



**Learning review
Climate, environment and the
role of religious actors
2022-2023**

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List of Abbreviations

ACRL-RfP	African Council of Religious Leaders-Religions for Peace
ADS-Kenya	Anglican Development Services Kenya
CCFC	Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Community
CEDRA	Climate Change and Environmental Degradation Risk and Adaptation Assessment
CKU	Center for Kirkeligt Udviklingsamarbejde - Center for Church Based Development
COP	Conference of Parties
CRISTAL	Community Based Risk Screening Tool - Adaptation and Livelihoods
DASSC	Development and Social Services Commission
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EECMY	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
EECMY-DASSC	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus- Development and Social Services Commission
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FECF	Free Evangelical Christian Fellowship
FPFK	Free Pentecostal Fellowship of Kenya
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
KIRDARC	Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre
LWF	The Lutheran World Federation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PULS	Projekt Ulandshjælp til Selvhjælp
RECODA	Research, Community and Organizational Development Association
RIPAT	Rural Initiatives for Participatory Agricultural Transformation
SA	Salvation Army
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEI	Stockholm Environment Institute
STREEC	Solar Training Renewable Energy & Entrepreneurship Centre
TSA	The Salvation Army
UMN	United Mission Nepal
UNDRR	United Nations office on Disaster Risk Reduction
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAT	Vulnerability Assessment Tool
VSLA	Village Loans and Saving Associations

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Executive Summary

The Church and faith-based organisations have the potential to play a significant role in addressing climate change and promoting environmental sustainability. The past decade has seen a growing importance of eco-theology and environmental initiatives in churches and faith-based organisations at global, national, and local levels; and religious actors present a large potential to address climate change in the global South. As climate change intensifies and the green transition becomes ever more urgent, it is key to involve all parts of society in mobilising both public and political engagement in identifying and implementing structural and behavioural change. Religious actors are key for involving people as well as authorities with a view to effectively support the societal transformation that is needed to achieve climate targets and goals.

CKU and Digni are umbrella organisations for Danish and Norwegian mission societies, churches and church-based organisations engaged in long-term development cooperation. Both CKU and Digni have recognised environmental and climate change as central areas of focus in their development work, emphasising environmental stewardship and ‘creation care’; that is care for both humanity and the natural world. The two organisations have individually developed strategies centered around climate adaptation, mitigation, and justice, harnessing the distinctive influence of religious actors and faith-based organisations. These strategies prioritize community engagement, the promotion

of sustainable agricultural practices, advocacy for climate justice for vulnerable and marginalized populations, and peacebuilding. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the member organisations have not fully embraced the climate action initiatives. This learning review set out to gain an overview of the current project portfolios in relation to climate change and identify how to increase both the scope and the quality of work by the member organisations on climate action. The review consisted of a desk analysis of 22 projects by 18 partner organisations based in 9 countries in Africa and 2 countries in South East Asia; a workshop with 9 partner organisations from East Africa, and interviews with actors working on climate change and/or faith-based organisations. The review was undertaken by two consultants specialised within the topical field, one being a practitioner of faith-based climate action in Kenya.

Overall, the findings highlight the potential for CKU and Digni, along with their member organisations and partner organisations, to make a substantial and positive contribution to addressing the complex challenges posed by climate change, poverty, and conflicts over natural resources. Their unique features and commitment to value-driven climate action position them as valuable actors in the pursuit of a more sustainable and just world.



Ideology: Social Justice & Responsible Stewardship of the Earth

Religious narratives form the ideological reason for churches and religious actors to engage - or refrain from engaging - in environmental degradation and climate change. The theological traditions that do not encourage churches to engage in climate action generally refrain churches from engagement in this-worldly matter due to doctrines of predestination or orientation towards the **after-life**. These churches tend to view human beings as visitors on earth that must prepare themselves for Heaven and regard this-worldly matters such as climate action to be the responsibility of the government. These traditions are deeply rooted in Pentecostal and Evangelical churches, yet one should caution against rigid classification as Christianity in Africa is a highly dynamic field with such churches getting more into this-worldly matters.

The theological narratives that encourage churches to engage in climate action present traditions that view the Church's mandate to protect, love, and care for the most vulnerable among God's creatures. It is the tradition of ecumenical bodies with a focus on **social justice** such as the World Council of Churches and outstanding social justice protagonists like Pope Francis and the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu. With reference to Genesis 2:15 that 'The Lord

God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it', God made humans responsible for the **stewardship** of creation and accountable to God for taking care of the whole of creation, both people and planet. The alignment of the notion of stewardship (or creation care) with the tradition of social justice frames a position to empower 'the voices of the voiceless' and address the basic injustice that the world's poorest population contributed the least to the climate crisis, yet are the most affected. This is the position of CKU and Digni as well as many member organisations and partner organisations for engagement in climate action. Theological alignment provides a powerful ideology because **it touches upon our very purpose as human beings and places churches in a unique position with a value-driven approach to climate action.**



Identity – Making Climate Action part of Faith & Church Mission

The climate crisis has involved theological reflections that have led some churches and Christian organisations to integrate care for creation not only into their social justice work, but into the very mandate of the church. Lutheran World Federation has been equipping member churches to care for creation and integrate environmental stewardship as a core part of being a church. Grøn Kirke in Denmark is an ecumenical body under the National Council of Churches of Denmark with an aim to grow environmental stewardship and more environment-friendly practices among the member churches and Christians. Some churches have taken one step further and made creation care part of their constitution. The Anglican Communion have added environmental stewardship to the constitution ‘as a response to the ecological crisis and the threats to the unity of all creation’, and Pope Francis wrote an encyclical letter on climate change and inequality and with a call to all people of the world to take swift and unified global action.

Making creation care part of the church mandate implies adjustment of the **identity of the church and its policies, strategies, operation and liturgy**. Moreover, it changes the **identity of a Christian** to ‘someone who loves God, neighbour and creation’. Thus, personal identity and faith become the motivation for people to change towards more environment friendly living and climate action. It intensifies the ideology (or theological narrative) that as human beings we should be responsible stewards to a personal matter of how to practice faith in this day and age. This change of identity draws on inner motivation with a potential of **long-lasting behaviour change**.

CKU and Digni policies emphasise theological narratives of stewardship and social justice, whereas the notion of environmental stewardship is subtle among most partner organisations. While a few partner organisations have started to integrate creation care into their constitution, there is a **huge unused potential among the churches and church-based development organisations of the partner organisations to integrate creation care into their constitution and systematically draw on identity and faith as the motivation for sustainable climate action**. For more information about how CKU and Digni-supported projects use religious narratives to leverage action and support for climate change projects, see [Thematic Brief 2](#).

Status of current portfolio - Climate Change Adaptation & Mitigation

More than 50% of the projects focus on climate change **adaptation** and addressing issues related to the adoption of agricultural practices to mitigate climate impacts, support communities in increasing food security, and improve natural resource management in context of climate change. About 40% of the projects address **livelihoods**, focusing on the socio-economic situation of the target group by introducing new sources of income; **climate justice**, **peace building**, and growing community resilience towards climate impacts. Most projects focus on several thematic areas such as food security and climate resilience or a broader spectrum of development challenges that intersect with climate change. It is also crucial to emphasise reducing greenhouse gas emissions, yet less than 20% of the projects address climate change **mitigation** through adoption of renewable energy technologies or increased energy efficiency.



The projects vary in their approach to integrating climate change considerations into their work. 40% of the projects integrate climate change considerations into the project design whereas 60% treat climate change as an add-on to projects, which focus on other areas such as agriculture. The partner organisations present at the review workshop expressed high interest in properly integrating climate change in project design, including making risk analysis of how climate change impacts part of the design phase, and expanding work on climate action. For an overview of how CKU and Digni-supported projects incorporate climate change adaptation and mitigation, see [Thematic Brief 1](#). The next three paragraphs focus on the features that make CKU and Digni-supported projects uniquely positioned to play a significant role in climate action.

Institution as Infrastructure - Adaptation at the grassroots level

The vast majority of the world's impoverished population resides in rural areas, with their livelihoods primarily dependent on agriculture. This is particularly evident in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, where rural agriculture is characterised by low productivity and recent years have witnessed the exacerbation of these challenges due to climate change, leading to altered seasons, prolonged drought, and increased flooding. Projections suggest that these climate impacts will continue to threaten food security in these regions.

Religious actors, notably churches, play a pivotal role in addressing these complex challenges. Their involvement is deeply rooted in the theological narratives of creation care. This tradition has a historical legacy dating back to the 19th century, where missionaries actively engaged in agricultural activities, introduced new crops and farming methods, and considered agriculture as vital income generation for mission societies and early churches. Churches and religious actors have extended their strong tradition of engagement in agricultural projects to climate change adaptation. The rather permanent presence and extensive networks into remote areas give churches and religious actors legitimacy at the local level, and it is **common for faith-based organisations to engage church leaders as influencers on social norms, enhance legitimacy of the intervention, and in mobilisation of project participants and wider beneficiaries.**

These efforts employ methodologies such as conservation agriculture to enhance food security, conserve biodiversity, preserve ecosystems, and foster community resilience. An innovative approach to conservation agriculture known as Farming God's Way has gained prominence among churches and faith-based organisations in East Africa. It integrates spirituality into farming practices, aligning them with environmental stewardship and community well-being. This approach fosters collaboration between churches and their development arms, promoting a unified effort to achieve environmental goals. **By infusing faith into agricultural practices, it encourages long-lasting behaviour change among farmers, leading to more sustainable and resilient farming communities.** This innovative approach not only enhances food security but also contributes to biodiversity conservation and ecosystem preservation while reinforcing the identity of farmers as responsible stewards of the environment. See [Thematic Brief 3](#) for an understanding of how CKU and Digni-supported projects engage in climate change adaptation.





Institution as Voices of the Poor – Advocacy & Climate Justice

Religious actors hold a unique and influential position in the pursuit of climate justice. While religious actors such as the World Council of Churches have been actively engaged in climate justice initiatives since 1978, the ground-breaking interfaith statement issued during COP11 in 2005 laid the foundation for faith-based climate action. This statement underscores the profound belief that stewardship of the planet is an expression of faith, coupled with a commitment to advancing climate justice, particularly for the vulnerable communities in the world. The statement thus follows the powerful alignment of responsible stewardship and social justice ideologies – or theological narratives – **that touch upon our very purpose as human beings and places churches in a unique position with a value-driven approach to climate action.**

Religious leaders often enjoy exceptional access to political leaders for several strategic reasons. **First**, many political leaders in the Global South have grown up within specific religious faiths, which establishes a common ground and shared values between them and religious leaders. Moreover, politicians may seek solace and guidance from their faith during challenging times, and are in need of church services for example to have their children baptised, strengthening their ties to churches.

Second, religious leaders wield significant authority and influence within their religious communities, and this influence extends to their interactions with political leaders, as they can command respect and attention

due to their moral guidance. **Thirdly**, in regions such as East Africa, top religious leaders may belong to the same elite social circles as political leaders. This shared social network can foster personal relationships and connections between religious and political elites, facilitating access for religious leaders to engage with political decision-makers.

Furthermore, religious leaders possess a unique ability to elevate the voices of marginalised communities. Religious leaders are often deeply embedded within local communities, and this closeness to the grassroots level allows them to witness and understand the local impacts of climate change. They can then use their access to political leaders to advocate for policies and actions that address the concerns of these vulnerable communities.

Thematic Brief 4 elaborates on the ways in which CKU and Digni-supported projects use **the influence of religious leaders on political decision-making, encompassing shared faith, authority, personal relationship, and a unique position to advocate for the marginalised.**



Institution as Peacekeeper – Risk Reduction & Environmental Security

Climate change threatens peace and security in many countries, and, at the same time, human conflicts may involve environmental degradation. The concept of ‘environmental security’ is concerned with this complex relationship between human security and the environment. It is one of the seven issues associated with human security and part of the 2030 Agenda, which recognises that sustainable development is intertwined with peace and security. Progress on environmental security is monitored under SDG 16.

Religion often promotes peace as a core virtue, with teachings supporting peace, justice, and reconciliation. Religious practices, like church greetings, reflect this commitment. Reconciliation can be seen as divine, as in Christianity, yet religious actors have a strong tradition of mediating conflicts, irrespective of religious identities and through interfaith collaboration. There are five key characteristics of how religious actors contribute to peacebuilding, including characteristics that have already been mentioned in relation to climate change adaptation and climate justice:

- 1. Belief in forgiveness and mercy:** Emphasising forgiveness and mercy aligns with local communities’ conflict understanding and is vital in resolving long-standing conflicts.
- 2. Rituals, healing and reintegration processes:** Rituals symbolise transformation, help parties develop a shared worldview, and facilitate innovative problem-solving.
- 3. Local embeddedness:** Religious actors, like churches, are integral parts of local society.
- 4. Institutional authority and trust:** Religious institutions gain influence through social service and trusted leadership.
- 5. Non-violence and relationship building:** Religious peacemakers prioritise non-violence, empowerment, human rights, and building strong community relationships.

First, the theological concept of forgiveness, defined as the release from sin, serves as a motivating force of action, much like the principles of social justice and responsible stewardship. *Second*, the practice of **rituals**, such as planting ‘peace trees’ in the border areas, mirrors the structured approach found in Farming God’s Way, elevating ordinary actions into rituals imbued with social and religious significance. *The remaining three characteristics – being integral part of local society, possessing institutional authority and legitimacy, and fostering strong relationships with communities and authorities* – position churches and church-based development organisations as well-suited for effective peacebuilding. Their institutional authority and deep community ties are valuable assets.

Nevertheless, to address potential biases and optimise resource mobilisation, the imperative of ecumenical or interfaith collaboration cannot be overstated. Such collaboration offers a more influential voice in the realm of conflict and environmental security efforts.

Thematic Brief 5 examines the ways in which CKU and Digni-supported projects contribute to disaster risk reduction and peace building efforts in the context of climate impacts.

Conclusion

In summary, the review findings underscore the considerable potential of CKU and Digni, in conjunction with their Member and Partner Organisations, to make a meaningful and positive impact in addressing the multifaceted challenges presented by climate change, poverty, and conflicts related to natural resources. The distinctive attributes and unwavering dedication to values-based climate action firmly establish them as pivotal players in the collective endeavour to create a more sustainable and equitable world.



Digni



**Center for Kirkeligt
Udviklings samarbejde**

SAMMEN SKABER VI HÅB

Introduction to the Review

Churches and other religious actors play a pivotal role in advancing climate change mitigation and adaptation, while also advocating for climate justice. These religious actors boast extensive networks that reach even the most remote and underserved communities, enabling them to engage with a wide range of individuals and authorities. In these interactions, religious actors act as advocates for the voices often marginalised in climate change discussions, including the rural poor, women, and marginalised communities. Religious actors bring a moral perspective to the climate change discourse, highlighting the ethical dimensions of environmental stewardship that stem from their religious values and identity. The notion of ‘creation care’ is particularly emphasised, underlining humanity’s responsibility to protect and preserve the environment as an integral part of their religious beliefs. This concept serves as a powerful motivator for religious actors to actively engage in climate action.

The focus of this learning review has been to identify the roles, practices, and potential of CKU and Digni supported partners and projects, with a specific emphasis on how these entities inspire climate action through faith and identity, rooted in the notion of creation care.

The findings of this review have been distilled into five thematic briefs that offer insights into how churches and other religious actors leverage their faith-based identity, values, and expansive networks to address climate change and promote sustainable environmental practices. These briefs draw from a review of CKU and Digni supported projects, interviews with representatives from Partner Organisations in the global South, interviews with external stakeholders, and discussions that transpired during the workshop for CKU and Digni Partner Organisations, convened in Kenya in May 2023.

This review includes 5 thematic briefs prepared by international consultants from NCG, Marianne Jacobsen Toftgaard and Catrine Shroff.

- Thematic Brief 1: Climate Adaptation and Mitigation in CKU & Digni Projects
- Thematic Brief 2: Mobilisation of churches and religious actors through theological narratives
- Thematic Brief 3: Churches and religious actors as mobilisers in sustainable use, protection and access to natural resources and eco-systems
- Thematic Brief 4: The role of religious actors as advocates for climate and environmental justice
- Thematic Brief 5: Religious actors and environmental security

Thematic Brief 1: Climate Adaptation and Mitigation in CKU & Digni projects

Background to the theme: Climate Adaptation and Mitigation in CKU and Digni projects

Climate change and environmental degradation are fundamental challenges affecting communities in developing countries in the pursuit of sustainable development. CKU and Digni have both identified climate change and environment as a key area to address in their development work. Both organisations understand their work on climate change and environment from the perspective of environmental stewardship and care for the non-human world (ref. Digni & CKU strategies). From conversations with stakeholders, we understand environmental stewardship as the nurturing and caring relationship humans extend to the non-human world as entrusted by God (ref. *Abundant Community theology: working towards environmental and economic sustainability, 2022, Tearfund*).

In its climate change strategy CKU emphasises that there is a need to base development interventions on thorough risk assessments. Such assessments should consider both the effects of climate change in the area of intervention and the impact on the target group/communities. Based on such risk assessments the intervention activities can be focused on strengthening the ability of communities to cope with and adapt to climate change. The other focus area for CKU is climate mitigation and environment as cross cutting issues emphasising the importance of taking care of the environment while mitigating the impacts projects have on the environment. CKU specifies its climate work to focus on:

- Responsible stewardship and sustainable natural resource management
- Risk assessment of the implementation area and the target group (risks and vulnerabilities)
- Climate adaptation (based on national adaptation plans)
- Climate change mitigation (reducing greenhouse gas emissions)
- Internal and external responses such as reducing CKU's carbon footprint.

(Climate Change Policy, CKU).

Digni's work on climate change and climate justice is based on a strategic approach that takes point of departure in working with member organisations and local partners for justice, human dignity and care for the creation. It builds on an understanding that local partners have close relationships with communities and the most vulnerable segments of society and that they are in a position to affect local power structures, norms and discrimination and bring about change on individual, household and community levels, as well as within religious institutions. More specifically, Digni works on climate change by focussing on:

- Care for and responsible stewardship of the environment
- Build resilient communities
- Climate justice and climate resilient development
- Risk reduction, equity and justice

The strategy will be achieved through:

- Awareness raising, learning, competency exchanges.

