best practices will harness the efforts of a

wide range of stakeholders in pursuit of effective climate action and strategies (e.g., reducing emissions, developing adaptive strategies and integrating these into the national development process, and exploring opportunities for climate investment and financing). The National Climate Change Policy for Nigeria 2021-2030 (hereinafter, the NCCP), which links these strategies with other existing policy frameworks, represents the guiding framework for the implementation of the Nigerian government's long-term climate action plan.

Existing policy frameworks here appear to be robust with regard to engagement with multilevel stakeholders. The NCCP includes strategic objectives such as "developing an effective climate change communication and information management system that facilitates access by all stakeholders to climate information" using strategies like "effective citizenship participation." However, there are gaps with respect to using religion and inter-faith dialogue to improve message delivery and simplify the context. By leveraging existing partnerships, there is an opportunity here to rethink climate change information dissemination strategies. Using religious institutions and faith to drive climate change information dissemination and action has not been widely used among developing countries to encourage mass action and perception change. Such efforts are imperative for the following two reasons:

- In general, people hold religious values and respect religious institutions across the world; and
- 2. Highly impacted and often "voiceless" vulnerable persons are often represented by religious/faith groups.

Faith, religious leaders, and socio-cultural perspectives all have the potential to drive climate information in different contexts, as research conducted in Australia showed. <sup>2</sup>Religious views

<sup>1</sup>See Business Day August 8, 2022; Also see Center for Climate Change Development Blog post on "How Nigeria can turn climate change issues into economic opportunities - Prof. Okereke

are often powerfully backed by interpretations of scriptural texts as to how its adherents should treat and respond towards the environment. Such approaches range from developing sustainable ways to cultivate lands (i.e. acting as custodians for future generations) to the requirements of planting trees.

The urgency of the calls for religious leaders to address environmental stewardship and sustainable practices as part of their teachings and moral guidance has increased in the past decade. Consequently, with the increased recognition of the strategic importance of faith in driving climate action, messaging, and partnerships, the 28th edition of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in 2023 included for the first time in the conference's history, the "Faith Pavilion," which aimed to, among other things, "encourage faith-based organisations (FBOs) to engage with their country delegates and increase their capacity to advocate for human and nature-centred negotiated outcomes at COP28 and beyond." <sup>3</sup>By bringing together over 70 organizations representing 54 countries, this strategic shift puts faith at the cente of future COP discussions, as well as policy development and implementation. It thus becomes imperative for religious bodies and faiths across developing countries (like Nigeria), which do not exist in isolation, to ensure that, when speaking up against climate injustice, the voices of the people they represent are heard at high-level meetings (where policies are designed and developed). Such contributions will provide further context and perspectives when understanding the extent and cost of climate justice inaction, often by putting faces and voices to these shared experiences. Religious bodies are of course part of human society as a whole, contributing to climate change while also feeling the impacts of global environmental developments. Accordingly, there is a need to consider and integrate religion/faith into effective communications strategies to advance issues climate action and other environmental matters.

## Aim and Methodology

faith perspective. These issues and considerations were arrived at after deploying two methodologies, namely;

- A systematic scoping review of interfaith and climate literature/research across Africa (and globally), and
- II. Focus group discussions (FGDs) in which religious leaders and climate action organizations attempted to contextualize the issues raised in the scoping review.

The developed methodology sought to generate evidence to inform an answer to the following broad question:

## What are the issues and concerns at and around the intersection of climate change and religion in Nigeria?

By answering this question concerning Nigeria's policy and practice in relation to climate messaging, action, and faith, this policy brief underscores key issues concerning the leveraging of faith and its known resources and power of mobilization to foster climate action in Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup>See Morrison, et al. (2015). Religion does matter for climate change attitudes and behavior, PLoS One, 10(8), e0134868 DOI: 10.1371/journal/pone.0134868

# **Findings**

## Understanding and Effectively Communicating Climate Science Using Faith.

When considered broadly and contextually, the numerous developed and implemented policies targeting climate change adaptation and mitigation contain gaps in terms of communicating what these policies entail and the position held by faith within the given policy's context . Another shortcoming is the knowledge level of faith leaders (and leadership structures) when it comes to nunderstanding and communicating what climate science means, how this affects different congregations, and the implications of "simple" actions contributing to environmental deterioration.

With regard to the latter issue, although many religious leaders understand some fundamental principles and processes that govern the Earth's climate system (e.g. interactions between the atmosphere, oceans, land surfaces, ice sheets, and living organisms), a significant number do not comprehend even these aspects of climate science (and change).

