



Guidelines on Environmental Justice





Report on Environmental Justice from the Caritas Oceania Regional Commission to the 2005 CI Executive Committee

Tasks given to Caritas Oceania Region:

Caritas Oceania is grateful to report here on the progress of the work undertaken by the Caritas Oceania Region following the mandate on Earth Care/ Environmental Justice given by the Executive Committee of Caritas Internationalis (CI). A Task Force on Environmental Justice has been established to assist Caritas Oceania in fulfilling this mandate on behalf of the Confederation. It will continue until the XVIIIth General Assembly of CI.

The Terms of Reference of the Caritas Task Force on Environmental Justice focus on issues of environmental justice related to the work of CI and its member organisations, focusing on those issues which adversely affect the lives of the poor. The work of the Task Force is based on and promotes the application of Catholic Social Teaching principles to the environment with particular emphasis on the linkage between human dignity, sustainable development and care for the environment. The approach of the Task Force is to be proactive and be based on science. As part of its work, the Task Force is to:


- i) Aim to make environmental justice a cross-cutting issue in the development, advocacy and emergency work of the Confederation and its members.

- ii) Investigate the development of an Environmental Justice Network within the Caritas Confederation so as to support and extend the work of the Task Force.
- iii) Take advantage of the opportunities presented by regional Caritas gatherings to deepen understanding and commitment on issues of environmental justice within the Confederation.
- iv) Foster alliances and cooperation among the regions, and with other appropriate Church bodies, other faiths and organisations.

Caritas Oceania is thankful for the decisions taken by the CI Executive Committee meeting of November 2004, where they noted the progress of the work undertaken by Caritas Oceania. They agreed that the Secretary General should seek the cooperation of each region to find a respective person to take responsibility for the issue of environmental justice. The aim is for the respective Regional Coordinator or his/her representative to undertake this function.

Discussion Paper:

Caritas Oceania is most grateful to forward here this Discussion Paper on Environmental Justice, and it is in the form of Framework for Action. It is aimed at assisting the discussions at regional level and the choice of appropriate actions to be implemented at regional and national levels. This is similar to previous discussions papers that have been circulated around the CI Confederation, where the decision for actions rests at the regional and national level. Major issues of common concern and need for efficient coordination, improved solidarity and effective networking and cooperation



will continually be brought to the attention of the CI Confederation.

Proposal from Caritas Oceania:

i) Climate Change the Major Focus of Environmental Justice: There are many pressing environmental justice issues. One key issue, climate change, demands priority above all others because of its potential to disrupt the well-being of future generations. Climate change poses the question: “What does our generation owe to generations yet unborn?” Climate change threatens the sustainable use of the land, the water resources of our planet, and the very existence of some countries. These outcomes call for climate change in all its dimensions to become a core concern of Caritas– stopping further climate change, living with the effects which are now inevitable, and planning for new forms of development which take into account both the climate and the sharing of resources

ii) Discussion at Regional Level: It will definitely provide a good backing that the CI Executive Committee agree to circulate this Discussion Paper on **Framework for Action on Environmental Justice**, for discussion and necessary actions in the various Caritas regions, led by their respective Regional Coordinators and regional contact persons on Environmental Justice. The various regions are rich with materials and resource persons but the Discussion Paper encourages a focus on issues regarded to be of priority for the Confederation.

iii) The Next CI 2007 General Assembly: It is the recommendation of Caritas Oceania that Environmental Justice, and in particular “Climate Change”, be a major top-

ic for study and discussion at the next CI 2007 General Assembly. It will have adverse effects on food security, agriculture and fishing, already a major issue in parts of the world. New patterns of natural disasters will impact adversely on the battle against poverty and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Inevitably the bad effects of climate change will be felt most by those who are already poor.

Recommendations:

1)-Climate Change be the major focus of environmental justice activity within the Confederation for the next five years.