- Increasing the work on challenges related to climate change, sustainable management of natural resources and food security
 - Reducing Digni's own environmental footprint
- (Digni, 2022).

Climate adaptation, mitigation and justice work form the core of both Digni's and CKU's strategies building on the distinct role of faith-based organisations and religious actors, with emphasis on the extensive outreach to communities and representing the voice of the poor and marginalised that are most vulnerable to climate change. From a climate change and environmental degradation thematic perspective Digni and CKU support projects that work on promoting sustainable natural resource management, food security and climate smart agriculture. These thematic areas are closely linked to climate adaptation and building the resilience of communities to withstand climate impacts. Likewise, the issue of climate justice is an integral part of many of the CKU and Digni projects as religious actors support the empowerment of individuals and communities to achieve human dignity and represent the voice of the voiceless.

Both organisations recognise that there is a need for providing an external as well as an internal response. The latter means that CKU and Digni are working on identifying internal steps to reduce their own carbon emissions and integrate climate and environmental awareness in their own operations.

Target groups in climate adaptation and mitigation

CKU and Digni recognise that climate change is critical to address at both project and strategic level.

Both organisations emphasise the particular role that they represent as religious actors supporting the most vulnerable communities and individuals in responding to the consequences of climate change. This includes structurally marginalised groups as well as underrepresented groups such as women, children and youth (boys and girls), ethnic minorities, religious minorities, people discriminated against on the basis of their religion or belief, and persons with disabilities (Digni, 2022). Studies show that for the majority of the global population faith and religion is an important factor in their behaviour, decision making, and everyday life. All stakeholders in this review recognised that faith-based actors have a particular role to play as they represent the voices of the poor, the moral voice of society and have a wider reach into communities than other actors working on climate change in developing countries.

As organisations based on Christian values and beliefs, it is imperative for them to focus on supporting the most vulnerable and marginalised in society. Climate change does not impact all societies in the same manner or with the same intensity. Some groups are more vulnerable than others and have fewer options for developing coping mechanisms. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working group II report (IPCC, 2022) on climate vulnerability developed a vulnerability index based on 64 indicators covering various aspects such as social and ecological factors. There are thus many factors determining the ability of communities and individuals to respond to climate change, and it is not necessarily straightforward to identify those that are most vulnerable in

society. The report concluded that most climate action is taken at the household level.

Turning to the project portfolio, CKU supports 26 Member Organisations to implement 76 projects in the global South (status as of June 2023), and Digni supports a total of 88 projects. For this review, CKU and Digni each identified 11 projects with elements of climate change, thus a total of 22 projects. The projects address one or more thematic topics: mitigation, adaptation (including food security, agriculture, and natural resource management), livelihoods, climate justice, peace building, and climate resilience. The projects are implemented in 11 countries across Africa and Asia.

- Adaptation covers projects that address issues related to the adoption of agricultural practices to mitigate climate impacts, support communities in increasing food security, and improve natural resource management in context of climate change.
- Livelihoods oriented projects address the socio-economic situation of the target group, for example by introducing employment opportunities or increasing household incomes.
- Climate justice and empowerment are closely linked thematic areas because empowerment of poor and marginalized communities is a crucial aspect of climate justice. When these communities have more control over their resources and decisions, they can better adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.
- Peace building/environmental security in the climate change related portfolio relates to those project that either have peace building as a cross cutting/mainstreamed topic (such as all projects implemented by EECMY) or also projects that directly address issues related to for example land conflicts and land rights.
- Climate resilience projects include measures to reduce the impacts of climate change while also increasing the ability of vulnerable groups to cope with climate change through improving their control over and access to natural resources, finances, human resources, social resources, and/or security/disaster risk reduction.
- Mitigation projects focus on reducing greenhouse gas emission through adoption of renewable energy technologies or increased energy efficiency. It could also include nature-based solutions such as large-scale tree planting, however, none of the projects in the portfolio do so.

Theme	CKU	Digni	Total
Adaptation, incl. food security, agriculture, natural resource management	4	9	13
Livelihoods	5	4	9
Climate Justice/empowerment	2	6	8
Peace building & environmental security	2	6	8
Climate resilience	6	2	8
Mitigation	1	3	4

Table 1: No. of projects per thematic area and umbrella organisation

Table 1 above shows that most projects focus on climate adaptation followed by projects that improve livelihoods. The same number of projects seek to address climate justice/empowerment, peace building and environmental security, and resilience of the target group towards climate impacts. Most projects focus on several thematic areas such as climate resilience and food security or a broader spectrum of development challenges that intersect with climate change.

The projects vary in their approach to integrating climate change considerations into their work. Some projects integrate climate change considerations into the project design, whereas others seem to treat climate change as an add-on to projects, which focus on other areas such as agriculture. Furthermore, Partner Organisations use different strategies in implementing the projects, and vary in the extent to which they leverage on their characteristics of being a religious actor. The next section will present three examples of how CKU and Digni supported projects incorporate climate change themes in various ways.

Selected projects

Climate change in integrated projects: The Salvation Army Uganda

The Salvation Army (TSA) in Uganda is actively engaged in development projects aimed at poverty alleviation in Eastern Uganda, particularly in Namisindwa district. The project has a multi-dimensional approach, targeting various aspects of well-being and poverty reduction for household members, this includes initiatives related to health, economic stability, family relationships, the environment and family planning (TSA project document). TSA is delivering services to vulnerable households and communities through a family centred approach. In the project document TSA systematically elaborates on the main challenges faced by the communities in Eastern Uganda, and the effects of climate change are mentioned as one of the main challenges to achieving sustainable livelihoods, albeit in a relatively short paragraph.

The project works with five result areas:

- Environmental conservation
- WASH
- Food security and nutrition
- Socio-economic empowerment
- Civil society strengthening

Bringing these five areas of intervention together is thought to ensure improved social and economic wellbeing of vulnerable households and communities and creating an enabling environment where every person enjoys life to his/her full potential. There is no specific mention of addressing climate change or climate change impacts. And yet, the project can be categorised as contributing to climate adaptation and climate justice on several levels. *First of all*, it includes the promotion of climate smart agricultural practices to improve food security and prevent degradation of arable land. *Second*, it addresses aspects of climate justice by empowering the most vulnerable to hold duty bearers accountable and “influencing specific policies and practices that affect vulnerable people and marginalised communities’ ability to claim rights at an institutional level” (TSA, project document). The Theory of Change highlights the need to ensure that vulnerable people are enabled to engage in their communities and play an active role in determining their own outcomes – addressing a key aspect of climate justice to hold control over their own resources. *Thirdly*, the project includes activities related to early warning systems for disaster risk reduction thus addressing a major climate change induced barrier to achieving sustainable development. *Finally*, the project includes aspects of climate change mitigation as it includes activities such as scaling up renewable energy technologies to households promoting access to clean, safe and renewable energy.

In terms of the target group, the project document mentions that vulnerable households will be identified by using a Vulnerability Assessment Tool (VAT) although it does not provide further details on the indicators used in the tool. There is thus no description of whether the target group and/or the intervention is particularly vulnerable to climate change and no specific climate change or vulnerability risk assessment is provided. Overall, the project logic and the project description does not take point of departure in climate change or climate justice related challenges. Therefore, it is not straightforwardly apparent in the project document how this project tackles climate change making it difficult to draw conclusions, lessons learned or measuring impacts and results with regards to climate change.

Nevertheless, the integrated project directly addresses a wide array of climate change related challenges and climate justice aspects. The project thus positively affects the ability of vulnerable communities to cope with and respond to climate change and achieve sustainable development goals.

Climate change mitigation: Renewable energy training & entrepreneurship, Eswatini

This project is being implemented by the Free Evangelical Christian Fellowship (FECF) anchored at their mission station in Nhlanguano located at Pasture Valley, a Farm and Children’s Home. The project builds on and contributes to the government’s declared goal of increasing the country’s renewable energy ratio in electricity supply to 50% by 2030. Further, the project argues that creating enhanced energy access through deployment of renewable energy solutions will “place consumer and people at the centre of the energy ecosystem, thus resulting

in enhanced employment opportunities, entrepreneurship, energy justice and reduced energy poverty” (STREEC project document).

Overall, the project aims to provide a platform for people to gain skills in renewable energy technologies, and meet objectives such as poverty and unemployment elevation, energy access, sanitation and access to drinking water, higher living standard, gender equality and awareness and right to quality life (project document). The project activities are mostly focused on providing training and support for incubating smaller businesses. The project also includes training in Human Rights based on Christian values.

The Solar Training Renewable Energy & Entrepreneurship (STREEC) project is a good example of a project which promotes renewable energy solutions and the reduction of carbon emissions, while also addressing development challenges of the target group and alleviating poverty. The intervention logic is because poverty reduction contributes to achieving environmental and climate change goals, which again results in the greater achievement of development objectives. STREEC is a climate change mitigation project that takes point of departure in the national context and development challenges while using the opportunity that climate action provides to achieve development goals.

From an organisational perspective it is interesting to note that STREEC has developed a range of policies that guide the organisation, however, there is no climate change policy stipulating internal actions in the organisation will take towards using renewable energy and reducing its own carbon footprint. At the workshop in Kenya, STREEC identified this as a gap and identified it as an area for action.

Climate Change Resilient Communities: CLIMATES, Nepal

The CLIMATES project is implemented by the INGO United Mission Nepal (UMN) in collaboration with two local partner NGOs, Rural Community Development Centre and Dalit Help Society. UMN is a Christian faith-based organisation that addresses the root causes of poverty through inter-mission cooperation and collaboration. Climate change and environment is a crosscutting theme in UMN and the organisation has developed a climate change policy and operational framework. In addition, UMN supports its local partner NGOs in developing their own climate change and sensitivity policies (UMN project document).

The project description takes point of departure in the climate change related challenges in the project area and for the target group. It thus builds on a needs assessment, including interviews and analysis on community/household and policy level. Climate change as a topic is mainstreamed throughout the project cycle from project initiation to evaluation. The project context analysis is thus focussed on identifying challenges related to climate change and systematically goes through climate change impacts on: i) natural resources; ii) livelihoods; iii) impacts and trends of natural disasters.

The overall objective of the project is: “resilient communities mitigating and adapting to climatic shocks and stresses”. This will be achieved through

protecting, conserving and rehabilitating natural resources; diversifying livelihood options through climate smart technologies; strengthening the resilience of duty bearers, civil society and rights holders to cope with climate induced hazards. The project is guided by a Theory of Change which is centred on adaptation and mitigation to climate change (see figure 1 below). In the project implementation plan emphasis is on identifying climate change related impacts on individual, household, communal and institutional level, recognising that coping strategies and capacities differ and interventions must be adapted to the context and the abilities of individuals/households while taking a communal approach so as to ensure that climate change solutions are not implemented on a communal level and in line with government climate change policies and locally governed action plans.

The CLIMATES project has climate change impacts at its very centre of conceptualisation. It is a good example of how climate change impacts the livelihoods of individuals and challenges community resilience. The various elements of the project activities such as dissemination of climate smart agricultural practices, establishing agroforestry practices, climate-smart conservation of natural resources and dissemination of renewable energy technology to households (solar, biogas systems etc) do not differ from other projects in the portfolio. However, the project *also* includes activities such as awareness raising on climate change adaptation focussing on the intersection to gender-based violence, conflict, exclusion and health hazards; and developing and strengthening local disaster and climate resilient plans in collaboration with the government-led Local Disaster Risk Management Committees.

The CLIMATES project is a holistic, integrated project that is built on the challenges that marginalised communities in Nepal face in relation to climate change. It is a project that addresses both climate adaptation, mitigation and climate justice issues. A key difference from other projects is that the conceptualisation is based on climate change challenges, policies and opportunities rather than on development related challenges. Development challenges are seen and framed through the climate change lens and it is intentionally designed to address climate change impacts as experienced in the targeted communities and individual households.

CKU and Digni supported projects – achieving strategic goals

As mentioned earlier in this brief both CKU and Digni have developed strategies on climate change that they wish to achieve internally and in collaboration with their partners in the Global South. The question arises whether CKU and Digni achieve their strategic goals in collaboration with the supported projects.

Based on the project portfolio overview, the level of achieving the CKU and Digni strategic goals varies significantly. The overarching strategic objective of promoting an approach towards climate change work through “caring for creation” has, to a large extent, been incorporated in both CKU and Digni projects. Most of the projects include a level of “creation care” through adaptation, agriculture, natural resource management or renewable energy elements. Some

projects are more intentional than others in integrating climate change and for many projects “caring for creation” is an intrinsic part of project implementation¹.

CKU also states the need to base projects on a risk assessment of the implementation area and the target group as the basis for climate change projects. Only a few projects link their theory of change to climate vulnerability or climate risk assessments, and it is not always clear what kind of methodology was used for the risk, or vulnerability, assessment. Some projects include a risk assessment in their analytical or background description of the project area and/or the target group². Many do not include a specific risk assessment related to climate change. Nevertheless, the project overview confirms that all projects are implemented in areas that are highly vulnerable to climate change and support beneficiaries that are most vulnerable to climate impacts. It can be concluded that there is no systematic or streamlined approach or methodology to using climate risk assessments in the project design.

The project overview has also shown that CKU projects both address climate mitigation and adaptation. Although, most of them relate to climate adaptation rather than mitigation. Further, only some projects build on National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). However, the review has found that the majority of the projects relate to local policies and local climate action plans and are implemented in close collaboration with local authorities. As National Adaptation Plans are largely designed on a central government level and do not necessarily address local development challenges, it might be a more useful approach to design projects that close link to the local authorities plans and programs and therefore include less reference to national level policies or plans. While Partner Organisations might draw on the national level adaptation plans, their projects are based on local policies and local climate action plans and address the needs and priorities of local communities. This confirms the perceived comparative advantage of religious actors as change agents that are trusted, have high legitimacy through their presence at local levels, even in remote contexts, and bring their knowledge of local challenges into play.

In terms of achieving Digni’s strategic goals most of the projects fulfil the aim of building community resilience and increasing the work on challenges related to climate change and sustainable management of natural resources. Many of the projects also include an element of achieving climate justice as the target groups and beneficiaries are the most vulnerable segments of the population³. A few projects, such as CLIMATES, are intentionally designed to address climate change challenges, and include awareness raising and empowerment amongst beneficiaries on climate change. Similar to the CKU projects, there is a variety and diversity in the projects and in their approach towards climate change. Thus, the level of climate change integration in the projects is varied and it is difficult to

¹ For example projects using the “Farming Gods way” methodology.

² See for example: the Mission East project: “Advancing resilient local development in the Himalayas”; IAS project: “Sustained resilience against climatic shocks and stresses among vulnerable communities in Kenya”.

³ See for example: Light of Hope, Somleng Prey Lang project; Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Community Association, Community Empowerment toward Life Dignity (CELD).

assess whether the resilience of communities in relation to climate change has been built and whether climate justice is being furthered. More could be done to provide guidance for the projects in terms of how to include climate justice and empowerment in a systematic manner in the design of projects.

In conclusion, even though many projects include climate change and climate justice elements, there is a gap in terms of promoting a systematic, strategic and joint approach to mainstreaming climate change into the development focussed projects. This gap could be filled by CKU and Digni in close collaboration with their Member Organisations and Partner organisations, and would result in CKU and Digni would be in a position to better assess the extent to which the supported projects lead to achievement of their climate change related strategic goals.

Contextualisation

CKU's and Digni's project portfolio on climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience is characterised by its diversity. Some projects address climate change as a part of their work on improving agricultural practices of rural communities, others view everything they do through the lens of climate change and are intentionally designing the projects as responses to climate change challenges of the targeted communities. Most of the projects are tailored to the needs of the target communities, however, based on different levels and systems of analysis and it is unclear whether the target group has differentiated activities based on the level of vulnerability of the individual households.

The diversity of the project portfolio and the diversity of how implementing organisations include climate change speaks to the importance of designing projects according to local context. It also reflects that CKU and Digni currently do not provide streamlined guidance to partner organisations on how to integrate, mainstream, or design projects to take point of departure in climate change challenges to achieving sustainable development in target populations that are vulnerable to climate change. Examples of what such guidance could look like is provided below.

The projects in the review portfolio all address climate change to some extent. 13 out of the 22 projects do so through climate adaptation related activities (food security, natural resource management, agriculture). The projects thus include climate change topics in their design and activities. Of all the 22 projects 8 are 'intentionally designed'⁴ to address climate change challenges on the target populations that are most vulnerable to climate change.

⁴ Intentionally designed means the problem analysis, theory of change and/or project vision is based on a thorough analysis of how climate change impacts the area of implementation and the target group – thus identifying the segments of the population in climate impacted areas that are most vulnerable to climate change; as well as identifying the linkages between climate change and development goals.

If development projects in the design phase do not take into consideration climate change impacts and environmental challenges; and if development projects do not intentionally address these and their impact on the most vulnerable, then the projects may not be effective in achieving their development goals. Climate change in the form of natural disasters and environmental degradation is already impacting the lives of local communities severely and consequential. These impacts will intensify hence it is key that development projects are based on how communities are experiencing climate change and already adapt, and how they will be impacted in the future. Factors to consider when developing projects could include: how communities will be affected by natural disasters; the increase of conflicts over natural resources; communities current exposure to and coping ability to environmental degradation and climate change impacts; increase of project costs due to climate change and environmental degradation; raising inequalities in societies and in communities as those with least ability to cope with climate change will be further marginalised; changing weather patterns that impact on main economic/livelihood activities (IPCC, 2022; Tearfund, 2012; IISD, 2015).

Other actors and development organisations may provide inspiration to Digni and CKU on how climate change and environment can become a more integral part of development work, for example:

Community-based Risk Screening Tool – Adaptation and Livelihoods (CRiSTAL) was developed by IUCN, IISD, Helvetas and SEI) to support organisations in designing projects in climate vulnerable and/or natural resource- dependent communities. It is based on an analysis of the situation of vulnerable communities in terms of human/social factors; natural/environmental factors and economic/political factors. The tool enables project managers to systematically analyse how vulnerability and exposure to climate change manifests itself in the project area (<https://www.iisd.org/cristaltool/>).