# Who Organized the Inaugural Faith Pavilion?

The first-ever Faith Pavilion to be held at a UN Climate Change Conference was hosted by the Muslim Council of Elders in collaboration with the COP28 Presidency, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and a diverse coalition of global partners including the Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development, the Episcopal Diocese of California, the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD), the Peace Department, and over 50 faithbased organizations. Initially, Pope Francis had planned to attend as well, but ended up giving a video address instead.

## What Happened at the Firstever Faith Pavilion?

Staged at the heart of COP28, adjacent to the World Climate Action Summit negotiations zones, the and Faith Pavilion hosts more than 65 sessions. It brings together religious and other civil society representatives, Indigenous Peoples, scientists, youth, and political leaders. The Pavilion provides a unique opportunity for faith-based engagement with key stakeholders, including political delegations, decision makers, negotiators, and business leaders to promote swift and effective climate action. A Faith for Climate Call to Action was issued by the Faith Pavilion.

Source: Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development

## **15 STEPS: HOW TO CREATE YOUR OWN MESSAGE**

The following steps outline a sequential process that can increase the effectiveness of your climate communications by connecting with people's values and providing answers that are grounded in their beliefs. One-on-one conversations can help us to more deeply understand the climate concerns and hopes of our congregations.

## Start with people, stay with people

If you want your congregation to care about climate change, then show that you care for them. Begin from their perspective, not yours. Infuse your conversation with tangible and relevant daily concerns. Connect with your audience before talking about climate issues, not the other way around, and keep bringing the conversation back to them.

### Connect on common values

As a trusted leader, you are in a unique position to connect climate issues with your audience's core values. Open your audience's hearts and minds by discussing important values and showing your congregation that you share and honor their concerns. Connect first on the values that bring the congregation together-for example, faith, family, and community. This creates an emotional and motivating bond that paves the way for a productive discussion on climate change.

## **Acknowledge ambivalence**

People approach climate from different perspectives and have varying levels of concern for climate issues. Moreover, we all have other priorities. Respect the different viewpoints of your congregation, and allow your congregants to have their own space. A simple line such as "we have a variety of views regarding climate change in our community" allows people to be comfortable and to listen with an open mind.

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## Make it real

Many Americans still view climate change as a distant concern. By focusing on local realities that people can see with their own eyes-simple, irrefutable facts about changing seasons or record weather in their own backyards, for example-faith leaders can make climate change real and relevant. One way to connect your audience to the reality of climate change impacts is to share the story of someone you have met who has been affected by climate change. Assume the realities-don't argue the science. Use a light hand with one or two examples and then quickly pivot to solutions.

## **Emphasize solutions**

Many people do not yet realize the extent to which clean energy powers our lives or understand that it is now among the least expensive of our energy options. We also have proven policies that reduce carbon pollution while accelerating economic growth. There is a suite of economic, health, nature, and security co-benefits associated with these energy solutions (see http://www.climatesolutions.org). Keep your congregation engaged and listening by offering tangible examples of solutions that are real in the here-and-now.

## Inspire and empower

Americans are repeatedly told that they cannot affect climate change when, in fact, the exact opposite is true. Every day, our words and actions-from the way we drive, to what we eat, to our ministry-can support solutions and inspire the people around us. One great way to accomplish this goal is to highlight how congregations or faith communities have benefited from climate action. We can lead on climate issues and so can our states, towns, congregations, families, and congregants!

## Focus on personal benefit

Most Americans think that action on climate change comes with a cost to their lifestyles and to their pocketbooks. However, the opposite is true. We save money by saving energy; morever, we are also healthier with more efficient transportation and more nutritious food. Always emphasize the personal benefits of climate solutions. And for people of faith, it is also critical to emphasize how climate solutions advance the values and mission of their faith tradition, whether by creating a more just and humane world or by using energy savings to reduce the congregation's operating costs, support mission work, or provide food to a local food bank.

### End with your "ask"

Always empower your congregation with solutions. Encourage them to turn information and understanding into action. Give them examples, ideas, and steps that they can take to make a difference individually, within and beyond the congregation. Show them how behavior change is easier and more inexpensive than they might think.

### **Sequence matters**

Research reveals that you can take the same set of six facts, arrange them in different ways, and end up with very different results. Connect on common values, acknowledge ambivalence, and then transition from impacts to solutions. Finally, focus on personal and congregational benefits. If you begin with the negative and impersonal, it is very difficult to get back to the positive, personal, and relevant. Follow the first eight steps in order.

### Describe, don't label

Use the language of your faith tradition in your climate communications. Furthermore, keep it simple. Jargon and labels confuse people. Avoid such terms as "mitigation," "adaptation," and others on this guide's "replace" list. Rather, follow the "embrace" guidance. Remember, the most persuasive language is vivid, familiar, and descriptive.