*2)-Agree to circulate for discussions and necessary actions in the various Caritas regions, led by the Regional Coordinators and regional contact persons on environmental justice, the **Discussion Paper on Framework for Action on Environmental Justice***

3)-Environmental Justice, and in particular "Climate Change", be a major topic for study and discussions at the XVIIIth General Assembly of CI in 2007.

Caritas Oceania Region
November, 2005



CARITAS CONFEDERATION DISCUSSION PAPER

**FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION
ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE
AT INTERNATIONAL,
REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS**

**Approved by the CI Executive Committee for
Discussion and Action by Caritas Regions.**

**Submitted by Caritas Oceania Regional Commission
November, 2005**

I. Preamble

“A new approach and a new culture are needed, based on the centrality of the human person within creation and inspired by environmentally ethical behaviour stemming from our triple relationship to God, to self and to creation. Such an ethic fosters interdependence and stresses the principles of universal solidarity, social justice and responsibility, in order to promote a true culture of life”.

Pope John Paul II and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I
(2002), *Common Declaration*

During the 2003 General Assembly of the Caritas Confederation, Caritas Oceania raised the question of “earth care” as a matter needing attention. In seeking to give care for the environment some priority, the Oceania member organisations spoke from their own national and regional experiences, and with a sense of urgency, from their local experience of the deterioration of the global environment.

The Caritas Oceania initiative did not seek to introduce a new element to the strategic planning or work plan of Caritas Internationalis. The Strategic Plan refers to various aspects of care for the environment in several places, beginning with the Vision:

“The vision of Caritas Internationalis is a civilization of love...in which the goods of the earth are shared by all; in which creation is cherished and held in trust for the common good of future generations...”¹

Stewardship of the planet – “being in solidarity not only with people but with the whole of creation” – is one of the Guiding Values in the Strategic Plan.²

¹ Caritas Internationalis *Strategic Plan* page 15.

² Ibid, page 19-23.

In relation to care for the environment, perhaps the most important reference in the Strategic Plan is to be found in the section “Identity and role of the Confederation” and does not refer directly to this topic:

“Caritas Internationalis, the point where all member Caritas organizations work together at the global or regional level, *derives its identity from its roots within the Catholic Church.*”³


In terms of the total history of the Catholic Church, care for creation has a very recent history in the social teaching of the Church. The biblical accounts of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 contain a dual command to “master” creation and to care for creation in a way best described as stewardship. History has emphasised the mastery of creation by human beings.

As pressing environmental questions that threatened the safety of present and future generations came to the fore in the 1960s, the Bishops of the Second Vatican Council took seriously their own statement in *Gaudium et Spes* about the need for the Church to ‘read the signs of the times’. In their statements in *Lumen Gentium* they began a process of deepening understanding of the value of creation in its own right, and human responsibility for creation. In *Gaudium et Spes* they highlighted the justice dimension of care for creation:

“God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples. Thus under the leadership of justice and in the company of charity, created goods should be in abundance for all in like manner.”⁴

³ Ibid, page 17.

⁴ Vatican Council II (1966), *Gaudium et Spes* n.69



In 1971, the Second Synod of Bishops was forthright about the global dimensions of environmental issues, and their relationship with justice:

“Moreover, men are beginning to grasp a new and more radical dimension of unity; they perceive that their resources, as well as the precious treasures of air and water – without which there cannot be life – and the small delicate biosphere of the whole complex of all life on earth, are not infinite, but on the contrary must be saved and preserved as a unique patrimony belonging to all mankind... Those who are already rich are bound to accept a less material way of life, with less waste, in order to avoid the destruction of the heritage which they are obliged by absolute justice to share with all other members of the human race”.⁵

In many Papal documents over three decades, Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II deepened understanding of the relationship between human dignity, sustainable development and care for the environment. Both Popes were very aware of the global dimensions of the problem, its connections with poverty and the need for both a global and local response. In the words of Pope Paul VI: “Interdependency must now be met by joint responsibility; common destiny by solidarity”.⁶

Scripture and the teaching of the Church are fundamental reference points for Caritas, together with the socio-historical reality which provides “the site where Church teaching is put into practice”. Caritas is itself an expression of the social teaching of the Church, with its specific charism of working towards a “liberation from everything that oppresses mankind”. A supporting charism is the ability of the Confederation to take the fruits of its reflection and to

⁵ Second Synod of Bishops (1971), *Justice in the World*, Chap 1 para 2.