Tearfund has developed a tool that provides organisations with a strategic risk assessment informing projects in terms of climate change and environmental degradation, risks and adaptation (CEDRA). The process is designed so that the organisations have a structured approach to identifying the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation as well as it maps the experiences and coping mechanisms of local communities. In addition, the assessment tool includes a process for prioritising the areas of intervention according to the severity of the expected impacts and the priorities of the target group. CEDRA was developed to support organisations intentionally design projects, which ensure that development, adaptation, and resilience are addressed concurrently (Tearfund, 2012).

(<https://res.cloudinary.com/tearfund/image/fetch/https://learn.tearfund.org/-/media/learn/resources/tools-and-guides/cedra-main-document.pdf>)

When deciding on whether and how to provide more guidance to Member Organisations on integrating climate change more intentionally in the project design, CKU and Digni could consider the level of capacity and resources available to the implementing organisations. Small organisations such as STREEC do not have the resources to implement large and complex analytical tools. There is thus

a balance that needs to be struck so that guidance is provided at the right level. During the workshop in Kenya the participating organisations established a WhatsApp group to support each other on working more strategically with climate change. Experiences and knowledge are being shared in the group and it is the impression of the consultants that there is a lot of interest much amongst the Partner Organisations to better address climate change impacts.

Digni and CKU have a great opportunity to engage with the global South partners to collaboratively identify how climate change integration can be strengthened. As part of these efforts, it is recommended to draw on the global South partners that have already advanced in this area and cede space for their knowledge, expertise and experience to inspire other global South partners.

Recommendations

Based on the review of the project portfolio, the workshop held in Kenya, interviews with internal and external stakeholders, and the review of external resources, the consultant team proposes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: For Digni and CKU to offer training for their Member Organisations on how climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience can and should be integrated into their development project design. Such training should both include organisational capacity building on climate change as well as training on how to integrate climate change in projects that are focussed on livelihoods, food security, agriculture or natural resource management. Ideally, this training draws on the capacity and experiences of global South partners.

Recommendation 2: For Digni and CKU to consider how they can design project templates that compel the organisations to consider climate change as a central factor, so that climate change is considered in the design, implementation and monitoring of the projects. Inspiration can be gathered from some of the partner organisations that are already designing projects against the backdrop of climate change (such as UMN) as well as from tools such as CEDRA and/or CRiSTAL.

Recommendation 3: Several Partner Organisations present at the workshop in Kenya committed to developing climate change policies and strategies on an institutional and strategic level. This is a key first step; the next step would be to link the strategic level with the project level. It is recommended for CKU and Digni to support the Member Organisations, and potentially their Partner Organisations, in the process of applying and linking strategies and policies in project-based work, for example by including climate related indicators in the project document templates and reporting formats.

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Thematic Brief 2: Mobilisation of Churches and Religious Actors through Theological Narratives

Background to the Theme

Religious narratives play a significant role in influencing the attitudes and actions of churches and religious actors in relation to climate change. These narratives are deeply rooted in the beliefs, values, and teachings of religious traditions, and they can shape the ideological reasons for engagement or refraining from engagement in environmental issues. According to the Terms of Reference, this thematic brief should explore two main concerns:

- How churches and religious actors can be mobilized to engage in climate change adaptation, mitigation, and climate governance through religious narratives;
- Assess to what extent selected projects work strategically with religious actors as change agents in relation to climate change.

This section introduces the main religious narratives that do or do not encourage engagement in matters such as climate change. The section first introduces to the three main theological traditions that do *not* encourage engagement in climate action, and then turns to the two main theological traditions that encourage engagement in climate action, namely social justice and eco-theology.

Religious Narratives for churches to refrain from climate action

There are three main theological traditions that do not encourage engagement in this-worldly matters. First, the doctrine of predestination - God has predetermined the fate of the entire universe, as well as our lives and our rewards or punishments. Second, the Bible predicts the end of the world and that things are going to get worse, more natural disasters will take place, and then Jesus will return in glory to judge the heavens and the earth. Following this line of thought, climate change may be embraced as it reflects that we are in the end times. Third, human beings are visitors on earth and must focus on their home in Heaven. These theological traditions focus on preparing human beings for Heaven, and may not find it relevant to engage in concerns such as degradation of the environment and climate change. The orientation towards the after-life implies that many of these churches do not regard this-worldly matters as the responsibility of the Church but, commonly, as the responsibility of the government.

At the workshop for this review, the group discussion on theological narratives regarded the last-mentioned theological tradition as a main barrier for churches to engage in climate action. The theological tradition is deeply rooted in Pentecostal and Evangelical churches to the point that in Uganda, for example, they are known as '*Balokole* churches' that literally means 'Churches of the Saved people'.

Social justice as integral to being a Church

This theological narrative involves a shift in perspective from the role of humans to the Church's mandate to protect, love, and care for the most vulnerable among

God's creatures. It is the theological narrative used by ecumenical bodies with a focus on social justice like the World Council of Churches and outstanding social justice protagonists like Pope Francis and the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu. It ties together care for creation and social justice with a view to empower 'the voices of the voiceless' and address the basic injustice that the world's poorest population contributed the least to the climate crisis, yet are most affected by climate change.

This theological narrative is associated with notions of holistic ministry paying heed to both word and action and the tradition of both churches and their development wings. It is the tradition of CKU and Digni as well as many Member Organisations and Partner Organisations. Similar to the project partners, CKU and Digni have strong social justice traditions and environmental stewardship has become increasingly important as the effect of climate change hits the vulnerable groups in the Global South who were already target groups for social justice interventions.

Eco-theology - Stewardship & Human-Nature Interconnectedness

Turning to the theological narratives that underpin many churches and religious actors' engagement in climate action, the notion of responsible stewardship is fundamental and with reference to Genesis 2:15 that 'The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it'⁵. Following this Biblical scripture, God created the world, and then created Adam to work with everything in it *and* ensure its sustainability. Thus, human-nature relations are at the core of God's purpose with man - and in a particular configuration: God placed humans in a position of responsibility over the creation, and, as all created things belong to God, humans are accountable to Him as stewards of the creation. Considering the importance of this theological narrative for faith-based climate action, the illustration below is common in eco-theology courses for a discussion of our role in environmental protection, and with an intention to move participants from the commonly held 'ego' to a 'theo' position. (It is also for this reason that we use the illustration on the front page of all the thematic briefs).



(Abundant Community theology: working towards environmental and economic sustainability, 2022, Tearfund)

There is a growing perception of salvation within eco-theology that Jesus Christ came to save the whole of creation, including ecosystems, not only humans.

⁵ New International Version (<https://biblehub.com/genesis/2-15htm>)

Rather than viewing humans as stewards of creation (somewhat separate from nature) it views humans as embedded into the web of life, an interconnectedness with nature where we look after nature and the nature looks after us. This embeddedness leads to a notion of creation as ‘our common home’⁶ - as phrased by Pope Francis in the encyclical letter on climate change and inequality in 2015 - an attention to ‘hear the cry of the Earth and the cry of the Poor’ as well as a call to all people of the world to work for the renewal of the Earth. The intention to embrace the whole of creation and renewal of the Earth makes this theological narrative associated with the notion of wholesomeness, inter-faith collaboration ‘for people and the planet’⁷ and holistic ministry.⁸

It is relevant to point out that many churches and religious actors engaged in climate action would draw on the theological narratives of social justice and/or eco-theology for taking different types of action.

⁶ <https://www.usccb.org/offices/general-secretariat/laudato-si-care-our-common-home>

⁷ <https://www.faihpans.org/2009-plans>

⁸ See for example the decade strategy titled ‘A Wholesome Ministry for a Wholesome Nation’ by Anglican Church of Kenya <https://www.ackkenya.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Daily-Nation-Newspaper-Suppliment-for-the-ACK-at-50-Celebrations.pdf>

Overview of CKU and Digni projects

This section looks into the extent that CKU and Dignity project partners draw on the above theological narratives in the project documents and in discussions during the review workshop.

The overall finding is that the project documents only to a limited degree articulate the religious motivation for taking climate action and Partner Organisations require prompting to do so. This was particularly obvious in the presentation of projects where the facilitators had to probe about the religious motivation and the role of religious actors in the projects presented. For example, Global Children Uganda made a presentation about an agricultural intervention using Farming God's Way methodology, yet at no point did they refer to scripture, theology, or a church. When asked about the role of God in Farming God's Way, they could easily explain that they draw on scripture to motivate farmers to work hard, together, and with a sentiment to care for the land as part of God's Creation. Thus, the theological narrative of responsible stewardship is part of the project and the staff can articulate it, when prompted to do so.

The implicit use of religious narratives raised questions about the ways in which Partner Organisations are faith-based - in the sense of affiliated with, supported by, or based on a religion or religious group - and it became clear that one Partner Organisation is secular organisation that engages local churches in project implementation. The Partner Organisations at the workshop represented three churches (FPFK and Salvation Army Malawi and Uganda), one church-based development organisation (EECMY-DASSC), one church network (Dutabarane), three organisations with vague affiliation to one or more churches (STREEC, Global Children Uganda, and International Aid Service Kenya) and one secular organisation (RECODA). The Partner Organisations in Asia are also made up of faith-based and secular organisations. This limited linkage with a church partly explains why theological narratives play a limited role in the operation of the Partner Organisations. Furthermore, some Partner Organisations acknowledged that they were rather disconnected from the church(es) that they are affiliated with. According to the national director of Dutabarane - a network of churches in Burundi - the conversation was an eye-opener and soon after the workshop, he gathered the member churches for a training and discussion of their role in climate action. This raises questions about the criteria that Member Organisations use in selection of Partner Organisations and the role of working faith-based in project implementation.

The opening session of the workshop included self-introductions, where participants were asked to express what they enjoy about nature. In the presentations almost everyone shared experiences that reflected eco-theological traditions, for example connectedness with nature and trees can give a sense of healing. One participant appreciated that the workshop was held in a green environment with free range cows and organic farming, as it gave him inspiration for 'greening' guest houses within his own church. Thus, the project partner staff are aware of their own motivation for working with climate action.

As the theological narratives are implicit in the project documents it is difficult to identify the ways in which these narratives inform the various projects. That said,

the main pattern seems to be a tradition of working for social justice of vulnerable groups in the Global South, and, as this target group is increasingly hit by climate change, climate action becomes a relevant supplement, and there is a growing awareness about eco-theological traditions.

The inquiry into the theological narratives underpinning their professional and personal motivation for climate action sparked lively discussions that reflected high interest in connecting theological narratives with climate action. The discussions led to two main findings:

- The project partners take climate action at activity level but not at a strategic level. Hence climate action is something that ‘they do’ rather than strategically connecting this to their identity as a church or religious actor.
- There is rarely clear connection between the theological narratives and the climate action.

A final point, there is little awareness about the effects of climate change on the churches. While this presents a more pragmatic motivation for taking climate action, it is no less critical for churches that are part of local society, rely on local resource mobilisation for operation and are expected to assist in times of famine and conflict. The case on Free Pentecostal Fellowship of Kenya below is an example of a church being affected by deforestation, which led to the church engaging in wider climate action.

Selected projects

This section presents three cases from the project portfolio that are representative of the ways in which theological narratives inform different ways of engagement in climate action. The first case represents the shift in theological narrative from an understanding of Jesus Christ coming to save humans to an understanding of salvation for creation and the associated change in identity, policy and organisational structure (Free Pentecostal Fellowship of Kenya). The second case represents a large church with a strong social justice tradition, where climate change has become an added attention at activity level, resulting in challenges of not having a strategic framework for climate action and a notion of environmental stewardship (Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY)). The third case, refers to a church with an internal divide between a mission structure operating with a ‘Heaven-orientation’ and a social development structure focusing on stewardship and social justice, and the ways in which the church has found ways to combine these theological narratives at the congregational level (Salvation Army Malawi).

From ‘Heaven-oriented’ to ‘stewardship’: Free Pentecostal Fellowship of Kenya

Free Pentecostal Fellowship of Kenya (FPFK) originates from Norwegian and Swedish mission societies, and regards itself as an Evangelical church. During the past few years, FPFK has been undergoing a change from being oriented towards salvation of the individual person (‘Heaven-oriented’) to promoting stewardship of God’s creation (‘stewardship’) with an attention to gender equality and peace building (‘social justice’). The change process reflects a shift in dominant

theological narratives from 'Heaven-oriented' to 'stewardship' and 'social justice'. Environmental change played a key role in this process.

Deforestation in a hilly area left one FPFK congregation concerned that their church, located at the top of the hill, would get damaged due to soil erosion during the rainy season, and they started planting trees within and around the church compound. They found the price of tree seedlings high and decided to establish a tree nursery that would also give income to the youth group. Christians bought seedlings to plant at home and their neighbours got inspired, leading to a demand for more tree seedlings and venture into a seedling nursery. The church leadership wanted to replicate the success at the regional level. Church leaders in other areas got engaged in providing such nature-based solutions to environmental change and also in peace building - often related to conflict over scarce natural resources.

The growing recognition amongst church leaders that socio-economic work based on Christian values strengthened the commitment of Christians and could therefore work alongside the evangelical focus on preparation for Heaven, led the national leadership to begin a process of changing the constitution to a holistic gospel that include work on environmental and climate change, gender equality, and peace building. A new constitution was adopted in 2018 and the draft policy on environmental and climate change guides the capacity building such as integrating environment and climate change in the curriculum at the Bible college, and climate action within congregations and through externally funded projects.

Request for integrating 'environmental stewardship' in constitution: Evangelical Church Mekane Yesu - Ethiopia

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) was established as a national church in 1959 and has grown a membership of 9 million people, mainly in the Western part of the country. The church addresses both the spiritual, the physical, and the psycho-social needs of the people through the church structure and its development wing; Development and Social Services Commission (EECMY-DASSC). The church structure and the development wing have increased engagement in environmental and climate change but dependent upon individual initiatives and not organized systematically. The director for EECMY- DASSC attended the review workshop and he realized that the church requires a policy on climate change with a clear Christian identity of environmental stewardship. This case attends to the importance of policies and strategic documents for growing climate action within a national church, and the ways in which climate action can bring together the church structure and its development wing.

Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) has been working on environmental concerns for 30 years and institutionalized eco-theology training in seminaries and colleges and initiatives such as the first week of July is a 'green week' where congregations plant trees in church compounds; a practice contributing to reforestation and the internationally well-known 'forest churches'. The church works with the government on its goal for large-scale tree growing.

While the development wing (EECMY-DASSC) supports the church in fulfilling its commitments to the government tree growing programme, it is also working on carbon emission reduction through clean cooking (mitigation), sustainable agriculture (adaptation), climate justice, and conflict resolution between communities over scarcity of natural resources.

Thus, the church and its development wing are thoroughly engaged in climate action but not aligned as there is no policy that is owned and effective across the whole structure of the church. Furthermore, the theological narratives underpinning the work by each structure have not been subject of discussion – the theological narratives of ‘stewardship’ and ‘interconnectedness’ are probably more profound within the church structure while the development wing puts more emphasis on ‘social justice’ - and there is no clear linkage between environmental stewardship and Christian identity.

EECMY-DASSC director charted the way forward: take initiative for policy development within the development wing, bring it to the attention of the church leadership so that they mandate a team or an institution to come up with a draft document, and after going through due process, the document is ratified by the general assembly so that it will be owned by all structures of the church. Once ratified, the church and its development wing can systematically roll-out and monitor impact in relation to action and modified identity of Christian identity in an era of environmental and climate change.

Integrating climate change into the entire Church: Salvation Army Malawi

This case attends to the ways in which Salvation Army has integrated climate change into its entire structure in Malawi. Salvation Army was established in Malawi in 1967 and organized into a church structure and a development wing with overlapping membership between the two organizational structures, the key office being the Development Secretary; the national liaison officer between the two organizational structures. Different from the previous cases, Salvation Army in Malawi has a policy for climate change.

The policy on climate change is rooted in creation care with Genesis 2:15 being a key scriptural reference and attention to the divine purpose of humans as responsible stewards of nature. The policy has been rolled out in the church structure and the development wing, and representatives from the two structures often work together as the church is the entry point to the community for development projects. According to the Development Secretary attending the review workshop, it is powerful when the priests in uniform talk about creation care and stand together with agricultural experts educating church and community members in conservation agriculture. It weaves together the theological narrative of stewardship with tangible environmental action, which gives legitimacy to the agricultural project and, at the same time, strengthens the local church through more members and more members that can tithe more, which in turn contributes to the sustainability of the achieved project results.

Although the engagement in climate change is moving ahead well, the connection between mission and development is complex. In the church structure, there are concerns that pastors get absorbed into projects and forget their core mandate, which is to prepare humans for Heaven, whereas the development wing depends upon pastors to engage in climate action for mobilisation of local church and community. Going forward, Salvation Army in Malawi wants to use the policy for identification of indicators in the mission structure that will then guide the identification of indicators for the projects.

Contextualisation

This section will contextualise to the theological narratives that underpin the environmental and climate change engagement of key churches and religious actors' engagement beyond the project portfolio with a view to provide inspiration for further action by CKU, Digni and their member organisations.

According to Rev Mash, Secretary to Anglican Environmental Network in Africa, member of Season of Creation, and member of UNEA Task Force on plastic pollution:

“As a religious actor, there is a danger to skip the spirituality of creation care and jump into action. Drawing upon religious narratives is possibly the most crucial aspect that sets apart religious actors from other actors within the field of climate action... To be a Christian you must care for the creation. We must love God, neighbour and creation. The response may differ between different faith organisations, but this is a core mandate”.⁹

⁹ Online interview 13th May 2023.

Global faith-based initiatives on climate action

Faith for Earth: This is a UN Environment initiative that is uniting religions around the world to focus on environmental issues. Based on recognition of the importance of spiritual beliefs and religious actors as drivers for cultural values, social inclusion, political engagement, and economic prosperity, Faith for Earth aims to ‘encourage, empower and engage with faith-based organisations as partners, at all levels, towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and fulfilling the 2030 Agenda’.¹⁰ Collaboration with the Faith for Earth Initiative provides an opportunity to ensure that faith communities can play their part in driving social and ecological transformation. The website provides access to resources on religious narratives across the world religions, inspiration for engagement at global, national, and local level.