## Have at least 1 powerful fact from a trusted messenger

One or two facts that pack a great deal of emotional power will add significant weight to your message. Your own testimony is important, but so is that of other highly trusted messengers or organizations, as it can lend credibility and importance to your words. Use at least one memorable and relevant quote or fact taken from someone your audience trusts. Consider your denominational head, regional or missional leader, or another well-known leader such as Pope Francis.

## Ditch doom and gloom.

We've all heard advocates who attempt to spur people to action by portraying climate change in dire or fatalistic terms. Emphasizing this aspect promotes fatalism and emotional numbing, causing people to turn away and disengage. Instead, focus on the common good. Cast a vision of a restored creation, of a better and healthier world. Remind your congregation that we can work together to achieve this vision. Solutions, benefits, and personal empowerment are the messages you want your congregants to absorb.

13

## Use stories to strengthen engagement

Stories allow your message to seem relevant and vivid. They help you to create connections with your congregation, allowing you to build bonds, enhance empathy, and open hearts and minds to new perspectives. Deepen your message by weaving in your personal story-tell them how you became concerned about climate change, for instance, and how you see it as connected to your faith tradition and as a central part of your ministry.

### Stay above the fray

Focus on the big picture; that is, emphasize what is important to your congregation and faith tradition. Do not get caught in the trap of arguing or diving into details, and do not get sidetracked if an individual tries to poke holes in your thesis. Avoid demonizing opponents, blaming adversaries, and engaging in confrontations that can distract from your message, cause you to lose your audience, or reduce your effectiveness.

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## Message discipline is critical

Stay true to your talking points. Repeat your key points. Do not explain the some thing in different ways-this can be more confusing than enabling. Follow the steps outlined in this guide, and be consistent across all messaging platforms. Use climate messengers and integrate climate messaging in all ministries, but be sure to tailor your message to your audience.

Source: ecoAmerica (2016), Lets Talk Faith and Climate Communication Guidance for Faith Leaders, Blessed Tomorrow, Washington D.C

Across society as a whole, such a gap in knowledge is no exclusive to religious leaders in developing countries like Nigeria. A study<sup>4</sup> conducted by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and published in the monthly journal Nature Climate Change (2015) found that "40 percent of adults worldwide have never heard of climate change [and] this rises to more than 65 percent in some developing countries." Although this disparity in climate change awareness and perceptions of its risks continues, the study nevertheless showed that some respondents in African and Asian countries aligned local temperature rises to climate change while "perceiv[ing] climate change as a much greater threat than people in developed countries." Once such a threat is recognized, how faith groups use it in their messaging and actions is important.

## Responses from Focus Group Discussions

"Look at the Climate Change Act. It's well loaded. But to what extent do we [people] understand its content? Even if you are a religious leader, if you don't understand this climate science, then it becomes a challenge.

"People at the grassroots level will now tell you they don't even understand what it means. How is it affecting them? So, we cannot advocate for something that people don't understand because, let me tell you, even if you push the government to pass or to implement policies, and people don't understand, they will see it as the government just wasting their time. That's the honest truth.

"When you're talking about the End Times,

we bring these things [environmental changes] in, but we may not mention climate change. We may not just say the exact term –"climate change." But we say that [our congregation should] look at how things are going and how things have gone wrong on this Earth."

A key strategy identified by FGD participants includes framing narratives and conversations around the everyday environmental impacts on congregations' lives. For instance, they may focus on how scarcity of resources (e.g. the shrinking of the Lake Chad Basin) and population migration create conflicts, or perhaps how persistent floods affect the economic livelihoods and health of a given congregation. Beyond linking changes in the climate to the "End Times," it was also suggested in the study that messaging from faith groups needs to be more specific thereby reducing the conflict between climate science and religion. The same study also encourages improving basic education, climate literacy, and public understanding of the local dimensions of climate change among the leadership structures of different faith communities via conferences and workshops (often of an inter-faith dimension). Seismic yet also proportionate shifts in faith communities' approaches can drive public policy and individual behavior regarding emissions, energy consumption, and transportation (among other clean strategies), all of which require public support to have the desired effect. This might of course vary depending on the given faith, community, or culture, but improving the knowledge levels of faith group leaders regarding climate science and change has enormous potential.

<sup>4</sup>See Leiserowitz, A & Howe, P. (2015), Climate Change Awareness and Concerns in 119 Countries; Yale Program on Climate Communication. Avialable online at https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/analysis-of-a-119-country-survey-predicts-global-climate-change-awareness/ Also see Lee, T. et al. (2015), Predictors of Public Climate Change Awareness and Risk Perceptions Around the World, Nature Climate Change, 5(1), 1014-1020

## The stakeholders made the call to partner with religious groups for climate action at the 17th Chief S.L. Edu Memorial Lecture of the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) in Lagos on 17 January 2019.