⁶ Pope Paul VI, Message to the Stockholm Conference (1972).


turn it into life-changing action at both a global and local level. By its very nature Caritas is constantly reading and responding to “the signs of the times”.

Caritas Oceania is the newest and one of the smallest regions of Caritas Internationalis in terms of population. When the representatives of this region asked the 2003 General Assembly to consider “care for the environment” as a priority in the work plan for 2003-2007, their request was not seen as urgent by several larger regions. In some parts of the world advocacy for the environment has become the preserve of secular environmental groups, with whom these regions felt they had little in common.

It was not the vision of these secular groups that Caritas Oceania was asking the Confederation to consider – it was the vision of “care for the environment” or “environmental justice” embodied in Church teaching, and intimately connected to human dignity and sustainable development. This teaching has been laid out in many documents over the last forty years as the Church has read the signs of the times.

In the last decade the people of the islands of Oceania have been reading the same signs of the times, as water encroaches on their scarce land resources. Climate change was a core issue in the desire of Caritas Oceania that the Confederation take up its concerns about the environment.

On 1 September 2005 the Stop Climate Chaos coalition was launched in the UK. This ‘monster coalition’ of aid and development agencies and environmental groups includes the three largest UK Christian development agencies, one of which is CAFOD (Caritas England and Wales). A report published by the coalition, “Up in Smoke” expresses their fear that “global warming could threaten attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and even reverse human development achievements”. This point is highlighted in the Foreword to the report:



“Most notable as a major issue of concern is the nexus between climate change and the widespread prevalence of poverty in the world. As the Third Assessment report of the IPCC clearly indicates, ‘the effects of climate change will fall disproportionately on developing countries and the poor persons within all countries, thereby exacerbating inequities in health status and access to adequate food, clean water and other resources’⁷.”

Caritas Oceania takes great heart from the formation of this coalition of agencies in the UK. We have always considered that the place accorded the environment in Church teaching and in the Confederation’s own strategic plan, together with the impact of environmental issues on the poor, meant that ultimately these issues would become an integral part of the Confederation’s reflection and work rather than being marginalised. We no longer feel like a voice alone in the wilderness, and it is with renewed energy that we put forward for discussion a framework for action on environmental justice.

II. Vision

A world in which our environmental interdependence “is met by joint responsibility, our common destiny by solidarity”⁸; where the goods of the earth are shared by all; and where all creation is cherished and held in trust for the common good of future generations.

III. Mission

To fully integrate environmental justice with the principles of human dignity and sustainable development in the Confederation’s work at all levels, through:

- Study and reflection on Church teaching

⁷ Pachauri Dr R K (2004), *Up in Smoke*, Foreword.

⁸ Pope Paul VI, Message to the Stockholm Conference (1972).

- Identifying the major global issues of environmental justice
- Research and planning at international level
- Education and awareness raising at regional level
- Local action by member organisations
- Advocacy in appropriate fora at international level
- Working with other bodies that share the same vision


IV. Guiding Values and Principles

In 2002 Pope John Paul II and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I together signed what has become known as the Venice Declaration. This Common Declaration calls people to repentance for “betraying the mandate God has given us: to be stewards called to collaborate with God in watching over the creation in holiness and wisdom”. The Declaration sets out ethical goals regarding care for the environment and the use of the common patrimony of all humanity, as well as highlighting the need for a new ethical approach:

“A new approach and a new culture are needed, based on the centrality of the human person within creation and inspired by environmentally ethical behaviour stemming from our triple relationship to God, to self and to creation. Such an ethic fosters interdependence and stresses the principles of universal solidarity, social justice and responsibility, in order to promote a true culture of life”⁹.