Faith Plans for People and Planet: A digital platform for development of a comprehensive plan to make climate action an integral part of a church or religious actor’s strategy and long-term commitment. It makes scriptural reference to “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it” (Psalm 24:1-2)¹¹ and draws on the theological narrative that religious actors must respond to the ‘cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor’¹². Religious actors are encouraged to use their assets, investments, and influence to drive action on climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development over ten years. The framework covers seven key areas – use of assets; education and young people; wisdom; lifestyles; advocacy; partnerships; and celebration – and religious actors can choose which areas are best suited to their community. Faith Plans is organised by FaithInvest and World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) Beliefs and Values Programme, and supported by faith-based networks (including Faith for Earth) and secular organisations. It is an ambitious faith-based environment movement focusing on action; not identity.

Global Churches make climate action part of church mission

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is a communion of Lutheran churches that ‘are gathered in Christ and as a communion we live and work together to make the world more just, peaceful and ultimately fully reconciled’.¹³ For almost a decade, LWF has been committed to advocating for climate justice and equipping member churches to care for creation. Rooted in the LWF’s commitment to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, LWF Assembly passed a Resolution on the Commercialization and Commodification of Creation, which encourages member churches to become more theologically grounded in their teaching on human dignity and human-nature relationship and the value of creation. The loss of biodiversity is directly linked to climate change, social justice, and environmental security.

The Anglican Communion is a family of 42 autonomous and independent-yet-interdependent national, pan-national, and regional churches in communion with

¹⁰ <https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment/faith-earth-initiative>

¹¹ <https://www.faithplans.org/2009-plans>

¹² <https://www.faithplans.org>

¹³ <https://www.lutheranworld.org/who-we-are/vision-and-values>

the see of Canterbury. The Five Marks of Mission express the Anglican Communion's common commitment to, and understanding of, God's holistic and integral mission.¹⁴ In 1990, based on "our understanding of the ecological crisis, and indeed of the threats to the unity of all creation"¹⁵ the Anglican Consultative Council adopted a fifth Mark of Mission: 'to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth'. This fifth Mark of Mission has encouraged the growth of Green Anglican Movement in three provinces on the African continent - in Southern Africa, Central Africa, and Kenya - and the Lambeth Conference in 2022 launched The Communion Forest, which is a global initiative on forest protection, tree growing, and eco-system restoration that engages provinces, dioceses, and individual churches to safeguard creation.¹⁶ The Communion Forest global office is placed in Nairobi and, in Kenya, it strengthens Green Anglican Movement to initiate tree growing at the grassroots level of church, school, and community development.

The Roman Catholic Church: In 2015, Pope Francis wrote an encyclical letter (a short book) on climate change and inequality named *Laudato Si'* with the subtitle 'on care for our common home', which focuses on care for the national environment and all people, as well as broader questions of the relationship between God, humans, and the Earth, and it calls all people of the world to take swift and unified global action.¹⁷ The encyclical letter made environmental and climate change part of the Catholic doctrine and foundation of the *Laudato Si'* Movement that seeks 'to inspire and mobilize the Catholic community to care for our common home and achieve climate and ecological justice, in collaboration with all people of good will.'¹⁸ This mission is achieved through training both clergy and lay people as 'environmental animators' who are supported at both diocesan and congregational levels to train others by 'promoting ecological conversion' (for example the spiritual side of protecting water), on reducing carbon footprints and changing lifestyle, and raising prophetic voice on environmental change and climate action.

LWF, Green Anglican Movement, and *Laudato Si'* Movement work together within the ecumenical platform organising the theme and resources for the annual Season of Creation¹⁹. Both Green Anglican Movement and *Laudato Si'* Movement are young movements in Africa, yet by building the environmental movement into the mission of the global Churches, they have huge potential for becoming major change agents on climate action in Africa and beyond.

¹⁴ <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ <https://www.comunionforest.org>

¹⁷ <https://laudatosimovement.org/news/whats-the-best-2-page-summary-youve-seen-of-laudato-si/>

¹⁸ <https://laudatosimovement.org/who-we-are/>

¹⁹ <https://seasonofcreation.org/>

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the above review, the following conclusions and recommendations that CKU and Digni could take to further mobilise churches and religious actors as change agents for climate action.

Recommendation 1: Development of climate action policies in Member Organisations and Partner Organisations, preferably include climate action as part of church mission and be explicit about the connection between theological narratives and climate action.

The Partner Organisations that participated in the workshop identified the need to develop or complete development of an environmental policy as a strategic framework for climate action. The process and the policy would make the project partners more articulate about the religious narratives that they draw on and thereby better equipped to communicate their own advantages and the like-minded partners that they would be looking for. The process should emphasise the opportunity for bringing together the community development structures (climate action as a social justice or developmental issue) and the mission structure (creation care as a spiritual matter) as a basis for making environmental stewardship part of the identity of the Church or church-based organisation.

Recommendation 2: Initiate discussion of sustainability of Church in an era of climate change. There is a stark absence of a discussion about the impact of environmental and climate change on the Church as an institution, and responsible leadership in an era of climate change. Discussions of this topic would be an entry point to open the eyes of those, who are not convinced that climate change is real and affects everyone and every institution. It is recommended that CKU and Digni support the Member Organisations and Partner Organisations to initiate internal discussions on the effects of climate change on the individual church and identify appropriate measures to ensure sustainability of the Church. The latter could well attend to the ways in which climate action can support the church interests and bring together the mission structure and the social development structure, which often present an internal cleavage in churches in the Global South.

Recommendation 3: Institute eco-theology in theological training and in-service training. The lack of access to theological training on climate action in East Africa presents a structural obstacle for clergy to learn and later preach eco-theology messages, which will in turn delay climate action by the church and individual Christians as well as the collaboration between the development and the mission structures on climate action. It is recommended that CKU and Digni explore the opportunity for providing a basic course on eco-theology to the Member Organisations and Partner Organisations as part of capacity building on climate action.

Recommendation 4: Strengthen engagement in climate action through participation in faith-based forums. Considering the appetite for knowledge, tools and network on climate action that the workshop participants showed, it is recommended that CKU and Digni support Member Organisations and Partner Organisations in better understanding the sector on faith-based engagement in

climate action, and its opportunities. This is in line with CKU's Organisational Strategy 2023-2027.

Recommendation 5: Review the eligibility criteria for Partner Organisations to achieve CKU or Digni funding to ensure that they work as a faith-based organisation. The implicit use of religious narratives raised questions regarding the faith-based nature of Partner Organisations, specifically whether they are affiliated with, supported by, or rooted in a religion or religious group. For CKU and Digni to enhance their identity as based-based organisations, it is crucial that this aspect is clearly manifested in both Member Organisations and Partner Organisations..

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Thematic Brief 3: The Role of Religious Actors in Engaging Communities in sustainable use and access to natural resources

Background to the Theme

The vast majority of the world's poor live in rural areas and most of them depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. In Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, rural agriculture is characterized by low productivity due to limited access to land, water, financial services, technology inputs and markets; and, in recent years, climate change has led to change in seasons, prolonged drought, and flooding. Climate change reduces food security, in Kenya, for example, maize insecurity, is predicted to increase to 21% by year 2100.²⁰

Sustainable Agriculture & Food Security

The strong tradition of religious actors, especially churches, to engage in sustainable agriculture and food security draws on several theological narratives especially human stewardship of the Earth²¹, which gives man responsibility to 'eat from the land' in a sustainable manner, and a deep consideration for the poor.

The tradition was well-established before the onset of climate change. In fact, the concern with land use and food security goes back to the evangelisation of Africa. Christian missionaries were given large tracts of land by colonial administrations or local kings and chiefs for the establishment of mission stations in what were often remote locations, to build churches, schools and health facilities, and to support themselves *and* their converts through farming.²² Most missionaries 'lived off the land', mission stations were sites for introducing new crops and farming methods, and agriculture was vital income generation for mission societies and early churches. It was commonplace that Christians would farm church land as part of their membership contribution and some would gain new knowledge on demonstration plots to better feed their families. Still today - for example in South East Uganda where population growth and land degradation has led to land scarcity - Catholic women groups farm on church land to enhance food security at home and to provide for their membership contribution; as it remains common for rural Christians to give agricultural produce, not money, as tithe. The strong tradition of Christian actors in Africa engaging in matters pertaining food security should be viewed from this historical dependence of missionaries and church leaders on agricultural produce for themselves, their converts, and the operation of the church.

Furthermore, the right to food protects the rights of all human beings to be free from hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition, and Sustainable Development Goal 2 is about creating a world free of hunger.

²⁰ J Kabubo-Mariara (2015): Climate Change and food insecurity in Kenya: Does Climate Change Affect Food Insecurity in Kenya? Research Brief, Environment for Development (EFD).
https://www.efdinitiative.org/sites/default/files/publications/drb_15-05_dec_2015_revised_jan_18_2016_0.pdf

²¹ See Thematic Brief 2 for information of theological narratives in mobilisation of religious actors for climate action.

²² Alava & Shroff (2019): 'Unravelling Church Land: Transformations in the Relations between Church, State and Community in Uganda' *Development and Change*, 1-22

Natural Resource Management & Eco-system Restoration

Churches and religious actors have extended their strong tradition of engagement in agricultural projects to climate change adaptation, which includes introducing drought resistant crops and agricultural practices that address climate change impacts, and improving the management of natural resources in light of climate change thereby increasing food security.

Conservation agriculture is a common methodology to alleviate and adapt to climate change. It can be understood as a “resource saving agricultural crop production concept that strives to achieve acceptable profits together with high and sustained productivity levels while concurrently conserving the environment”²³. In addition to being an integrated approach to agriculture cultivation that helps enhance food security, conserve biodiversity, and preserve eco-systems, conservation agriculture practices are helpful in making farming systems more resilient to climate change. It can comprise of wide-ranging practices such as management of farm animals, combined cultivation of agricultural crops and trees as agroforestry, management of watershed, fallows improvement, and management of areas which are reserved for the local community.²⁴

A first step for addressing climate change impacts on food security, agricultural practices and natural resource management, is to conduct a climate risk assessment, and then select conservation agriculture practices appropriate for the agroecological conditions and socio-economic realities in the area of implementation. It is important to have a gender lens as women and men experience differentiated effects from climate change due to their different social positioning, roles, and physical characteristics. According to a recent report from OECD Environmental Directorate:

*‘Women around the world are disproportionately affected by environmental factors: climate change, deforestation, land degradation, growing water scarcity, and inadequate sanitation and other infrastructure. This is especially the case in developing countries and rural communities, where women may have more limited access to natural resources, face barriers to decent work and finance, and are more likely to shoulder an over-proportionate share of unpaid work’.*²⁵

According to FAO, land is the most important household asset for supporting agricultural production and providing food security and nutrition, and women are significantly disadvantaged relative to men with regard to their land rights.²⁶ It is well-established that securing better land rights for women often bring better

²³ FAO REOSA 2010

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ OECD (2022), *Gender and the Environment. Building the evidence base and advancing policy actions to achieve the SDGs*, OEC Environment Directorate

²⁶ FAO (2018): The gender gap in land rights. www.fao.org/3/I8796EN/i8796en.pdf

outcomes for them and their families, including food security.²⁷ The difficulty to change inheritance patterns and grow women’s access to land should not be underestimated, yet some religious actors may address this sensitive issue due to their position towards cultural leaders. This brief will look into women’s access to land from a food security and livelihoods perspective, whereas Thematic Brief 4 looks into the role of religious actors as advocates for climate justice, including women’s access to land.

The following section provides an overview of the extent to which CKU and Digni supported projects address food security, livelihoods and resilience in relation to climate change, and the ways in which they engage communities, especially the incorporation of churches, church leaders, and faith.

Overview of CKU and Digni projects

This thematic brief is based on the review of 22 projects that are supported by either CKU or Digni. The data is sourced from the project documents and the interaction at the workshop held during this review as well as interviews with key religious actors within the sector of climate change and religious actors.

The overall finding is that a total of 18 out of the 22 projects work within this thematic area to achieve changes that addresses the needs and priorities of the projects’ target groups. The table below indicates the main topics of interests are food security, livelihoods, and climate resilience; it is notable that several projects address more than one of the three main topics.

Livelihoods	Food security	Climate resilience
15	14	9

Table 1: Number of projects engaged in climate change adaptation divided by topics.

Considering the consequences of climate change on food security in developing countries, it follows that most of the projects address a key challenge for rural communities to have ‘the daily bread’. It is a clear pattern that projects focusing on food security also address livelihoods concerns. Furthermore, there is a substantial overlap (7 out of 9 projects) between the projects that address food security and livelihoods, and the projects focusing on building climate resilience.

CKU and Digni fund different livelihood methodologies. CKU mostly (five out of six projects) use access to finance - Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLA) - whereas Digni has funded one such project. The other eight projects funded by Digni use food production or income generation. The use of different approaches could form the basis for mutual learning between the two umbrella organisations.

The table below shows that 11 out of 18 projects work towards empowerment of women to take on leadership positions, for example at group and community

²⁷ Ibid

levels, and four projects also work towards acceptance of women’s rights to land or ‘gender balanced land ownership’.

Gender	Women in local leadership	Promotion of women’s rights to land
No.	11	4

Table 2: Number of projects promoting women leadership and women’s right to land

Moving on to the ways in the projects engage churches, church leaders, and faith in food security and livelihoods projects– it is characteristic that most projects only engage churches in the mobilisation of beneficiaries and ascribe certain roles to church leaders such as influencers on women’s rights towards cultural leaders. As aspects of church or faith is otherwise hardly mentioned, the involvement of churches seems practical rather than spiritual, and it is difficult to grasp the ways in which some projects are ‘faith-based’. During the workshop for this review, Partner Organisations made a presentation about their project within this thematic area, which led to agreement that for many of them, the unique positioning of their work as religious actors is rather elusive. It was an eye-opener that formed the basis of discussion and group work on how to strengthen their unique positioning. Two key areas of interest were to work closer with churches on incorporation of faith as a driver of behaviour change and bring closer church operation and project implementation for enhanced impact and sustainability. This included the two Partner Organisations from Tanzania and Burundi, and the next section will look into their projects as well as one project from Asia.

Selected projects

This section presents three cases from the project portfolio, which represent different ways of engaging communities in sustainable use and access to natural resources and ecosystem restoration. Furthermore, the three projects represent different types of religious actors’ engagement:

1. A local NGO with no religious affiliation that works with the main churches for strengthening mobilisation and project legitimacy.
2. A church network involving church leaders as influencers on social norms towards women’s access to land.
3. A Christian organisation engaging churches in empowerment of indigenous people to ensure food security and forest protection.

It is characteristic that the three project partners organise farmers into groups; introduce new crops and livestock to foster environmentally sustainable agricultural practices; attend to the disproportional effects of climate change on women; and assign churches a limited role within specific project components.

RECODA: Climate change adaptation through ‘A Basket of Options’

Research, Community and Organizational Development Association (RECODA) is a Tanzanian NGO that has been working with Projekt Ulandshjælp til Selvhjælp (PULS) and the Rockwool Foundation on the development of an agricultural

extension approach called Rural Initiatives for Participatory Agricultural Transformation (RIPAT). RIPAT aims to close the agricultural technology gap as a means of improving livelihoods and self-support among rural small-scale farmers.²⁸ A RIPAT project involves mobilisation of smallholder farmers to form producer groups, transfer a 'basket of agricultural technology options' to them, and facilitate the graduation of these groups into producer associations.

The project in focus was implemented between 2017 and 2020 in rural Arusha, Northern Tanzania, where population growth and poor agricultural methods contribute to increasing poverty and food insecurity among small-scale farmers. The impact of climate change was taken into consideration in the needs analysis - especially the forecast of more frequent drought - and the response was to enhance community resilience to manage drought through conservation agriculture, plant drought resistant crops, improve rainwater infiltration through contour cultivation, and improving soil water retention through farmyard manure.

According to the evaluation report²⁹, the project achieved mobilisation of 12 RIPAT groups where farmers were presented a 'basket of options' for improving their agricultural practices as well as their livelihoods. These options included, amongst other, conservation agriculture, Irish potatoes as a cash crop, livestock, agroforestry and Village Loan and Saving Associations. Towards the end of the project, the farmer groups established a producer cooperative and the Village Loan and Saving Associations formed a Village Loan and Saving Federation providing access to bigger loans.

The project also set out to enhance gender balance, and while this was achieved both in relation to women participation in farmer groups and leadership of the same, there was limited progress for women to get ownership of land and other household assets, which is a required collateral for credit.

PULS is a Christian NGO and RECODA works with churches to help mobilise producer groups. The most common churches in the project area are Tanzanian Assemblies of God and the Lutheran Evangelical Church of Tanzania; the project worked with these churches for mobilisation of some of the beneficiaries, to heighten the legitimacy of the project, and enhance sustainability. During the workshop held for this review, RECODA representatives became aware of their limited 'faith-based' operation and after a group work session, they presented ambitions to develop strategic partnership with churches and religious actors on climate change, which would churches have set climate change measures for their own operation and inclusion of faith as motivation for behaviour change.

Dutabarane: Food Security & Gender Balance

Dutabarane is a network of 32 member churches in Burundi working on poverty reduction, gender inequality and food insecurity in partnership with Baptist Union

²⁸ J.M. Vesterager et.al (2017): *The RIPAT manual – Rural Initiatives for Participatory Agricultural Transformation*, Second edition. World Vision Tanzania and RECODA. Arusha, Tanzania, page 19

²⁹ RECODA, Evaluation report (2022): *Making the Leeward Green Again – Mobilising Communities in Likamba Area for Livelihood Improvement and Resilience*.

of Denmark. The project in focus also uses the RIPAT methodology³⁰ to enhance food security and livelihoods through conservation agriculture, increased productivity, market linkages, and VSLAs among women and youth farmers in one commune.