Various religious leaders and environmental experts took turns to explain how religion and nature were interdependent, and stressed the need to adhere to religious teachings of mutual benefit. They also emphasized the importance of adhering to teachings about restoration and conservation to save the environment and, ultimately, the world.

Guest lecturer, Martin Palmer, Secretary General of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) in the United Kingdom, called on religious leaders to appeal to the conscience of worshipers to correct the ills destroying the environment. Speaking on the topic "A Quiet Revolution – Faith and the Environment," Palmer said that sacred places situated in or near natural forests enjoy biodiversity because they were well protected. He also said constant lamentation would not solve the problems of environmental degradation, and that appeal to the hearts of people through religion would more likely make an impact and save the environment.

"If we want to convey the truth, don't do it through data," he said. He advised the NCF to explore ways of changing attitudes towards the environment through the faith-based organizations holding the greatest influence when it comes to value reorientation. He urged the NCF to recognize the fact that religious bodies run many education systems with the potential to steer young people towards environmental restoration. He explained that the Covenant of the Rainbow God gave to Noah, recorded in the Islamic and Christian holy books, was one way God brought to bear the need for conversation. "We have allowed the human-centric view to take over. It is time to stop being apart from nature, and be a part of nature," he said. He also underlined the need to unite through religion to save the environment. He added that a "fusion of the religions and traditions" contributed to some countries preserving forests in some sacred areas. He said that, for over 2,000 years, religion has preserved nature, citing examples from the teachings of Prophet Muhammad that forbid the cutting of trees during wars and support the protection of springs. Palmer also asserted that Pope Benedict's teachings had corrected environmental degradation caused

by the Roman Empire 1,400 years ago courtesy of re-greening through agriculture. He also said that, in 1982, Islamic leaders preached against wildlife trade and the burning of bushes in Indonesia, which led to a revolutionary change in environmental protection. Palmer also gave the example of the Methodist Church which, in 2017, issued a report on handing over forests to the church which had a positive impact. The Director General of the NCF, Dr. Muhtari Aminu-Kano, said the Foundation identified the scale of the problem and saw the need to bring in faith-based organizations to appeal to the hearts of Nigerians to save the environment. Aminu-Kano said Nigerians were very religious and that positive changes regarding the environment could be achieved through their beliefs. "We have been browning Nigeria, and we need to reareen it," he said.

Chief Philip Asiodu, the NCF's President, said that since the Foundation's establishment it had been pursuing an agenda to recover the nation's forests. "The rate of consumption without restoration will bring a consequence that we will need more planets to survive," he said. Meanwhile, a representative of Chevron said that the multinational company continued to award scholarships to doctoral degree candidates studying the environment since 2016. At the same time, various perspectives were shared by the Christian, Islam, and Buddhist groups in attendance whose members took the opportunity to espouse the virtues of their religions and how they supported the protection and preservation of the environment. In addition, two doctoral candidates received awards for their contributions to the preservation of the environment, namely Soberekon Afiesimama of the Department of Geography and Environment Management at the University of Port Harcourt, and Adeola Jude of the University of Ibadan.

## Excerpts from EnvironNews Nigeria

EnvironNews Nigeria is a multimedia online news magazine focusing on issues related to the environment and development. As an information and educational platform, EnvironNews Nigeria engages in awareness raising and presenting climate science in a simplified manner to reach a broad audience in Nigeria. As part of its strategy, the magazine's messaging and communication also targets members of religious and faith-based organizations, thereby improving knowledge levels and amplifying the issue of climate injustice.

## Congregational Awareness Levels from Understanding and Communication of Climate Policies

A key component of Nigeria's climate policy deelopment and implementation to date, which intersects with faith, is simplifying communication to improve the general public's understanding of how global emissions impact livelihoods. Under the rules and responsibilities contained in Nigeria's climate policy implementation strategy is the identification of collaborative partnerships for cross-cutting issues as well as climate change management and governance with different groups, including "community and faith-based organizations" (p.47). Furthermore , Nigeria's Climate Change Act, 2021, provides for mainstreaming climate education, using the advisory position of the National Council of Climate Change (NCCC) to "advise the MDAs responsible for regulating educational curriculum in Nigeria on the integration of climate change into various disciplines and subjects across all education levels" (Article 26, p.18).

However, evidence suggests that a fundamental gap exists between how religious stakeholders, as part of the larger group of policy development stakeholders, participatem in the education, implementation, and conversation dimensions of such policies. Major institutions do engage with religious (and other) stakeholders, but to what extent faith strategies constitute part of effective communication on climate action and policy still needs to be answered. Citing gaps in the understanding of climate policies, some FGD participants lamented being left out altogether in the drafting and implementation of the nation's climate action policies. Relatedly, one of them asked:

"When these policies are being drafted and signed, how do these [policies] get to the religious bodies as part of communication and implementation?"