The Strategic Plan of Caritas Internationalis contains guiding values derived from “Scripture, the social teaching of the Church, and the lived experience of those we serve”. Five core values are described as immutable: the dignity of the human person, the option for the poor, the universal destination of Earth’s goods, solidarity, and stewardship.

⁹ Pope John Paul II and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I (2002), *Common Declaration*.



These core values are the same values which must guide the Confederation in its decision-making on matters to do with environmental justice. Church documents have provided many insights into the application of these values to environmental justice. The Confederation will gain from taking these insights into its own reflection, and beginning a process of discerning how they might be applied in its work. This process can only be enriching because it will lead to new understandings of the core values which underpin the life and work of Caritas worldwide.

While all five values are important, solidarity has particular relevance to environmental justice. Solidarity extends not only to those alive now, but also to future generations. The global dimensions of the current environmental issues mean that local solutions will not be sufficient for vulnerable communities, now and in the future. As an organisation that can act both globally and locally, Caritas has both the capacity – and even the duty – to put solidarity at the centre of its response to environmental issues.

“It is not science and technology, or the increasing means of economic and material development, but the human person, and especially groups of persons, communities and nations, *freely choosing* to face the problems together, who will, under God, determine the future”.¹⁰

V. Thematic Areas and Suggested Actions

A) Climate change - future planning and decision-making

We are called to extend our concern to future generations. As Pope John Paul II has written: “There is an order of the universe which must be protected, and the human person, endowed with the capability of choosing freely, has a grave

¹⁰ Pope John Paul II (1985), Address at United Nations Centre, Nairobi, Kenya.

responsibility to preserve this order for the well-being of future generations".¹¹


There are many pressing environmental justice issues. One issue, climate change, demands priority above all others because of its potential to disrupt the well-being of future generations. Climate change poses the question: "What does our generation owe to generations yet unborn?"

Climate change threatens the sustainable use of the land, the water resources of our planet, and the very existence of some countries. It will have adverse effects on food security, both agriculture and fishing, already a major issue in parts of the world. New patterns of natural disasters will impact adversely on the battle against poverty and the achievement of the Millenium Development Goals.

Inevitably the bad effects of climate change will be felt most by those who are already poor. As women are the great majority among the poor, the effects of climate change will further increase their vulnerability. Decreased agricultural productivity, increases in waterborne diseases, and accelerating desertification are all impacts of climate change which will impact in a greater degree on women because of the type of work they do in developing countries.

These outcomes mean that climate change in all its dimensions must become a core concern of Caritas – stopping further climate change, living with the effects which are now inevitable, and planning for new forms of development which take into account both the climate and the sharing of resources. Issues which are linked to climate change, such as unsustainable logging of forests and mining which

¹¹ John Paul II, *The Exploitation of the Environment Threatens the Entire Human Race*, address to the Vatican Symposium on the Environment(1990), in *Ecology and Faith: The Writings of Pope John Paul II*, ed Sr. Ancilla Dent, OSB (Berkhamsted, England: Arthur James, 1997), 12.



reduces arable land and forest cover, are well-known already to a number of Caritas member organisations. The fight to overcome the injustice associated with these activities now has a new context in climate change.

Climate change must also become a key issue for all countries and governments. Good governance and global cooperation, together with transparency and accountability at all levels, are needed to confront and mitigate this threat to future generations. As a global organisation Caritas must play a role in every country as well as internationally.

Meeting the challenges of climate change calls for a review of the priorities of Caritas in policy making, planning and setting of agendas in the next four years and beyond. Climate change is a major issue which must be factored into all levels of Caritas operation.