The project document recognises the challenges of climate change and refers to a USAID study, which states that 'climate change models forecast that in the future, Burundi will encounter more severe weather conditions marked by high winds, hail and prolonged drought. This issue requires that the Government of Burundi and donors invest in the growth and promotion of new varieties of seed and animal stock that are adaptable to climate change and encourage climate-smart crops and livestock production techniques.'³¹ Conservation agriculture includes new ways of soil protection, establishing kitchen gardens, constructing compost and generating organic manure at the household level as well as establishing post-harvest storage and sales opportunities.

The project intended to work with church leaders as influencers on social norms and cultural behaviour towards a more favourable perception of women's rights, including their right to inherit land. At the workshop held during this review, Dutabarane representatives said that little progress has been made on women's rights, which they attributed to limited collaboration between church leaders, staff, and the other project stakeholders (farmers, businesses, and local government). For the representatives, questions about how they work with their church members were an eye-opener, and, after the group work session, they presented a decision to target the member churches for engagement on climate action through training, development of environmental policies and action plans, sensitisation of church members, and an annual conference with church and government representatives.

One month after the workshop held during this review, Dutabarane held a training for church leaders on climate change, Bible study on the relationship between man and nature; and peaceful resolution of conflicts over natural resources. According to the report, the church leaders made commitment to include climate change in sermons for awareness raising and to plant trees in church compounds.³²

Light of Hope: Community Empowerment & Forest Protection

Ponleu Ney Kdey Sangkhum (PNKS), Light of Hope, is a Christian NGO in Cambodia affiliated with Christian Outreach in England, and it uses a people-focused approach to community development in Prey Lang near the Mekong River. Prey Lang is the largest lowland evergreen forest complex in Cambodia, a massive carbon sink, a primary watershed, and the home of the indigenous Kuy.

³⁰ RIPAT aims to close the agricultural technology gap as a means of improving livelihoods and self-support among rural small-scale farmers. A RIPAT project involves mobilisation of smallholder farmers to form producer groups, transfer a 'basket of agricultural technology options' to them, and facilitate the graduation of these groups into producer associations.

³¹ C Collins, R Magnani & E Ngomirakiza (2013) 'Food Security Country Framework for Burundi (FY 2014-FY 2019). USAID, Washington, DC.

³² Dutabarane (June 2023): Training of religious leaders on climate change and the peaceful resolution of related conflicts.

The project aims at 'communities living in harmony with each other and the forest, practicing environmentally sustainable livelihoods' through collaboration with community groups as the rights-holders *and* local authorities as the duty-bearers.

Light of Hope carried out a climate change and environment degradation risk and adaptation assessment together with community members to identify the needs of the people through a climate change lens. The assessment showed that climate change has led to change in weather patterns that makes subsistence farming difficult, in particular, less rain has negative impact on the agroecological conditions for rice production. Furthermore, deforestation and expansion of commercial rubber plantations has led to loss of livelihoods from the forest, especially non-timber forest products. The adverse effects of climate change have increased interest in fish and poultry farming for income generation, and so the project intends to introduce these new livestock.

According to the mid-term report, some community groups have been empowered to address their challenges, for example they have started their own family pond to have water during drought; some women have been empowered to chair some groups; and some group leaders have established relationships with local authorities and express their concerns to the communal council to achieve greater support for addressing the main challenges of the communities.

Besides working with local authorities, community groups have started working with monks, local churches, and schools on tree planting along public roads and around the community ponds. Local churches are also engaged in quarterly meetings with the community groups on forest, livelihood, and peaceful coexistence. It is the first project for PNKS to engage a local church for the benefit of the target community.

Contextualisation

This section will contextualise the engagement of religious actors in sustainable use and access to natural resources for smallholder farmers beyond the project portfolio with a view to provide inspiration for further action by CKU, Digni, and their Member Organisations. It will focus on two key findings.

Firstly, following the finding that most food security projects in the project portfolio of this review have vague aspects of faith and church yet are interested in strengthening their unique position as faith-based organisations, this section will begin with an introduction to a popular Christian approach to conservation agriculture in Africa. Secondly, while some projects in the project portfolio make a comprehensive climate change assessment, other projects rely on country studies, hence the section introduces a faith-based strategic approach to climate change risk and adaptation assessment.

Farming God's Way: Christian teaching & Conservation agriculture

Farming God's Way is a type of conservation agriculture that embeds conservation agriculture principles of no tillage, mulching and crop rotation in

biblical metaphors such as God as the First Farmer and God doesn't plough.³³ Yet, Farming God's Way is more than a conservation agriculture technology; it aims to transform the farmer and why and how they farm. It is fundamental to re-orient a farmer's mindset – the lens through which they interpret and understand the world, including their relationship to the spiritual, human and non-human realms (God, neighbour, creation) – and grow a perception of 'farming as a spiritual vocation whereby producing food is a way of edifying God and loving one's neighbour, and caring for the soil is an act of ordained sustainability'.³⁴ The starting point is that God is the Creator of all (Genesis 1) and that God planted a garden towards the east in Eden (Genesis 2:8,9) and mandated mankind to work and carefully look after the garden that He had made.³⁵ Throughout the training, Biblical verses form a backbone for restoration of the local eco-system and increase in food security. Thus, faith is viewed as an integrating framework for transforming farmers' vocation and livelihood.

Farming God's Way is a non-organisational, non-denominational, apolitical entity made up of a voluntary relational network of people. During the past 10-15 years, churches and faith-based organisations have promoted Farming God's Way as a development intervention for improving food security, adapting to climate change, and restoring soil productivity for farmers in East and Southern Africa.³⁶ A few critical voices have pointed out that Farming God's Way can be prescriptive of agronomic requirements – the methodology being perceived as divine instructions not to be tampered with – stifling on-farm innovation and, the great attention to religious motivation may exclude people in need of food security and climate change adaptation yet with low religious motivation or being non-Christian.³⁷ That said, Farming God's Way has gained prominence among churches and faith-based organisations in East Africa operating within mostly Christian societies. According to Anglicans Development Services – North Rift Region, which is the development arm of five Anglican dioceses in Kenya, Farming God's Way is working very well and the focus on faith incorporates the church structure and help close the gap between the church (Anglican Church of Kenya) and community development work (Anglican Development Services), hence these interventions can support growing Green Anglicans Movement. Farming God's Way could be a source of inspiration for making creation care part of conservation agriculture projects by CKU and Digni Member Organisations.

Climate Change Assessment & Eco-system Restoration

Climate change and Environmental Degradation Risk and adaptation Assessment (CEDRA) is a strategic tool on environmental risk assessment for agencies in developing countries.³⁸ Tearfund developed the tool in collaboration with churches and faith-based actors in Africa and Asia, and has compiled learnings

³³ Spaling and Kooy (2019): 'Farming God's Way: agronomy and faith contested' *Agriculture and Human Values* 36: 411-416

³⁴ Ibid: 412

³⁵ G Dryden (2022): Farming God's Way. Trainer's Reference Guide. Second edition.

³⁶ www.farming-gods-way.org

³⁷ Spaling and Kooy (2019): 'Farming God's Way: agronomy and faith contested' *Agriculture and Human Values* 36: 420-421

³⁸ M Wiggins (2012): Climate change and Environmental Degradation Risk and adaptation Assessment (CEDRA). Tearfund.

from churches and faith-based actors that have used the tool at organisational and project level.

The purpose is to help organisations take a structured approach to identifying possible impacts of climate change and prioritise which climate change impacts to respond to, and how. Moreover, the tool enables organisations to address climate change in an integrated way, together with other projects such as food security; which Tearfund refers to as ‘adaptive resilient development’.³⁹ It requires organisational capacity to carry out such a comprehensive assessment and to use information about the past, present and projected impacts of climate change for understanding the likelihood of these impacts occurring and their likely scale of impact. Yet it enables an organisation to understand the impacts of climate change and ensure that the intervention is designed accordingly and results are monitored with an attention to the projected impacts of climate change, for example drought frequency for food security.

There is a notable emphasis on addressing gender in climate change assessment as women and men experience differentiated effects from climate change due to their different social positioning, roles, and physical characteristics. As women commonly take care of the land and children, women play a central role in building resilience to climate change, but are underrepresented in decision making due to patriarchal cultures where men are the landowners and take the decisions on family finances.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the above review, the following conclusions and recommendations are offered to support the efforts of engaging communities in sustainable use and access to natural resources and promoting religious actors as change agents for climate action.

Recommendation 1: Integrate religious motivation with principles of Conservation Agriculture in a manner that is appropriate to communities of various religious motivation and affiliation. There is a big gap between conservation agriculture approaches used by religious actors which either do not have any linkage to faith (such as RIPAT) or assume inner motivation for development of Christian faith (such as Farming God’s Way). It is recommended that CKU and Digni provide guidance to Member Organisations on how to integrate Creation Care with climate change adaptation. A starting point could be internal discussion of the theological narratives that human beings are part of nature (Thematic Brief 2) and incorporate faith as a driver of behaviour change in relation to sustainable use of natural resources, including food production. The notion of wholesomeness is open for Christians as well as inter-faith collaboration for people and the planet. The inclusion of religious motivation would strengthen the unique positioning of religious actors in relation to climate change adaptation.

³⁹ Ibid: page 11

Recommendation 2: Integrate climate change assessment in project design and reporting to enhance sustainability of project results - Undertaking a comprehensive climate and environmental risk assessment can greatly enhance project relevance for a range of stakeholders and better ensure that project results are not undermined by future climate change effects. Hence, it is recommended that CKU and Digni as umbrella organisations encourage Member Organisations to conduct climate change risks assessment during project development. To facilitate this process CKU and Digni could provide an overview of recommended tools such as CEDRA and also ensure that funding is earmarked for such risk assessments in the project preparation.

Recommendation 3: The emphasis on gender in the climate change literature as women and men experience differentiated effects from climate change is left out in the Terms of Reference for this Review. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are universal goals, as captured in Sustainable Development Goal 5, and it is widely recognized that addressing gender inequalities and inequities is a social, environmental, and economic imperative. It is recommended that CKU and Digni as umbrella organisations request for a gender lens in all climate change programming, for example including gender aggregated data and indicators.

Recommendation 4: It is recommended that CKU and Digni establish a communication and learning platform in relation to climate change - This Learning Review attests to the relevance of collaboration between the two umbrella organisations for mutual exchange of experience in using various methodologies to livelihoods and food security, among others. The Partner Organisations that attended the workshop held for this review, established an informal platform, which is rather active.

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Thematic Brief 4: The role of religious actors as advocates for climate and environmental justice

Background to the Theme

Religious actors have a distinct role to play in advancing the goals of climate and environmental justice. This role has been carved out and become more important as climate change has developed from being a primarily scientifically described problem to a transformative process responding to a crisis that requires engagement of all of society. Care for the environment and for nature has deep historic roots in Christian culture. We know of Hildegard von Bingen, the German abbess who in the 11th century described the healing nature of plants and is widely known for her views on the spiritual connection between humans and nature. Likewise, Frans of Assisi, Saint Patrick and the Patriarch Bartholomeus I have advocated for the care for Earth and the environment and humanity as intrinsically connected. “Our Common Future”, the Brundtland report published in 1987 which first defined the term “sustainable development” also provided a description of the role the world’s religions have in achieving sustainable development: “...[They] could help provide direction and motivation in forming new values that would stress individual and joint responsibility towards the environment and towards nurturing harmony between humanity and the environment” (Brundtland, 1987). Since the debates on environmental sustainability in the 1970’s and 80’, the challenges related to climate change have overtaken international debates on how to achieve a sustainable common future.

As the climate change debate grew bigger and the urgency of finding solutions to climate change increased there has been a strong push to widen the debate from primarily involving scientists, government representatives and representatives of environmental NGOs to include other stakeholders and adopt a “whole of society approach” bringing in the private sector, religious actors and subnational actors (cities). Religious leaders engaged in climate change have a significantly strong moral voice compared to other civil society actors. The below paragraphs provide a brief account of the historic engagement and the unique role and voice of religious actors in climate change debates.

An Act of Faith and an authoritative voice

The World Council of Churches has worked on climate change since 1978 and viewed climate change as a matter of international justice and inter-generational justice (WCC, 2005). Following the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol in 2005, the international climate change conferences grew in terms of public and media attention. The faith community representatives participating in the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP11 and COP/MOP1 for the Kyoto Protocol) made a statement, which has laid the foundation for many interfaith statements on climate change:

“We hear the call of the Earth. We believe that caring for life on Earth is a spiritual commitment. People and other species have the right to life unthreatened by human greed and destructiveness [...] The poor and the vulnerable in the world and future generations will suffer the most. We commit ourselves to help reduce the threat of climate change through actions in our own lives, pressure on governments and industries and standing in solidarity with those most affected by climate change. We pray for spiritual support in responding to the call of the Earth.” (WCC, 2005).

In 2007, a group of religious leaders (Christian, Muslim and Jewish) called on the Bush administration to act on global warming. Their motivation was clear, as one spokesperson said: “As Christians, our Faith in Jesus Christ compels us to love our neighbours and to be stewards of God’s creation.” From this perspective, it is an act of faith to care for the people affected as well as to care for the environment⁴⁰. As religious leaders engage in the climate change debate this topic including, environmental degradation, the support from the Global North to the Global South has been a frequent topic of dialogue between religious leaders and Heads of States.

Religious leaders have extraordinary access to political leaders for especially three reasons. First, most political leaders are brought up with a particular faith, and as mentioned by one respondent interviewed for this review, “presidents and political leaders also need to have their children baptized or seek comfort in the church at times of distress.” Second, religious leaders by virtue of their position in society have an authoritative voice, also with political leaders. Thirdly, top religious leaders are often, especially in East Africa, part of the same elite class as the top political leaders, hence they have personal relationships.

In addition to the unique access that religious leaders have to decision makers at all levels, they hold an extraordinary position to elevate the voices of the voiceless as the embeddedness of the religious actors in remote communities makes them witness to local impact of climate change to policy making processes.

Witnessing local impacts and bringing the voice of the voiceless

In 2014, one year before the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate (UNFCCC), the global leaders of large religious organisations gathered for the Interfaith Summit on Climate Change. They recognized that religious actors have a key role to play in ensuring that societies, political leaders and people respond to the climate change challenge. A core aspect of their argument is that faith leaders have an in-depth understanding of how climate change affects their congregations and local communities. The statement thus reads:

“In our communities [...], we see the manifestations of climate change everywhere. From our brothers and sisters around the world, we hear about its effects on people and nature. We recognize that these effects disproportionately affect the lives, livelihoods and rights of poorer, marginalized and therefore most vulnerable populations, including indigenous peoples. When those who have done the least to cause climate change are the ones hardest hit, it becomes an issue of injustice. Equitable solutions are urgently needed.” (Climate, Faith and Hope: Faith traditions for a common future, 2014).

Religious movements and the related organisations seek to empower the voices of the voiceless – both the voices of the poor and the voices of the Earth. As reverend Dr. Rachel Marsh from the Green Anglicans Movement in Southern Africa

⁴⁰ https://sciencepolicy.colorado.edu/students/envs_4800/wilkinson_2010.pdf

exclaimed in her statement to UNEA: “Hear the cry of the poor, hear the cry of the Earth” (UNEA/UNEP50, 2022). In the same statement Rev. Marsh challenged the international institutions working on addressing climate change by asking: “Can UNEP reach an isolated village in South Sudan? A faith leader can.” (ibid).

The whole of society approach

Responses and implementation of solutions related to climate change have evolved from being the responsibility of political leaders to being the responsibility of all actors of society. The Paris Agreement clearly established that the responsibility of tackling the climate crisis lies with all actors in society. Tackling the climate crisis can only be achieved through a multi-stakeholder approach providing and driving solutions on multiple levels⁴¹. Religious actors have ample opportunity to act as change agents through:

- i) their witnessing role with regards to voicing the effects of climate change on people and nature;
- ii) their promotion of justice to defend the rights of the poor and marginalized people; and,
- iii) their strong moral authority towards political leaders.

The work on climate change and the position of faith leaders in society is often rather similar whether these are Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Buddhists, Muslims and other faith leaders. This gives opportunity for fruitful collaboration across faith groups as they share common messaging on why it is important to act on climate change, even though their religious contexts differ. One such example is the multi-faith organisation *Green Faith* which was established to support the building of a joint religious movement working towards achieving climate and environmental justice goals. The foundation for Green Faith and other initiatives is that protecting the natural environment and people is part of caring for the divine creation. Other initiatives that bring together religion and climate change include: Faith4Earth, Renew our World, and the workstream WECARE under the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD).

These movements are – to a large extent – top-down initiatives and do not necessarily provide a reflection of to what extent advocacy for the voiceless is being practiced at the grassroots level. How are implementing organisations advocating for the rights of the voiceless in addressing climate change challenges that occur at a local level? And to what extent do they support the empowerment of marginalized groups to better cope with climate change? And what internal advocacy needs to be done in the organisations and in religious institutions to lead by example? How are the voices of local communities elevated to other levels to enact systemic change?

The following section provides an overview of the extent to which CKU and Digni supported projects use advocacy to raise the voices of the most vulnerable and work towards climate justice for the parts of society that will be impacted most

⁴¹ For a more detailed account of the multi-stakeholder approach within the UNFCCC please see: <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/introduction-climate-action/history-non-party-stakeholder-engagement>

by climate change. The section also discusses how the projects make use of the specific role that they hold as change agents.

Overview of CKU and Digni projects

This thematic brief is based on the review of 22 projects that are supported by either CKU or Digni. Thirteen out of the 22 projects include advocacy activities and/or strategies to achieve changes that address the needs and priorities of the projects' target groups. This could both be changes in relation to climate change and environmental degradation and/or changes in relation to a target group's ability to cope with climate change and/or environmental degradation.

Table 1 below shows that the organisations supported by CKU and Digni are primarily engaged in conducting advocacy activities related to securing/promoting the interests of their stakeholders in relation to land rights and natural resources as well as broader issues such as promoting climate justice and women rights. Less advocacy is conducted with a view to ensuring a greater representation of the beneficiaries in decision-making processes led by authorities

Advocacy topics	Climate Justice (broadly defined)	Land Rights & Access to Natural Resources	Access to decision-making processes
No.	7	11	4

Table 1: Number of organisations engaged in advocacy divided by topics.