Other participants outlined how the alleged non-inclusion of faith groups in policy design and implementation, while leveraging platforms as being for local persons and congregations, further perpetuated the lack of awareness on climate action.

Institution/Plan	Level	Climate Education Mandate
	LEVEI	
Federal Ministry of Environment National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change	Federal	The Plan's action and timeline for 2020-2025 includes plans to produce climate change "information, education and communication (IEC) materials such as posters and flyers" (p.46) in local languages, and to "design and develop online short courses as well as course for educational institutions on climate change, gender, energy, and transport" (p.46). The Plan also intends to "build the capacity of educational institutions ( primary, secondary, university) on waste management" (p.51)
Nigerian Educational Research Development Council (NERDC)	Federal	The scope and service of the Council includes curriculum development and implemen- tation (primary and secondary), book development, quality assurance and readership, language development and extension services, and educational research for public policy. There is no explicit mention however of climate change on the Council's website
Nigeria's Third National Communication	Federal	The National Communication indicates that climate change content in formal education in Nigeria is still lacking. As part of the UNFCCC, the National Communication requests that the Nigerian government follow the recommendations in the National Policy on Environ- ment (2016) to mainstream climate change in education because this is not fully integrat- ed into the country's study curriculum. However, the informal sector and education is not covered in this Communication, nor is the place of faith/religion in effective communica- tion and education regarding climate change.
Department of Climate Change	Federal	<ul> <li>In terms of education, awareness, and outreach, the Department of Climate Change in the Ministry of Environment is responsible for:</li> <li>Development of strategies for implementation of education, awareness, and out- reach programs on climate change and its effects;</li> <li>Liaison with relevant stakeholders on media education, awareness, and outreach;</li> <li>Organizing and attending meetings, seminars, workshops, and conferences re- lated to climate change education, awareness raising, and outreach programs locally and internationally;</li> <li>Collaborating /supporting projects with NGOs/CSOs in climate change education, awareness raising, and outreach programs and activities locally and internation- ally;</li> <li>Production and distribution of climate change education, awareness, and outreach materials for public consumption;</li> <li>Coordinating school programs on climate change;</li> <li>Providing stakeholders with relevant public access to ICT, research, and devel- opments with regard to climate change vulnerability and mitigation/adaptation indices; and</li> <li>Facilitate the establishment of a small unit library, as well as a website and other social media to ease dissemination of information to the general public.</li> </ul>

## **Climate Education and Communication Institutions**

Efforts and plans directed towards improving formal education on climate issues in Nigeria have been well documented. The table above shows some of the federal-level measures taken to improve climate education in the formal context of educational institutions. However, as faith-based organizations continue to serve both formal and informal groups, policy frameworks that properly integrate faith and foster closer collaboration with faith groups in terms of communication would improve awareness levels further still. Pertinently, Dupar et al. have studied<sup>5</sup> climate communication strategies in developing countries under the Climate and Development

<sup>5</sup>Dupar, M., with McNamara, L. and Pacha, M. (2019). Communicating climate change: A practitioner's guide. Cape Town: Climate and Development Knowledge Network Knowledge Network (CDKN). While their studies have identified the lopsided nature of climate communication across the globe, in which there has been a significant focus on developed countries, they provide a step-by-step approach towards effective climate communication (taking faith and the audience into account). The argument made herein is that people in developing countries do not need to be convinced further about the effects of climate change, as they can already see it in their everyday lives. Instead, what these audiences need is to make sense of what they are seeing: to understand their lived experiences in a scientific way, to have an idea of what the future holds, and to know what they should do about it.

For governments, establishing a relationships with the audience and enhancing their understanding in relation to the climate can bolster feedback loops on climate policy while increasing the appetite among communities to share own experiences of climate change effectively with their government and policymakers.

## Framing the impacts of climate change and the benefits of adaptation action

People want to know how climate change is going to affect the places they know, value and depend upon – whether they depend on their environment for:



jobs and livelihoods,



food and energy security,



safe and tolerable living conditions.



religion and spirituality.