The following proposals are therefore put forward:

For CI Secretariat consideration:

- i. Climate change is to be the major focus of environmental justice activity within the Confederation for the next five years.
- ii. Environmental justice, and in particular climate change, is to be a major topic for study and discussion at the CI General Assembly of 2007.
- iii. An Inter-regional workshop on climate change is to be implemented in good time prior to the CI General Assembly of 2007.

For Caritas Regional Commissions' consideration:

- iv. Regions are to include study of the causes and implications of climate change in their regional planning process, and address these issues in their regional work plans.

- v. Advocacy for good governance in climate change management activities at regional level is to be strengthened.


For Caritas Member Organisations' consideration:

- vi. Climate change considerations are to be mainstreamed into policies, planning processes, and decision-making within MOs.
- vii. Advocacy for good governance in climate change management activities at national level is to be strengthened.
- viii. Adaptation measures to deal with the adverse effects of climate change are to be developed and integrated into MOs' programme planning, and particularly into sustainable development strategies.
- ix. Greenhouse gas reduction measures are to be included in national level plans, and advocacy undertaken nationally on this issue.

B) Climate change - training and awareness

Caritas needs to seek to offer a more distinct religious and moral perspective to the complicated scientific discussion on climate change. John Paul II insists: "We face a fundamental question which can be described as both ethical and ecological. How can accelerated development be prevented from turning against man? How can one prevent disasters that destroy the environment and threaten all forms of life, and how can the negative consequences that have already occurred be remedied".¹²

¹² Pope John Paul II, *International Solidarity Needed to Safeguard Environment*, Address by the Holy Father to the European Bureau for the Environment, *L'Osservatore Romano* (June 26, 1996)



There are already Church and other documents available that need to be made more available, and new publications need to be generated.

Caritas' capacity to use scientific and traditional knowledge to monitor, assess and predict environmental, social and economic risks and effects of climate change needs strengthening. This is critical for developing and implementing viable and sustainable programmes on cost effective adaptation and greenhouse gas reduction measures.

The CI International Cooperation Committee needs to undertake research into the potential effects of climate change, with particular emphasis on changes in disaster patterns, and regions need to be made aware of the implications of this research. Understanding of climate change, variability and extreme weather events is needed for better informed responses by the region and local communities. Increased awareness and understanding of risks and effects of climate change are particularly important at community level to increase resilience.

The current efforts to include assessment of environmental impact of programmes need to be strengthened and expanded to include climate change impacts.

Awareness raising and training are needed at all levels and in relation to all types of Caritas work if the Confederation is to respond adequately to the enormous challenge of climate change.

For CI Secretariat consideration:

- i. The document "*From Stockholm to Johannesburg: An Historical Overview of the Holy See for the Environment*", published by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and other similar documents are to be made more available to Caritas member organisations.

- ii. Caritas papers focusing on environmental justice, especially the different aspects of climate change, are to be developed and made available to MOs.
- iii. The International Cooperation Committee is to carry out research into the existing and potential effects of climate change, with particular emphasis on changes in disaster patterns, and make regions aware of the implications of this research.

For Caritas Regional Commissions' consideration:


- iv. Regions are to implement educative sessions on climate change and its implications in their Regional Assemblies prior to the 2007 CI General Assembly.
- v. Regions are to develop or strengthen, where necessary, regional information required to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of adaptation or mitigation measures in vulnerable priority areas.

For Caritas Member Organisations' consideration:

- vi. MOs are to ensure they are well-informed on climate change issues in their country and region.
- vii. Human capacity to monitor and assess environmental, social and economic risks and effects of climate change are to be strengthened.
- viii. Assessment of environmental impact of programmes is to be expanded to include climate change impacts.