The table below indicates at what level the supported projects conduct advocacy and the main topics of interest. The data is sourced both from the project documents and from presentations given at the workshop held in Kenya. The tables summarise the activities per organisation and not per project. Some projects and organisations conduct advocacy on multiple topics and at several levels.

Level of Advocacy	Local	National	International
No.	13	4	2

Table 2: Number of organisations engaged in advocacy at various policy- and decision-making levels.

Table 2 shows that the organisations primarily conduct advocacy at the local level, by for example engaging with local authorities. This corresponds well with one of the main strengths of religious actors, namely to represent the voices of the poor in local communities. A few organisations bring these voices to national level policy- and/or decision-making processes and two organisations also engage in advocacy at international level for example by participating in UN-level conferences and meetings.

Advocacy in CKU and Digni

Advocacy is generally defined as activities and strategies aimed at achieving structural change such as change in policies, cultural norms, legislation, and resource allocation. Advocacy is carried out by amplifying the voices of those that are not heard in decision-making processes and where such marginalisation has profound effects on their lives. CKU follows this line of thinking and defines advocacy as: “strategic action to influence political processes aimed at bringing about sustainable change in favour of the poor and marginalized.” (CKU, Advocacy Policy). CKU also spells out that advocacy can take place at various level including addressing the structural causes of poverty; influencing processes and decisions at all levels; empowering those affected and providing a voice to the most vulnerable (ibid).

Although Digni does not have an advocacy policy, the above definition corresponds to Digni’s approach to advocacy and empowerment. In Digni’s Strategic Action Plan, 2023-2027 change happens through activities that: “challenge and change the conditions that maintain unjust and discriminatory social relations and inequalities of opportunities, outcomes, norms and practices.” (Digni’s Strategic Action Plan, 2023-2027). The strategy further describes that this change will come about through the empowerment of people by using a rights-based and asset-based approaches, mobilizing local resources, actively engaging in networking, seeking strategic alliances with multiple others and cooperating with and challenging the authorities.

An important aspect of climate justice advocacy is for the most vulnerable groups to achieve greater control over resources (natural, social, human, financial) and better access to, and meaningful participation in, decision-making processes. Thus, the level of control over resources is a significant lever in terms of being able to cope with climate impacts and to develop climate resilient local solutions.

The CKU and Digni supported projects have ample opportunity to act as change agents for the most vulnerable groups who are most often the main project beneficiaries. As table 1 and 2 show, many of the supported projects already engage in advocacy especially on the local level. The advocacy work that is being conducted draws on the strengths that religious actors have, including:

- Witnessing role – they have large outreach into remote communities and are present at local levels.
- Voice of the voiceless – they represent the members of their communities which include the poor, vulnerable and marginalised segments of society.
- Authoritative voice – they have access to decision-makers and are listened to.
- Ability to gather people.

The project review shows that many of the implementing organisations, albeit to various degrees, already have strong collaborative relationships with local government authorities and engage regularly with decision-makers on how to improve the conditions of the poorest. Some of the projects also interact with national governments and a few participate in global policy discussions. Many

of the organisations recognize that they need to conduct internal advocacy so that institutional and organizational decision-making structures become aware of the impacts of climate change on the church; and the necessity for the church to lead the way in terms of climate action.

Selected projects

The following section contains a deep dive into two selected cases from the project portfolio that are representative of the broad span of organisations and projects. The selected cases represent projects and organisations that have: i) a strategic cross-cutting approach to advocacy and empowerment at all levels (local, national, global); ii) projects that mainly conduct advocacy and empowerment at local levels.

The cases will thus be examples of how religious actors can act as change agents by making use of their strengths and unique role in society to advance climate justice goals:

- Witnessing role
- Voice of the voiceless
- Authoritative voice
- Ability to gather and mobilise people for joint action
- Ability to change the hearts, minds and behaviour of people.

The cases will thus provide the reader with an idea of how religious actors conduct advocacy purely on the local level building on their close collaboration with local government, as is the case with The Salvation Army (TSA) in Malawi. Or through more strategic approaches across local, national and international levels as is the case with the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesu in Ethiopia.

Empowering women and girls from the community to global levels: Evangelical Church Mekane Yesu - Ethiopia

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) was established as a national church in 1959 and has grown a membership of 9 million people, mainly in the Western part of the country. The church addresses both the spiritual, the physical, and the psycho-social needs of the people through the church structure and its development wing Development and Social Services Commission (EECMY-DASSC). The vision of the EECMY-DASSC is to achieve a reconciled, just and prosperous society and its services are delivered through local branch offices. At an organizational level EECMY-DASSC works on four main thematic pillars with Gender, Disaster Risk Reduction, Care for the Environment and Climate Change as cross cutting themes. The organisation aims to achieve developmental changes through i) the empowerment of women and girls, and ii) conducting advocacy to achieve gender and child rights. EECMY-DASSC has five projects supported by CKU and Digni. This case study draws on all five projects as well as on EECMY-DASSC's organisational advocacy strategy and approach.

For all five project documents, EECMY-DASSC has identified women and girls as the most vulnerable to social and developmental challenges with little or no access to decision-making processes and thus very little influence and control over essential resources. As indicated earlier in this brief the access to and control over resources is a key element in climate justice work. If the project beneficiaries live in geographic areas that are highly susceptible to climate change impacts and have little control over essential resources to cope with such impacts, and if the projects aims to improve these conditions based on sound contextual analysis, then one could argue that these projects work on issues related to climate justice.

The EECMY-DASSC project documents include a detailed situation analysis with regards to climate vulnerability of the areas of implementation; the vulnerability and needs of the project beneficiaries; the main drivers of climate change and environmental degradation; as well as the main policies at national and local levels. The project documents also include a detailed gender and empowerment impact assessment. Deep-rooted traditions, lack of community awareness with regards to gender equality and human rights; and lack of attention by local authorities are identified as the major causes of gender inequality and a barrier to achieving development.

The projects' primarily focus on improving the livelihoods of vulnerable women and girls through income diversification and advancing food security. They typically include elements such as group discussions at community level to enhance the adaptive capacity and resilience of vulnerable groups; working with government stakeholders on for example disaster risk reduction strategies on community level; improving agricultural and natural resource management, as well as improving the access to clean and safe water.

Advocacy at local, national and global levels

At the local level, the branch offices have a solid relationship with local authorities which are both stakeholders in the projects and sometimes also beneficiaries of training for example in disaster risk reduction strategies. Advocacy towards local authorities and duty bearers has been organized in collaboration with other religious actors in the communities such as elders and representatives from Muslim organisations. In a joint effort the inter-faith community group is raising the awareness of duty bearers on gender equality, gender rights and gender-based violence. Likewise, such groups work jointly on improving the access of women to decision-making fora, for example, by training in public speaking, raising community awareness on the rights of women, and ensuring that their male counterpart can advocate for the rights of women in public settings. They have thus focused on the empowerment of vulnerable and marginalized groups using an inter-faith approach.

At the national level, the EECMY-DASSC is engaged in the national Green Legacy Initiative initiated by the Ethiopian Prime Minister that aims at building a green and climate-resilient country through agro-forestry initiatives, forest sector development, greening and renewal of urban areas, and integrated water and soil resource management. EECMY-DASSC uses their local experiences in

influencing the implementation of the Green Legacy Initiative so that it responds to the priorities of the most vulnerable. Besides climate change, peace building is a foundational topic for EECMY-DASSC and part of all advocacy work at national level. The EECMY has been able to continue working in conflict areas supporting local communities due to their ability to promote peaceful dialogue between parties of the conflict and by focusing on their objective of supporting local communities. According to representatives from EECMY-DASSC, religious leaders are given space to advance peacebuilding and justice initiatives because they are recognized as important social actors with a neutral position in relation to conflicts. Likewise, the EECMY-DASSC provides comments and inputs to national policies related to climate change. There is however uncertainty to what extent such views are reflected in national policies. Thus, the work on national level seems quite effective with regards to peace building efforts and to supporting government-led greening initiatives (caring for the environment), while there is less evidence of the impact on influencing national policies to include greater references to the priorities of the poor. This is limited impact on national policy making probably does not differ from the effectiveness of policy focused advocacy efforts by other civil society organisations.

At the global level, the EECMY-DASSC is an active member of ACT Alliance and regularly participates in international forums representing the voices of their community. At this level, EECMY-DASSC and the ACT Alliance focus on strategic policy goals related to climate change adaptation and financing for loss and damage. Within the national ACT Alliance Forum in Ethiopia, members discuss and formulate national and global level advocacy initiatives and programmes of common interest. At the global level, a major part of the advocacy efforts is focused on holding governments of the global North to account and ensuring climate justice for the global South. In this setting the EECMY-DASSC can apply its knowledge and ability to represent the voices of the poor.

The example of EECMY-DASSC shows that religious actors are very well placed to conduct advocacy work at all levels (local, national, global) and have tremendous opportunities to act as change agents also with regards to achieving systemic change.

In terms of the strength and the role of religious actors in climate justice advocacy EECMY-DASSC uses its large outreach to local and remote communities in their advocacy work at local level. They use the witnessing role by bringing priorities of women, such as gender equity, to local council meetings. They also actively promote the voice of the voiceless, both by creating community groups that engage with local authorities and by strengthening the ability of marginalized groups (women) themselves to gain confidence and learn to formulate their interests and concerns in a public setting.

The EECMY-DASSC in collaboration with the EECMY Church leadership uses their authoritative voice to promote peace in areas that are prone by conflict. And finally, the EECMY-DASSC also uses the opportunities they have, to raise awareness on for example climate justice or women's rights at the regular church meetings and make use of the fact that the communities regularly attend service.

The above is primarily referring to the work of EECMY-DASSC at the local level. At the national and global level, it is less clear cut whether EECMY-DASSC is using the strength of religious actors to the fullest extent in terms of advocating for climate justice goals based on their witnessing role, their ability to bring the voices of the voiceless and the authoritative voice they have with decision-makers.

Advancing the needs and priorities of local communities with local authorities: Salvation Army, Malawi

The Salvation Army (TSA) in Malawi was established in 1967 and has operated in the country since then focusing primarily on agriculture and food security projects including women empowerment and gender equality. Institutionally, TSA is organised in a church arm and a development arm with overlapping membership as for example priests are closely involved in the activities of the development arm at local level with both communities and government authorities. At the national level a “development secretary” acts as a liaison between the two organizational branches. Through closely interweaving the church and development arms of the organisations TSA is uniquely placed to credibly using religious narratives and church leaders in their development and advocacy work and vice-versa.

The project supported by CKU focuses on improving the living conditions of farmers (60% women) and achieve economic empowerment and self-sustainability. As noted in the earlier section, access to and control over land as a productive resource is key for improving resilience of vulnerable groups to climate change. This project includes a target on improving women’s access to productive resources and decision-making processes through raising women’s awareness on their land rights and making women’s land rights part of discussions with government authorities⁴².

In the formulation of their projects TSA Malawi maintains a close collaboration with district level local authorities such as agriculture development committee to ensure alignment with government plans and priorities. The project also aims at addressing key human rights issues with duty bearers, specifically: the right to food, agricultural extension services and good infrastructure. Finally, the project seeks to engage government community development officers and support their efforts to deliver development services to communities.

In conversation TSA Malawi referred to a wide range of local level advocacy efforts. TSA is thus deeply engaged in conversation with government authorities in terms of delivering emergency response after natural disasters as well as in discussions on repatriation of communities from highly climate impacted areas to more secure parts of the country. Likewise, the organisation frequently engages with local authorities to discuss how the needs and priorities of local communities are reflected in local budgets and plans.

⁴² Malawi is heavily affected by climate related natural disasters and one of the coping responses by government is to repatriate people in highly vulnerable regions to other regions, which generate critical discussions about land rights.

The implementation strategy of TSA Malawi, with a wide reach and the deep integration of TSA officers and church representatives in the project activities ensures a high level of community participation and awareness in all aspects of intervention. This also means that all involved officers can participate in advocacy efforts aimed at local authorities. Likewise, TSA highlights the critically important role of district authorities in implementation and sustainability of the project and in return government officials have expressed the importance of community participation to ensure success in development efforts.

The work of The Salvation Army (TSA) is focused at the local and national level and TSA is a trusted partner for the government at local levels in development efforts. TSA can thus balance advocacy efforts towards government entities with their status as key implementing partner at local level. This position enables them to put forward the needs and priorities of the communities that they serve and influence decision making to the benefit of the most vulnerable communities.

TSA Malawi is using the witnessing role they have and their presence (of both the development organisation and the church institution) at local level to reach remote communities and to represent the voice of the voiceless with government institutions on the local level. They are able to speak with an authoritative voice. Based on their role as religious actors and trusted government partners, they can ask difficult questions in terms of whether the needs and priorities of the poorest are being addressed adequately by the authorities – for example in repatriation programmes.

The review team has not found evidence that TSA engages in advocacy activities, or climate justice movements on the national or global level. There is thus no obvious connection or dissemination of local experiences, knowledge and insights to national and/or global levels and TSA is thus not necessarily achieving systemic changes in favor of the rights, priorities and needs of local communities and the most vulnerable.

Contextualisation

The following is based on all the information that was gathered during the review, including project documents, interviews conducted and discussions held at the workshop.

Based on the interviews conducted for this review, the statements and contributions participants made during the review workshop and the project documents reviewed - there is no doubt that many of the supported organisations are highly engaged in advocacy and empowerment activities at the community and local levels. They work on strengthening the most vulnerable and marginalized so that they are better able to raise their voices and put forward development priorities in decision-making fora⁴³. The efforts described in the project documents and further supported during interviews with the implementing organisations underline religious actors, such as EECMY and TSA,

⁴³ EECMY-DASSC; IAS-Kenya; The Salvation Army; RECODA; KIRDAC; UNM and the CLIMATES project are all powerful examples of organisations and projects that conduct advocacy and undertake empowerment activities for the most vulnerable.

are in a position to strengthen and support the groups most vulnerable to climate change (such as women) on the local level and thus challenge structural and societal inequities such as access to and control over resources (such as women's land rights).

During the workshop in Kenya there were a number of stories shared on how the projects and organisations secured “advocacy wins” for local communities and the most vulnerable. IAS Kenya and Salvation Army for example narrated how they had convinced local governments and local committees to prioritise the needs of local communities with regards to water management. They had thus secured better and more reliable water access for local communities through dialogue, access and influence on local government decision making structures. Religious actors are highly regarded partners of local government entities and work very closely with these, bringing about change in line with the priorities of local communities.

EECMY-DASCC told the story of how they train women to raise their voices about their own needs, and that they now speak more frequently in village council settings and are better able to influence decision-making, also at the household level. Religious actors are deeply engaged in empowering the most vulnerable and culturally/socially marginalized groups and this work is often at the heart of what they do. Serving the poor and the most vulnerable aligns with the religious background of the project partners.

The review of the project portfolio, the workshop and the questionnaire that was shared with project partners in Asia, however also identified gaps that could be strengthened to better achieve goals related to Climate Justice.

Identifying the gaps

During the workshop several participants explained that the main barriers for them to work more on advocacy and advancing climate justice are:

1. Insecurity in terms of challenging authorities and civil society space. Whereas most of the organisations include advocacy as part of their project activities and referred to close working relationships with local authorities, there is less evidence that they are willing to call out and challenge authorities. As one respondent said: “when I say ‘advocacy’ activities the government official thinks I will spend all my time criticizing them and would not want to engage with us anymore.” There is thus a sense that it can be difficult to put forward advocacy demands or asks as it might require changes which officials are not willing to make. A key question thus arises in terms of how the organisations can maintain a strategic partnership with government authorities at local or national level, while also challenging them when the priorities of the most vulnerable are not reflected or considered in decision-making. This question is also particularly relevant in political contexts where the space of civil society has been limited considerably. This is for example the case in Egypt, but can also be observed in other countries where civil society space is increasingly being limited by government ([Freedom House, 2023](#)).

CKU and Digni, as trusted partners to their respective governments, are well placed to support organisations from the global South in investigating the balance between calling out and challenging authorities, while also acting as a strategic partner to the very same authorities. Finding the right balance between constructive advocacy and challenging authorities, while also remaining collaborative will be key for the organisations.

2. Lack of understanding of key concepts, processes and related terminology. During the workshop it became clear that many participants were uncertain about what Climate Justice work is. The limited understanding was both at the conceptual and operational level. Advocates must have a deep understanding of their field of work, they should not only be 'fluent' on the terminology but able to 'localise' the concept and identify how climate justice matters to the communities that they serve. During the workshop the review team conducted a very short training on a few key concepts such as climate justice and equity. Concepts were explained both in relation to climate justice between the Global South and the Global North and in relation to the poor and marginalised segments of society and rich elites. It was for example explained that there is a difference between a single mother in a dry African country cutting down a tree for firewood to cook a meal for her children and thereby emitting 1 ton of CO₂; and 1 ton of CO₂ emitted by an upper-class white male from an industrialized country flying to Thailand for a holiday. For organisations to be able to use rather abstract concepts such as climate justice they need to be able to contextualise the concept and apply it to their own work. Similarly, there is a need to understand what policy-making or budgetary processes should be influenced and what the critical timeline is for these processes. Supporting the organisations in drafting advocacy strategies, including connecting local and national levels, would enable the organisations to understand their role, tactics, timelines, key barriers and opportunities for advancing the voices of the poor and marginalized and advance climate justice goals.
3. Internal advocacy and understanding of climate change impacts and climate justice. The workshop also brought out a disconnect between the church structure and its development arm. Whereas the development arm generally has begun to incorporate climate change aspects in their work; the church structure has not necessarily reflected on how climate change affects the church? Or how climate change could/should be internalized in the church structure. There is therefore also a lack of understanding and identifying a joint vision or goal for the church structure and the development arm in relation to climate change.

As an example, very few organisations present at the workshop had developed an internal climate policy or strategy⁴⁴. As a consequence, many of the organizational representatives identified the development of an internal climate change and environmental policy - encompassing both the

⁴⁴ FPFK in Kenya has a draft climate change and environment policy which needs to be adopted by the national governance board.

development and the church arm – as key for ensuring a more strategic and more streamlined focus on climate change in development projects. If there is no understanding of how climate change will affect the church as such, for example by impoverishing or displacing the members of the congregation, then there is little urgency to engage in climate change and work towards climate change goals at all levels and with all internal stakeholders on board. Developing an internal policy would not only provide answers to the question of: “how is our church affected by climate change?”. It would also support the development arm to understand better how they can work on climate justice at the field level and use their strength as religious actors when conducting advocacy by bringing in church leaders.