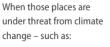
Source: CDKN (2019), Communicating Climate Change: A Practitioners' Guide Insight from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. p.15

## Government and public policy audiences

- Highlight the risk that climate change may undermine the achievement of major public policy goals, especially on eliminating poverty and reaching fiscal targets.
- Highlight obligations and opportunities for meeting international commitments to climate action, such as the Paris Agreement under the UNFCCC.
- Highlight obligations and opportunities for meeting national commitments to climate action, such as national climate change strategies, action plans, policies and laws.
- Show that prevention costs less than the cure. It is better to invest in adaptation to climate impacts now than to invest in relief and reconstruction afterwards (see case study: Comparing the costs and benefits of early climate action with inaction in Uganda, page 46).
- Or, if there has already been a climateor weather-related disaster, make the case for 'building back better' - investing in rebuilding efforts to be more resilient to the next extreme event and to avoid disaster.

Source: CDKN (2019), **Communicating Climate** Change: A Practitioners' Guide Insight from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. p.15

Africa requires 2.8t by 2030 to play its part in limiting global heating to 1.5C and to address the impacts of climate change. Yet the whole continent received only 30b global climate finance in 2020. - Amina Mohammed (UN Deputy Secretary General).







drought and heat

 people want to know what measures they can take to adapt and cope with the impacts.

# Climate Injustice - Faith-based Organizations Speaking Out.

No doubt, Nigeria (like many African countries) contributes relatively little to global greenhouse gas emissions. Despite that, African countries are amongst the most vulnerable to climate change, which has impacted over 330 million Africans over the last two decades. With the prevalence of floods, droughts, and food rising shortages, climate change increasingly inhibits African development. Amina Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General, noted that over 700 million Africans face severe water shortages and that in Nigeria frequent flash floods have swept away homes, businesses and livelihoods, before leading calls for developed countries to meet their climate financing promises. According to her6: "Africa requires 2.8 trillion USD by 2030 to play its part in limiting global heating to 1.5°C and to address the impacts of climate change. Yet the whole continent received only 30 billion USD in global climate finance in 2020."

Faith leaders, by speaking up about the shared lived experiences and climate injustice faced by vulnerable groups, can add context and inspire further climate action (nationally and internationally). Elsewhere, discussions with climate activists and religious leaders have indicated how religious groups can best amplify the voices of such vulnerable communities in countries like Nigeria, where religion and faith occupy important societal and cultural relevance. Faith leaders thus appear poised to speak up for such vulnerable groups, capturing their lived experiences more aptly and sharing them accordingly. Generally, religions can use their platforms not only to speak out for their communities and follower but also to mobilize people towards action. David Rosen, the President of Religions for Peace, noted such potential when he stated: "As leaders and representatives of world religions, our role gives us a platform and position to encourage, influence and motivate people, and thereby a responsibility to help

guide our communities in how to restore, protect and live in harmony with the natural world."

As highlighted during discussions with faith leaders and climate activists, the socioeconomic and health implications of not mobilizing members against climate injustice could/would be dire. With their livelihoods and health impacted, vulnerable groups often turn to faith institutions as the first point for assistance and succor. Accordingly, such institutions need to be fully committed to providing relief. Meanwhile, as faith institutions are not confrontational, they tend not to see protest as a progressive strategy engaging with the government (and when other stakeholders) to drive change. CSOs can be more confrontational in theirdemands for climate justice, but faith groups often consider advocacy and moral suasion as having the potential to be more effective.

CODE is a CSO leading the process of highlighting the climate crisis facing vulnerable and religious groups, using the Community Media Collaboration for Climate Justice (CMCCJ) project to amplify their voices. By adopting strategies of;

- 1. Helping communities to identify environmental challenges,
- 2. Tracking climate and ecological funds,
- 3. Research and online advocacy,
- 4 Engagement with stakeholders through radio and media publications, code worksdevotedly to increase knowledge of climate injustice and how this affects groups vulnerable (including faith communities/congregations).

Green Faith<sup>8</sup> is another leading organization working closely at or around the intersection of climate change and faith groups. It understands the potential of faith leaders with regard to climate justice, has intensified its corresponding efforts, and driven climate action. Key points as to why faith leaders (and groups) are important to Green Faith's strategy include:

- Faith leaders hold moral power and are listened to by their congregants and many people in power;
- 2. Around the world, politicians need support from religious leaders in order to get elected;
- People of faith have often shaped how the majority of society define what is right and what is wrong;
- People of faith are already part of the communities and congregations that can be organized;
- 5. People of faith are able to look inside of ourselves and find spirit or "God" to sustain us in the work .
- 6. Bringing people of faith into a secular campaign for climate justice

Using mechanisms such as Sunday schools or Islamic equivalents to adjust religious attitudes/ perceptions, faith leaders can leverage these opportunities to inform the next generation of climate change leaders in the communities they serve while designing messaging based on lived experiences.

The Guardian, The Faith Leaders Fighting for Climate: We have a Moral Obligation.