C) Advocacy for resources for adaptation and global greenhouse gas reduction

The Caritas Confederation has the network and alliances to advocate for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and to advance adaptation and mitigation internationally. This could be led by the CI International Advocacy Committee,



which should place climate change on its agenda, with the intention of developing a Confederation position, carrying out advocacy in international fora, and facilitating appropriate collaboration with other bodies working in this area.

Similar efforts are also required at regional and national level.

Adaptation and global greenhouse gas reduction are closely associated with energy use. The development and sharing of cost-effective renewable energy technologies and local energy sources need to be part of the advocacy platform.

For CI Secretariat consideration:

- i. The International Advocacy Committee is to place climate change on its agenda, with the intention of developing a Confederation position, carrying out advocacy in international fora, and facilitating appropriate collaboration with other bodies working in this area.
- ii. CI is to seek significant international support through advocacy for further reduction in greenhouse gases and for securing resources for adaptation to climate change.

For Caritas Regional Commissions' consideration:

- iii. Regions are to seek, through advocacy, significant regional support for further reduction in greenhouse gases and for securing resources for adaptation to climate change.

For Caritas Member Organisations' consideration:

- iv. MOs are to promote energy efficiency in their programmes and, if possible, in their countries, as part of their response to climate change.
- v. MOs are to carry out advocacy on climate change issues, including logging, at national and local level.

D) Climate change - alliances and cooperation

Responses to global climate change should reflect our interdependence and joint common responsibility for the future of our planet. What is done in one part of the planet can have environmental impacts elsewhere. As Pope John Paul II has said: “We cannot interfere in one area of the ecosystem without paying due attention both to the consequences of such interference in other areas and to the well-being of future generations”.¹³

Because of this interdependence we are all called to work together. Alliances, cooperation and partnerships provide an enabling environment and would be an essential part of Caritas efforts to build resilience to the adverse effects of climate change. Networks and partnerships need to be fostered at all levels with other appropriate Church bodies, other faiths and organisations. The Declaration on the Environment signed by Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople in 2002 is a good example of such partnership and cooperation.¹⁴ The Stop Climate Chaos Coalition in the United Kingdom is an example of a national alliance which has the potential to be very effective.

Efforts will need to be taken to ensure that the Caritas Confederation actions on climate change are strategic and well coordinated, and that linkages with other bodies are effective.

For CI Secretariat consideration:

- i. A plan is to be developed to coordinate Caritas Confederation action on climate change issues.

¹³ Pope John Paul II, *The ecological Crisis: A Common responsibility* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1990) no.6.

¹⁴ Pope John Paul II and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I (2002), *Common Declaration*.



For Caritas Regional Commissions' consideration:

- ii. Alliances and cooperation are to be fostered between the regions, and with other appropriate Church bodies, other faiths and organisations within regions.

For Caritas Member Organisations' consideration:

- iii. Alliances and cooperation are to be fostered nationally with other appropriate Church bodies, other faiths and organisations.

VI. Implementation Strategy

The implementation of this Framework, the CI Work Plan, and the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals (including those contained in the *Millennium Declaration*), need to be mutually reinforcing. For this reason the implementation of this Framework will be further elaborated in the preparation for the CI 2007 General Assembly. It will require more focused and substantially increased effort by the Confederation as a whole and appropriate support from the regions and member organisations.

Each region and member organisation has the primary responsibility for its own development and response to this issue. The role of regional and national policies, development strategies and the allocation of dedicated financial resources cannot be overemphasised.

VII. Monitoring Progress and Updating this Framework

Targets and indicators will later be established within the Action Plan linked to the Framework, and set at the appropriate levels for each year. The Framework itself will be subjected to a mid-term review to determine overall progress.

Evaluating progress towards achieving the outcomes of this Framework will be measured every two years against the agreed indicators, with the support of regions and the Confederation as a whole. This will require the Confederation to identify what has been achieved, and to identify emerging gaps requiring priority action and adjustment of priorities in future. The regions will, where necessary, provide support and a coordinating role, for regional and Confederation reporting.

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