Likewise, there might be a need to support a greater shift in terms of how climate change is communicated within the Church context. Change and achieving greater awareness of climate change issues that impact churches can also be communicated through theology and rituals. This aspect of achieving change is further described in Thematic Brief no 2.

4. Working with others and connecting to other levels of decision-making. No organisation can achieve deep structural and systemic changes on its own. The project arm of the religious actors can achieve significant progress on development and empowerment goals at the local levels working closely with local government. If this work is to achieve structural change, then there is a need to ensure that the grassroots work feeds up to sub-regional and national levels and achieves changes at the systemic level in favor of the poor and marginalized.

Achieving change at national level is difficult – as several workshop participants exclaimed “government will make decisions that favor the rich and the economy, not the poor or nature”. A few project partners are engaged in national and/or international networks of like-minded organisations, but many are not and work exclusively at community level. At the same time, the reach and the authority of religious actors to engage with policy-making structures and individuals at national and international levels is huge. Pope Francis has 40 million followers on Twitter and engages in 9 different languages, the CEO of Shell has approximately 6 million followers, and Greta Thunberg has 5.8 million. The ECCMY church in Ethiopia has 9 million members; WWF International has 5 million members, globally. Even though working on climate justice is not only about numbers – it is also about structural power – there is huge opportunity for religious leaders to use their deeply localized membership, their authority and ability to connect with authorities through a moral voice and achieve progress on advancing climate justice goals on both national and international levels.

The priests of the Salvation Army for example preach in churches on Sundays and train community members on Wednesdays in conservation agriculture. They can embody the moral voice with the lived experience and communicate climate change experiences from the local level to a global platform. This requires strategic and organized collaboration and engagement with other actors in civil society so that policy and advocacy messages that favour the

poor, the voiceless and the marginalized are not overpowered by political and economic elites.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Against the above, the following conclusions and recommendations are offered to support the efforts of achieving climate justice goals and promoting religious actors as change agents:

Recommendation 1: There is a need to build the capacity of the partner organisations to ensure that fundamental concepts are understood in either local, national and/or international context. This could be organizing training on: i) how to develop and implement an advocacy strategy (including tactics, tools and timelines) on local, national and/or global levels; ii) what is climate justice and developing a climate justice strategy. It is recommended that Global North organisations consider how they can support their Global South partner organisations in building their climate justice advocacy capacity and related strategies. Such training and capacity building would also strengthen the organisations' ability to formulate advocacy demands and calling out authorities, while maintaining the role as trusted and collaborative partners with the same authorities. It would also enable partner organisations to work on ensuring that the valuable work they do on local level is reflected in national and global policies and the change that is achieved becomes systemic in addition to being effective locally.

Recommendation 2: There is opportunity to support partner organisations in the process of integrating and mainstreaming climate change and climate justice internally - in both the church structure and its development arm. Thereby the member organisations will be able to relate to how climate change will impact them; how climate justice affects the internal structures; who plays what role in achieving climate justice goals on local, national and international level. It is recommended that Global North organisations support their Global South partners in integrating climate change into internal structures and policies for example by sharing their own experiences in how this can be done.

Recommendation 3: Working with others in strategic alliances. It is very difficult to achieve structural change through the work of a single organisation. Much more can be achieved when working in strategic alliances and partnerships with other like-minded allies. Religious actors are particularly well-placed to forge strategic alliances with others as they primarily bring in a moral voice and the voices of the marginalized rather than being focused on complex technical demands or the advancement of specific regulatory mechanisms. The moral voice and the representation of the voices of the poor is particularly important when working on topics related to justice and empowerment and religious actors are thus well-placed to enter into partnerships with others that are less able to bring this perspective. It would furthermore also open up for Global South partner organisations to play a contributing role in climate justice campaigns at the national and/or international level. It is recommended that Global South partner

organisations conduct a mapping of like-minded organisations/networks at local, national and international levels and consider joining such networks for joint campaigning and advocacy. In such settings religious actors can contribute with i) their local knowledge; ii) their ability to represent the voices of the poor in remote communities; and iii) their strong moral authority and access to decision-makers.

Recommendation 4: While a lot of the advocacy work related to climate and environmental justice can be conducted in the Global South, there is a huge role for Global North partners to play in holding their governments accountable to historic responsibilities and related support. It is recommended that CKU and Digni as umbrella organisations engage their respective members in considering how to elevate the voices of their Global South partners with governments and leaders of the Global North at national and international levels

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Thematic Brief 5: The Role of Religious Actors in peacebuilding in situations of environmental insecurity and conflict through reconciliation, dialogue, and mediation

Background to the Theme

The impacts of climate change – such as more severe and frequent extreme weather events – are directly or indirectly fuelling social tensions and conflict as well as affecting ecosystems, societies, institutions and infrastructure. According to the UN Climate Security Mechanism, climate change ‘compounds structural weaknesses and hits hardest where coping capacities are already compromised. Populations most affected by climate disasters often also suffer more from other vulnerabilities.’⁴⁵ Thus, the interplay between climate change and socioeconomic and political factors creates cascading effects that in some situations can threaten human, national, and even international security.⁴⁶

Thus, the impact of climate change on peace and security is an important aspect to consider when working with climate change in regions that are experiencing conflicts. This brief focuses on the role of religious actors in peace building in relation to climate change induced conflicts over natural resources with an intention to understand how religious actors can enhance environmental security. The brief begins with an introduction to environmental security and the role of religious actors in peace building, and then turns to how CKU and Digni as umbrella organisations work with peacebuilding at a strategic level and an overview of how their Member Organisations work with environmental security. The next section attends to church-based and ecumenical peacebuilding in relation to environmental insecurity, as the workshop participants representing churches and church-based development organisations expressed interest in growing engagement in this area of climate action. The brief concludes with recommendations.

The Role of Religious Actors in Peacebuilding

Religion often promotes peace as a core virtue, with teachings supporting peace, justice, and reconciliation. These notions intertwine, especially in the Biblical notion of peace – shalom – that means more than internal peace, it includes external justice in society. Expressions of peace are part of *ritual practice*, like in some churches, congregants greet each other saying ‘peace be with you’ before receiving Holy Communion. Reconciliation may be viewed as an act of God – for Christians, that God initiated reconciliation through the death of Jesus Christ –

⁴⁵ United Nations Climate Security Mechanism, May 2021.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

and religious actors have a strong tradition of mediating conflicts, irrespective of religious identities and through interfaith collaboration.

There is an extensive literature on religious actors in peacebuilding and multiple ways to conceptualise how religious actors can contribute to peacebuilding.⁴⁷ The key elements can be summarised as below:

1. Belief in forgiveness and mercy: Emphasising forgiveness and mercy aligns with local communities' conflict understanding and is vital in resolving long-standing conflicts.
2. Rituals, healing and reintegration processes: Rituals symbolise transformation, help parties develop a shared worldview, and facilitate innovative problem-solving.
3. Local embeddedness: Religious actors, like churches, are integral parts of local society.
4. Institutional authority and trust: Religious institutions gain influence through social service and trusted leadership.
5. Non-violence and relationship building: Religious peacemakers prioritise non-violence, empowerment, human rights, and building strong community relationships.⁴⁸

First, the theological concept of forgiveness, defined as the release from sin, serves as a motivating force of action, much like the principles of social justice and responsible stewardship. *Second*, the practice of rituals, such as planting 'peace trees' in the border areas, mirrors the structured approach found in Farming God's Way, elevating ordinary actions into rituals imbued with social and religious significance. *The remaining three characteristics* - being integral part of local society, possessing institutional authority and legitimacy, and fostering strong relationships with communities and authorities - position churches and church-based development organisations as well-suited for effective peacebuilding. Their institutional authority and deep community ties are valuable assets.

While religious actors can draw upon this tradition of peacebuilding when engaging in the emerging field of conflicts stemming from climate change, it is essential that religious actors can sometimes have adverse effects on peacebuilding efforts. This occurs when religious entities become entangled in political agendas, often aligning themselves with ruling parties regarding matters

⁴⁷ See for example Susan Haward and Erin Wilson (2022). "Chapter 6: Religions, Peace, and Conflict" *The state of the evidence in religions and development*, Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities; Owen, Mark and Anna King (2019). "Enhancing the Efficacy of Religious Peacebuilding Practice: An Exploratory Evidence-Based Framework for Assessing Dominant Risks in Religious Peacebuilding" *Religions* 10, no 12: 641. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10120641>; C. Sampson (2009) "Religion and Peacebuilding," *Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques*, ed. I. William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press); Mans, Ulrich and Orman Mohammed Osman Ali (2005) "Religious actors in peace-building". *Stuck in change: Faith-Based Peacebuilding in Sudan's Transition*. Clingendael Institute.

⁴⁸ Religious advocates use of non-violence and focus on empowerment, human rights, and building relationship and community have been critical for the conceptualization of peacebuilding theory (Sampson 2009).

of environmental security. A significant potential for religious actors in the realm of peacebuilding lies in their capacity to navigate the challenging terrain of politicisation and religious fervour, grounded in an understanding of the intricate dynamics between politics and religion. This potential is frequently realised through fostering ecumenical and interfaith relationships.

Environmental security

Environmental security is the key concept concerning the complex relationship between human security and the environment and how this relationship can play out. Following the definition by UNEP's Faith for Earth:

“Environmental security addresses the question of how environmental issues (climate change, environmental degradation and natural disasters) interact with and impact on human security concerns, conflict and peace. It examines threats posed by environmental degradation and trends to individuals, communities and nations. Equally, it explores how conflicts can result in environmental degradation as the natural world becomes caught up in human conflicts, also becoming a victim in the process.”⁴⁹

It is a complex relationship where, on the one hand, climate change threatens peace and security in many countries and, on the other hand, human conflict may involve environmental degradation, for example the current war in Ukraine has ruined vast farmland, burned down forests and destroyed national parks.⁵⁰ Furthermore, conflict may arise from structural scarcity where different groups in the society face unequal resource access. Conflicts may also arise because of demand induced scarcity such as population growth and increased consumption levels that may cause supply induced scarcity whereas overconsumption may cause environmental degradation, collapse and limited availability of natural resources.

According to the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), it is critical to address systemic risk, make risk-informed decisions, and integrate Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in development policy and programming to enhance environmental security. DRR is ‘aimed at preventing new and reducing existing disaster risk and managing residual risk, all of which contribute to strengthening resilience and therefore to the achievement of sustainable development. DRR is the policy objective of disaster risk management.’⁵¹

⁴⁹ Faith for Earth, “Faith and Environmental Security. E-learning Course”

⁵⁰ <https://www.politico.eu/article/environment-scars-russia-war-ukraine-climate-crisis/#:~:text=The%20conflict%20has%20ruined%20vast,toxic%20chemicals%20and%20contaminated%20water.>

⁵¹ UNDRR (2020) Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Guidance Note on Using Climate and Disaster Risk Management to Help Build Resilient Societies.

Environmental security is one of the seven issues associated with human security⁵² and part of the 2030 Agenda, which recognizes that sustainable development is intertwined with peace and security. Progress on environmental security is monitored under SDG 16, which is about peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice for all and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.⁵³

Overview of CKU and Digni projects

CKU & Digni strategies

CKU and Digni attend to the importance of peace and security as a basis for development in their respective strategies. Digni's Strategic Action Plan 2023-2027 has a Thematic Goal on 'Peaceful Relations' which states that 'there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development'⁵⁴ and commitment 'to supporting work that fosters inclusive societies, in which all individuals enjoy equal rights, opportunities and access to justice'.⁵⁵ While peace is regarded as a basic condition for development, reference to 'security' is mostly in relation to food and water, and the growing food insecurity and water scarcity that hit poor people the most as they 'cannot meet their essential material needs and maintain security'.⁵⁶ Along similar lines, CKU's Climate Change Policy states that peace and stability is essential in order to foster good dialogue and cooperation on the increased risk of 'local conflicts over natural resources, which have significant implications for livelihoods and security, particularly for the most vulnerable people'.⁵⁷ Moreover, faith-based peacebuilding is one out of three strategic priority areas in CKU's Strategy 2023-2027.⁵⁸ Thus, CKU's and Digni's strategies recognise a predicted increase in conflicts induced by climate change, and emphasise food and water insecurity as key areas of concern for their target groups. The strategies do not use the term 'environmental security' - hence it is not expected that the Member Organisations and their partners use the term for projects that address these concerns.

CKU and Digni Member Organisations and their partner projects

This thematic brief is based on the review of 22 projects that are supported by either CKU or Digni. The data is sourced from the project documents and the interaction at the workshop held during this review. As this thematic brief is concerned with the role of religious actors in peace-building in situations of environmental insecurity and conflict, focus is on engagement in reconciliation, dialogue, and mediation in situations of food and water insecurity caused by climate change.

⁵² There are seven essential dimensions of human security: economic, health, personal, political, food, environment, and community. UNDP, Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security. New York

⁵³ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16>

⁵⁴ Digni, Strategic Action Plan 2023-2027, page 12.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid, page 10.

⁵⁷ CKU, Climate Change Policy, page 7.

⁵⁸ CKU Organisationsstrategi 2023-2027.

The review shows that 6 out of the 22 projects work within this thematic area, and the table below shows that current projects focus on more than one main topic in relation to environmental security.

Peace building	Disaster Risk Reduction	Food security	Water security
5	4	4	3

Table 1: Number of projects engaged in peacebuilding and DRR in relation to environmental security.

One Partner Organisations - IAS Kenya - had added peace building due to an emergent conflict over water security: the targeted communities were on the brink of conflict due to water scarcity: the community living upstream had built a dam to provide sufficient water to maintain food security, yet the community living down-stream hardly got any water and would face great insecurity if the dam was not dissolved. IAS Kenya engaged with the local authorities and the community to settle the issue peacefully.

Somewhat similar for FPFK in Kenya during the prolonged drought: deforestation in the highlands of Kericho has led to surface water run off to the lowlands in Kisumu and increased water scarcity, which may exacerbate political tensions between Kalenjin and Luo communities; FPFK engages religious leaders and youth from both sides in planting 'peace trees' in the borderland as part of conflict prevention that also promotes tree farming, agroforestry, and more reliable water sources. The project draws on the theological narrative of responsible stewardship that encourages collaboration between the different community groups. This project was not funded by CKU or Digni (FPFK took part in the workshop as a potential partner to CKU or Digni on climate change).

For EECMY-DASSC from Ethiopia, on the other hand, the widespread conflict in Ethiopia have made peace building a cross cutting issue and part of a standard approach of emergency response, development, and peace building.

It is notable that the concept of 'environmental security' was not used in the project documents or by the workshop participants.

Selected projects

This section presents three cases from the project portfolio, which represent different ways of engaging in peace building and disaster risk reduction in relation to food and water security as well as broader environmental security. It is characteristic that the projects take place in South East Asia where Christians are a minority group, and the project works with religious actors somewhat differently.

The first project is the Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Community working with Misjonsalliansen on implementation of a five-year programme that seeks to enhance environmental security through enabling farmers defend their land

rights, access social services and social protection, and shift to conservation agriculture in order to enhance food sovereignty and prevent environmental degradation. This project does not have any link to religious actors. The second project takes place in Nepal where KIRDARC, a Non-governmental Organisation, works with Mission East on growing resilience among remote communities that face high food insecurity and which are at high risk to climate change induced disasters like drought and landslides. Civil society actors are not allowed to work directly with religious communities, however religious leaders are involved as respected leaders firmly embedded in local society and with outreach to the wider community. The third project is a Christian NGO in Cambodia working with Misjonsalliansen on 'healing broken relationships', and enhancement of community unity around Prey Lang near the Mekong River through 'peacebuilders' that influence their intimate, close and near relationships as 'channels of peace'. Next step is to establish collaboration between community groups and the local authorities. Religious leaders were involved as respected leaders firmly embedded in local society who represent values of peace and social justice, and with outreach to the wider community.

Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Community - peaceful land rights

Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Community (CCFC) is a membership-based organisation that defends land rights of small-scale farmers affected by land grabbing across Cambodia. The Cambodian Constitution guarantees the political and human rights of Cambodian citizens and the 2001 Land Law provides for the citizens' land ownership and control over their community natural resources, yet the government favours large-scale development projects that force small-scale farmers from their farmland without fair compensation. In addition to eviction, transnational companies use chemical substances that lead to environmental degradation, which reduce food security and could escalate the conflict between the citizens and the state over democratic space and political rights.

CCFC is working with Misjonsalliansen on implementation of a five-year programme (2020-2024) titled 'Community Empowerment toward Life Dignity' that seeks to enhance environmental security by enabling farmers defend their land rights, access social services and social protection, and shift to conservation agriculture in order to enhance food sovereignty and prevent environmental degradation.

Similar to the project by Light of Hope, the starting point for CCFC is to build *community unity* as the basis for building up local leaders to represent the community towards local authorities. The main division is along gender lines where women farmers are marginalised and male representatives do not represent their voices well, yet women leaders are pressured by their family to stop engagement in local development issues due to gender stereotypes. Gender equality is therefore a cross-cutting issue, including relationship building for local women leaders between their family members and other men in the communities that they serve. Whilst building strong community leaders, *conflict sensitivity* is a cross-cutting issue regarding the community's communication with local authority, and the project trains staff and project participants on *Do No Harm and*

Active Non-Violence approach as well as on *peace building* as part of community empowerment and problem solving in the community. According to the annual progress report 2021, many community members and activists have become more brave, more active in advocacy, and, at the same time, 'more humble, peacefully negotiating with local authorities during their protest and advocacy.'⁵⁹ The peaceful negotiation with local authorities is critical when operating under an authoritative government that targets environmental activists⁶⁰ yet difficult when providing legal representation on highly sensitive issues such as land disputes against the government. CCFC works as a human rights defender and is attentive to the risk of difficult relationship between CCF and the authorities, and the importance of growing strong organisational capacity to operate under such conditions. It is notable that this project appears to have no link to religion or religious actors.