# 15

# Scriptural, Cultural, and Historical Backing for Climate Action Messaging

A key strategy in climate action messaging, as identified by some existing climate change studies, is utilizing scriptural annotations that align with aspects of environmental protection. Such messaging generated with reference to holy books and ethical beliefs can inspire climate action. Adopting this sort of strategy can help the targeted audience to properly relate to the message being conveyed and visualize, courtesy of scriptural messaging. Also such messaging on how simplifying their actions might mitigate such changes can have directly upon the environment. By presenting messages alongside relatable portions of scriptures, faith leaders can improve awareness levels with regard to climate change and use messaging to foster climate action. Further entrenching this dimension of scriptural annotations are the cultural and historical actions closely related to sustainability. On the historical side, FGD participants related how places of worship and other religious places were usually sensitive to their environment by ensuring trees and other biodiversity were kept intact during their construction. In such cases, these institutions place importance on trees as a means of shade as well as having aesthetic value. In parts of northern Nigeria, many FGD participants also recalled how groups such as forest guards play significant roles alongside faith groups in communities to ensure the maintenance of biodiversity by ensuring that for every tree cut down, it is replaced by at least one by a community member. The general expectation here is that faith institutions support the drive for attitudinal change beyond scriptural messaging, by consistently setting an example by, for instance, planting trees, respecting biodiversity, sustainably disposing of waste, and engaging in environment-generative activities. Of course, a challenge that faith groups might face by referring to scriptural and historical

justification for their messaging might stem from divisions among faith groups regarding climate change and science.

## Responses from Focus Group Discussions

"We have it where the scripture tells us we should not shift the ancient boundaries. And this is something we find ourselves doing. Shifting these boundaries is bringing some of the problems we are seeing.

"I know about the hadith that encourages us to encourage good practices and discourage doing harm.

"There is part of the Quran that speaks about eating and drinking, in the sustenance of Allah. That is to say, [at] the point of that sustenance you can eat and drink [but] [ensure] you don't harm the source so that the next person or the next generation coming don't have to struggle for what you had for free.

"So I think in our different mosques and churches we have to plant more trees."

"When you look at the whole concept of climate change, the reason faith leaders are important is [to showcase] the role of injustice. From who causes the problem, to who it affects, to those who are vulnerable. Despite how it affects them, [the vulnerable] can't say anything. And religious leaders are in the middle between those who cause the problem and those who are affected. They have a role to speak up. On this issue [climate injustice], faith organizations need to speak up.

"There have been a lot of religious organizations – Islamic, Christian, Hindu – and there are a lot of Islamic declarations, Christian declarations, Buddhist, and Hindu. This shows that religious organizations have been very instrumental in speaking up about climate change and climate injustice. "So for me, if I am a priest, I am a pastor, or I am an imam, these [vulnerable groups] are my family. I will [need to] mobilize them to seek their [climate] rights. They need to hold the government responsible.

"It is for our leaders to use religious platforms or content to pass this message on to our people that there is climate injustice and not to remain silent on what is going on. We can pray for them, but also mobilize them for this action."





### NEWS

Climate Change: Connected Development Creates Awareness on Climate Crisis



**Source:** The Sight News, 2023 available online at https://thesightnews.com/2023/12/01/ climate-change-connected-development-creates-awareness-on-climate-crisis/



# **Alternatives for Poor Communities**

Communicating the benefits of sustainable climate actions to vulnerable groups struggling to maintain their livelihoods might however prove difficult for faith and religious groups alike. Data show that among those directly impacted by climate change in Africa, people within lower income percentiles are less likely to escape poverty because of the harsh climatic conditions in which they live. 9The World Bank supports this view, indicating that over 100 million people globally are at risk of falling back into poverty due to climate change. <sup>10z</sup>Within these precarious circumstances, it becomes extremely difficult for faith and religious institutions to preach the message of sustainability and warn of the effects of climate change to poor households who do not have access to alternative livelihoods. Indeed, poor families engaged in unsustainable activities to ensure their sustenance might find environmental sustainability messaging from faith leaders unpalatable.. It is therefore suggested to provide viable alternatives in tandem with sustainable practices to such households (e.g. removing the need of families to cut trees and use wood, while at the same time providing ecofriendly stoves). Faith groups can work together to provide such alternatives while improving sustainability and climate change messaging simultaneously. Indeed, some faith communities have utilized the strategy of aiding vulnerable communities through raising resources and deploying approaches geared towards easing some of their immediate environmental needs (e.g. provision of clean water and healthier living conditions). Prominent examples here include the Al-Habibiyyah Islamic Society which works closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Nigeria by providing relief services, as well as the Women's Forum's, "Do something" initiative that targets vulnerable groups (e.g. internally displaced persons (IDPs)).

In such strategies, messaging using religious insights of societal relevance as well as zakat and waqf may be applied as a means of supporting the targeted groups. From positions like these, climate action and justice messaging become easier to implement.



<sup>9</sup>See. Winsemius H.C., Jongman B., Veldkamp T.I.E., Hallegatte S., Bangalore M., Ward P.J. Disaster risk, climate change, and poverty: Assessing the global exposure of poor people to floods and droughts. Environment and Development Economics. 2018;23:328–348. Also see Azzarri C, Signorelli S. Climate and poverty in Africa South of the Sahara. World Dev. 2020 Jan;125:104691. doi: 10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.104691. PMID: 31902973; PMCID: PMC6853414.

10Akihiko Nishio, (Nov. 2021), When Poverty Meets Climate Change: A Critical Challenge That Demands Cross-Cutting Solutions, World Bank Blogs



5 October 2022 · 🚱

The #Faiths4ClimateJustice which kick-started on Sunday the 2nd to 4th of October 2022, was a huge success.

As people of faith, we gathered in Port Harcourt and resolved to form coalition for climate Justice.

It was a wonderful experience for Green Faith Nigeria Team members who were on ground to support in different ways to see we that we had a successful dialogue.

Our Faiths demand that we seek justice for the oppressed and be a voice to the voiceless. Armed with the core values of @GreenFaith and our beliefs, we demand

#climatejustice #restorationbeforedivestment #JustTransition #sustainability #ecoprotection

@GreenFaith, @GreenFaith NG

## **Energy Saving Cook Stoves for Poor** Women and Planting of Trees - Kenya.

This project supplied women in Kenya with improved cook stoves and planted trees. These energy-saving cook stoves have proven popular among the woman because they are cheaper and easy to use. They are also eco-friendly, as their use reduces environmental degradation.

#### Fast facts:

- 500 energy saving cook stoves supplied to women;
- 15-20 kilograms reduced to 2-3 kilograms of fuel wood used per day;
- 30,000 tree seedlings planted.

#### The problem

The majority of households in developing countries cook over open fires. Women, who typically do the cooking, frequently visit local health centers suffering from respiratory diseases due to inhaling smoke.

In addition to health problems, many communities in developing countries face a fuel-wood shortage due to high demand resulting in the massive felling of trees, which is driving deforestation and causing desertification to spread.

#### The solution

This project innovated a new cook stove design that can use both fuel-wood and charcoal briquettes, thus reducing operating costs. The energy saving cookstoves are made of clay liners, a metal casing, and vermiculite cement, which maintains heat during cooking. Such materials are cheap and locally available. These energy-saving cook stoves were supplied to women who had been cooking with open fires.

Source: United Nations Climate Change (2023), Energy Saving Cook Stoves for Poor Women and Planting of Trees - Kenya. Available online at https://unfccc.int/climate-action/momentum-for-change/activity-database/momentum-for-change-energy-saving-cook-stovesfor-poor-women-and-planting-of-trees#:~:text=The%20energy%20saving%20cook%2Dstoves,been%20cooking%20with%20open%20fires.

# **Policy Option**

Given the currently unsatisfactory state of climate change policy implementation, efforts towards improving the integration of faith and religious groups into policy frameworks need to be encouraged. These efforts should include the provision of more platforms and opportunities for faith-based organizations to lead robust conversations on how policy should be designed with due account given to potential impacts on their congregation. Moreover, they ought to showcase how such frameworks (learning from global experiences) are widely being considered in climate policies. Beyond providing improved platforms and/or opportunities, such discussions and climate actions, inter-faith collaboration with other interest groups (like CSOs) towards amplifying climate injustice and understanding policy design will require further improvements in both messaging and engagement across Nigeria.

# Conclusion

Communicating the challenges and opportunities associated with climate change initiatives requires innovative solutions. Different faith-based and religious groups have significant opportunities to reconsider strategies to mobilize communities and further climate action. However, the vulnerability of congregations and the general gaps in knowledge among some faith leaders in Nigeria have thus far limited the extent to which religion and faith have been mobilized for climate action. Policy and program implementation frameworks acknowledge the immense role of multi-stakeholder engagement in Nigeria's climate adaptation and mitigation outcomes. But the extent of such engagement has left many climate advocacy groups, faith leaders, and congregations questioning if the intent and results of these policies are suitably framed. Efforts towards tightening these connections while leveraging faith groups' prominent role, outreach, and ability to mobilize/speak up against climate injustice should be encouraged. Awareness raising and action are possible here by harnessing the power of inter-faith conversations and dialogues on climate action. Indeed, this is a strategy already in play across Africa. Accordingly, Nigeria's faith groups can and should take similar steps and amplify the voices of the vulnerable groups that they represent with the support of CSOs.

# Acknowledgment

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