KIRDARC, Nepal – DRR for Community Resilience to Climate Change

After Nepal regained peace around 2007, the country has been highly vulnerable to climate change due to its geography, and millions of Nepalese are estimated to be at risk from the impacts of climate change including increasing food insecurity, strained water resources and damaged infrastructure.⁶¹ Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre (KIRDARC) is a Nepali Non-governmental Organisation that has worked with Mission East on growing resilience among remote communities that face high food insecurity and which are at high risk to climate change induced disasters like drought and landslides. The project took place from 2019 to 2020 in Karnali province.

Using a DRR approach, the project focused on growing preparedness to, and prevention of, disasters among the community, civil society, and local government. According to the project completion report,⁶² the targeted *community* increased awareness on disaster risk reduction, impact on food security, and the role of local government on DRR; and adopted climate resilient crops and agricultural technologies such as snow ponds and water recharge ponds. *Civil Society Organisations* formed alliances of Disaster and Climate Resilience at regional and district level that provided training on DRR policy, monitoring, and advocacy, and which played a constructive role in making duty bearers accountable. The capacity building of *local government* representatives on DRR, DRR mainstreaming and contextualization of Disaster Risk Management Act, policies and provisions on DRR led to tangible outputs such as increased budget allocation for DRR and tree planting. The project also established a DRR resource centre as a means of giving the target groups continued access to knowledge, DRR materials, and government policies and guidelines on DRR. The project's cross cutting approach of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion supported the recent government inclusion of women and minorities in

⁵⁹ Misjonsalliansen: Annual Progress Report 2021, page 18.

⁶⁰ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/05/24/cambodia-land-rights-activists-face-baseless-charges>

⁶¹ <https://www.climatelinks.org/countries/nepal>

⁶² Mission East (2021): Final Project Completion Report' Advancing Resilient Local Development in the Himalayas.

committees formed at district level, and addressed the fact that women are the most affected and more vulnerable to disasters as many male family members are absent due to migration.

In Nepal, civil society actors are not allowed to work directly with any religious communities, however religious leaders were involved in the Disaster Risk Management committees and community awareness raising. Also, religious leaders were involved in advocacy towards the local government authorities as well as in local disaster plan preparation, implementation, and are expected to play a role in the event of disaster. Thus, religious leaders were involved as respected leaders firmly embedded in local society and with outreach to the wider community.

Light of Hope Cambodia – Peacebuilding as basis for DRR

Ponleu Ney Kdey Sangkhum (PNKS), Light of Hope, is a Christian NGO in Cambodia affiliated with Christian Outreach in England, working with Misjonsalliansen. Deforestation and climate change have further impoverished indigenous communities around Prey Lang near the Mekong River due to loss of livelihood, lack of power and systemic corruption. The project aims at ‘communities living in harmony with each other and the forest, practising environmentally sustainable livelihoods’ through collaboration between community groups as the rights-holders and local authorities as the duty-bearers.

The community is divided due to low trust, allegations of some community members side with the illegal loggers, influx of migrants with different views on forest protection than the indigenous population, and intimidation coupled with corruption between locals and officials. As a divided community is prone to conflict and a frail foundation for Disaster Risk Reduction, peace building within the community and between the community and local authorities is integrated throughout the project.

The starting point is to heal the broken relationships through training officials and community leaders as ‘peacebuilders’ who take the message of peace to their respective ‘circles of influence’, which include a peacebuilder’s home, workplace, religious affiliation, and public engagement. The approach uses existing networks and connections as ‘channels for peace’.⁶³ It corresponds with piloting a greater involvement of churches and more explicit voice of religious values of forgiveness and love your neighbour as yourself. It is the first time that the Partner Organisation works with a local church to benefit the target community. The church works with the Community Initiatives for Development Groups and pastors took part in a faith-based dialogue held during COVID-19 pandemic to promote peace, love and care for one another as well as firm collaboration on community development, especially for the vulnerable and marginalised.

Thus, religious leaders were involved as respected leaders firmly embedded in local society who represent values of peace and social justice, and with outreach to the wider community. It is notable that the project does not consider the

⁶³ Light of Hope, Project document, page 9.

relevance of eco-theology for bringing together the parties on environmental protection and climate change mitigation.

The three projects use the approach of non-violence and relationship building with a focus on community unity and empowerment of local leaders; and creating platforms for dialogue between the duty bearers and the rights holders. The two projects in Cambodia engage religious leaders as key local leaders representing values of peace and social justice, and with outreach to the wider community. Finally, the two NGO Partner Organisations (CCFC and KIRDARC) do not at all, or only to a limited extent, engage religious actors, whereas the faith-based Partner Organisation (Light of Hope) engaged religious leaders, values, and outreach.

Contextualisation

At the review workshop, several participants expressed interest in working (more) with peace building in situations of environmental security and conflict through reconciliation, dialogue, and mediation. This section will focus on church-based and ecumenical collaboration on this area of climate action.

Church-based peace building in situations of environmental insecurity

The participants most interested in working on this thematic area represented two churches (Salvation Army in Uganda and Malawi, and FPFK in Kenya) and a church-based development organisation (EECMY-DASSC in Ethiopia). They presented somewhat similar reasons, the main one being an expectation to achieve high impact due to the well-established public authority and legitimacy of the institution, its values and leadership. Thus, a perception of peacebuilding in situations of environmental insecurity as an underutilised opportunity to serve the community on matters of long-term importance.

Salvation Army and FPFK have organisational structures where the church and the development (or social mission) structures intersect at all levels, for example clergy take part in project implementation, whereas EECMY-DASSC is the development arm of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus with its own staff and operation. It is common in East Africa that a church and its development arm operate quite independently to serve different constituencies with different resources - the church serves the congregation based on local resource mobilisation and the development arm serves the community with donor funding.⁶⁴ According to the director of EECMY-DASSC, this line of work would involve drawing on the theological narratives of eco-theology and social justice, and working closely with church leaders at local church level, and with the fringe benefit of bringing closer together these two structures.

⁶⁴ Catrine Christiansen (Shroff) 2012: *Mixed blessings: empowerment programs and the disempowerment of lay governance in Uganda* in Religion og Udvikling, Dansk Missionsråd.

In other words, engagement in this area of climate action offers an opportunity for churches with separate mission and development/social mission structures to work more closely together.

In an interview for this review, Charles Macharia, Programs Manager at Anglican Development Service Kenya (ADS-Kenya) and member of ACT Alliance advocacy working group, shared this perception and an example of the same. Recently, conflicts over the Mau Forest (the largest water tower in Kenya), deforestation, and land disputes between pastoralists in Narok County led to violent conflict and the loss of lives. The church is a permanent member of the local society and, as some people went to the church to seek refuge, the church 'bears the burden of conflict within the community', which gives legitimacy for the church to act as a venue for peacebuilding. ADS-Kenya achieved funding for a project on intercommunal peacebuilding and disaster risk reduction through dialogue between community representatives and security officials on the causes of the conflicts and identification of solutions; peace committees, and alternative livelihood options. In the high-level dialogue forums, the bishop and the director of ADS-Kenya would draw on the same values yet with different emphasis on peace and community development; in the peace committees, the dialogue would continue between representatives of the various communities and with engagement of local church leaders, who would also promote peace to their congregations. The project led to implementation of a peace accord and a number of young men handed in their guns to pursue non-violent livelihood options. According to Macharia, the church is a good peacemaker due to its legitimacy as a member of local society, the authority of its leaders, universal values of peace, and contribution to solutions that can prevent disasters from recurring.

The interplay between peacebuilding, local churches, and their potential effectiveness and risks in the context of environmental insecurity is an important consideration. Peacebuilding projects often derive legitimacy from the involvement and support of local churches. During the workshop, the representative from Salvation Army in Malawi observed that the church plays a significant role in promoting peace and reconciliation efforts within their communities due to their moral authority and community trust. Yet, he continued, local churches also benefit from participating in development projects, because the projects can serve as platforms for local churches to strengthen their relevance, influence, and impact within the communities. This synergy can contribute to the sustainability of both the church and the development results achieved through peacebuilding efforts.

Ecumenical collaboration on peace building

The church's positioning in society matter for its effectiveness in peacebuilding; the impetus of the Anglican Church in Kenya - where 85% are Christian and 10% are Anglican - is much higher than for example Light of Hope operating in a mostly Buddhist context of Cambodia. Nevertheless, to address potential biases and optimise resource mobilisation, the imperative of ecumenical or interfaith collaboration cannot be overstated. Such collaboration offers a more influential voice in the realm of conflict and environmental security efforts.

At the global level, Mattias Söderberg, Co-chair of ACT Alliance Climate Change advocacy group and Global Climate Lead at DanChurchAid, said that it is much easier for religious leaders to gain access to decision-making forums like the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) when representing ecumenical alliances such as World Council of Churches than one denomination.

At the regional level, Dr Francis Kuria, Secretary General for African Council of Religious Leaders-Religions for Peace (ACRL-RfP), highlights their constructive collaboration with Faith for Earth (UNEP) in relation to UNFCCC and engagement in situations of environmental insecurity through large-scale initiatives such as the Great Green Wall across 11 countries, many prone with conflicts due to climate change and the growing Sahara Desert.⁶⁵

At the national level, ACT Alliance and Lutheran World Federation (LWF) are critical platforms for engagement in peacebuilding and environmental security. In Ethiopia, for example, LWF focuses on the conflict and climate-induced displacement through emergency response and peace building. They work with religious leaders and elders as ‘brokers of peace’ to bring together representatives from both sides of the conflict for ‘community conversations’ to encourage peace efforts at the grassroots level.⁶⁶

It is commendable that faith-based peacebuilding is a strategic priority area in CKU’s Strategy 2023-2027 and it could form the basis for CKU, possibly also Digni, build capacity of the Member Organisations and Partner Organisations interested to engage in peacebuilding in situations of environmental insecurity.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the above review, the following conclusions and recommendations are offered to support the efforts of religious actors in peacebuilding in situations of environmental insecurity and conflict through reconciliation, dialogue, and mediation.

Recommendation 1: DRR is essential for sustaining the achievements of all SDGs since it provides a safety net for the hard-earned development gains of a developing country. There is a need to build the capacity of the CKU and Digni Member Organisations to ensure that fundamental concepts are understood in local, national and international contexts. This includes the need for training on the concept of environmental insecurity in relation to peace building as well as on the role of climate change assessment (risks and opportunities) for project design. It is recommended that CKU and Digni consider how to support their Member Organisations in building capacity on peacebuilding in relation to

⁶⁵ See also for example <https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/lack-of-security-support-delay-africa-s-green-wall/6587268.html>

⁶⁶ <https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/peacebuilding-grassroots>

environmental security and risk assessment. Member Organisations could be encouraged to access online resources for capacity building such as free of charge E-learning course 'Faith and Environmental Security' by Faith for Earth or the eight-module course on 'Faith, Environment and Climate Change'); UNEP's course on 'Climate Change, Peace and Security', and United Nations Climate Change Learning Platform: <https://unccelearn.org/user/policy.php>

Recommendation 2: CKU and Digni's Member Organisations work with Partner Organisations representing different types of organisations, very different levels of operation, and with a span between NGOs without any aspect of being faith-based and churches acting as development actors. It implies attention to diversity and context as well as recognition that some types of organisations are more relevant than others for certain areas of work. As peacebuilding can gain legitimacy from being affiliated with churches that are permanent members of local society, as long as the churches have not already sided in a conflict, in which case they may lose legitimacy, it is recommended that CKU and Dignity support the churches and church-based among their MOs and POs in integrating environmental security into their policies and structures. This should include integration of theological narratives of eco-theology with linkage to universal values of peace and justice (or shalom), give church leaders roles such as 'peacebuilders' that spread the gospel of peace to congregations; and adopt rituals such as planting 'peace trees' in borderland and perhaps also within church compounds. Once eco-theology forms a basis for this line of work, environmental security becomes an opportunity to bring closer together the church and development arm; strengthening the church and the legitimacy of the peacebuilding process.

Recommendation 3: Working with others in strategic alliances on peace building, including disaster risk reduction to enhance environmental security. Peacebuilding are often long processes, involve mobilisation of various state and non-state stakeholders as well as representatives of the opposing parties, and take place a several levels of society - such as local, sub-national and national levels - hence the advantage to join hands with other like-minded organisations and networks to enhance the chance of success and increase sustainability. It is recommended that CKU and Digni support a mapping of Member Organisations' and Partner Organisations' like-minded actors with a view to expand collaboration on peacebuilding in situations of environmental insecurity.

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Annex 1 Glossary and Terminology

Climate change and environment is a broad topic and hence it is necessary to briefly define what is meant with the key terms that will be used in this and the other four related thematic briefs.

Climate change refers to the long-term shifts in temperature and weather patterns. Climate change can occur naturally or through anthropogenic changes in the composition of the atmosphere. Since the 1800s, human activity has been the main driver of climate change, mainly through the burning of fossil fuels (IPCC 2018).

Mitigation addresses the root causes of global warming and climate change through the reduction of fossil fuel emissions (and to a lesser extent their removal from the atmosphere) to slow and stabilize the rate of global warming (IPCC 2014). The Paris Agreement, the largest binding agreement by countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, stipulates a reduction of 40% globally by 2030 in order to keep the rise of global temperatures well below 2°C.

Adaptation is defined 'in human systems, as the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects in order to moderate harm or take advantage of beneficial opportunities. In natural systems, adaptation is the process of adjustment to actual climate and its effects; human intervention may facilitate this' (IPCC 2022). The Paris Agreement also sets "a global goal on adaptation "of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change, with a view to contributing to sustainable development".

Resilience is described as 'climate-proofing' and places emphasis on 'the capacity of social, economic, and environmental systems to cope with a hazardous event or trend or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identity and structure, while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning and transformation' (IPCC 2022).

Vulnerability is 'the propensity or predisposition to be adversely affected and encompasses a variety of concepts and elements, including sensitivity or susceptibility to harm and lack of capacity to cope and adapt' (IPCC 2022). According to the IPCC, 'vulnerabilities and climate risks are often reduced through carefully designed and implemented laws, policies, processes, and interventions that address context-specific inequities such as based on gender, ethnicity, disability, age, location and income' (IPCC 2022).

Climate Justice refers to climate change as an ethical and political issue. It identifies climate change as a symptom of unfair and unrepresentative economic, social and political institutions. It views climate change through the lens of social and environmental justice and works with concepts such as equality, human rights and collective rights. It examines the structural injustices in societies. On a global level climate justice also refers to the historic responsibility of industrialised nations to curb climate change and provide financing to support climate mitigation and adaptation in poorer countries.

Environment in this brief refers to environmental degradation meaning the deterioration of the environment through depletion of resources such as air, water and soil; the destruction of ecosystems and the extinction of wildlife. It is defined as any change or disturbance to the environment perceived to be deleterious or undesirable (UNEP). In this review the term environment refers to environmental degradation linked to the effects of climate change. Environment and environmental degradation are thus used interchangeably as well as the effects of climate change also refer to potential environmental degradation.

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8. Annex 2: Project Portfolio Overview

The below table summarises the main characteristics of the CKU and Digni support projects part of this review.

Project no	Country	Organisation	Name	Climate Justice	Adaptation	Mitigation	Resilience	Livelihoods	Peace /env. security
DMCDD-21-B-03	Burundi	BUD, Dutabarane	Turime 2		x		x	x	
CKU-22-TA-01	Cambodia	Danmission/Peace Studies Center	Towards more freedom of religion and belief						
10832-MA	Cambodia	Light of Hope	Somleng Prey Lang	x	x				x
10838-MA	Cambodia	Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Community Association	Community Empowerment toward Life Dignity (CELD)	x				x	
CKU-21-B-03	Egypt	Anafora	Coptic church as green change agents in El Qussia and Meir Diocese, Upper Egypt, waste recycling	x					
10900-DFEF STREEC	Eswatini	Free Evangelical Christian Fellowship	Solar Training Renewable Energy & Entrepreneurship Centre			x			
DMCDD-21-A-02	Ethiopia	Promissio, Ethiopian Evangelical Church	Nensabo Community Livelihood Capacity Enhancement Project	x	x		x	x	x
10403 NLM-Filtu	Ethiopia	Ethiopian evangelical church	Filtu Food Security Project	x	x				x
10864-RDCLIP	Ethiopia	The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY-DASSC)	Rayitu and Dawe Serar Community Livelihood improvement project	x	x	x	x	x	x
10913-NLM	Ethiopia	The Norwegian Lutheran Mission	Clean and Safe Environment at Ginnir Hospital and Town Community	other					

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10919-Nor	Ethiopia	Ethiopian Evangelical Church	Green Livelihood Programme III	x	x		x	x	x
10914-NLM Bena Tsemai	Ethiopia	The Norwegian Lutheran Mission/EECMY	Bena-Tsamay Pastoral Community Development Project		x			x	x
	Kenya	Assist DK/The navigators	Micro-Enterprise Development and Support					x	
CKU-22-A-04- IAS	Kenya	IAS DK & KE	Sustained Resilience against Climatic Shocks and Stresses among vulnerable communities in Kenya				x		x
DMCDD-20-A-05	Malawi	The Salvation Army	Livelihood Improvement and Farmers Empowerment - LIFE		x			x	
DMCDD-19-A-17	Myanmar	Mission East	Strengthening Sustainable Food Security and Nutrition for Mara community of Southern Chin State		x				
DMCCD-18-A-14	Nepal	Mission East/KIRDARC	Advancing resilient local development in the Himalayas		x		x		
10894-MA	Nepal	Badikedar Integrated Community Transformation Project	United Mission to Nepal	x					
10917-NOR	Nepal	UMN	Climate change impacts mitigation & adaptation for environmental sustainability (CLIMATES)		x	x			
CKU-21-B-15	Rwanda	BUD, AEBR	Terimbere 3 - Food Security and VSLA project		x		x		
DMCCD-2017-A	Tanzania	PULS/RECODA	Making the Leeward green again: Mobilising Communities in Likamba Area for Livelihood Improvement and Resilience				x	x	
10771 FA	Uganda	The Salvation Army	Sustainable Integrated Development		x				