

RESPONSE OF RELIGIOUS BODIES TO CLIMATE CHANGE IN GHANA

**THE CASE OF THE EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF GHANA**

▶ INTRODUCTION

- ▶ The Evangelical Presbyterian Church is a founding member of the Christian Council of Ghana and a foremost and respected protestant church in Ghana.
- ▶ The EP Church in the 1970s had established in the Northern Ghana, three agricultural stations that are used for the education and transfer of appropriate technology and modern agronomic practices to rural farmers to improve productivity and enhance livelihoods to help address the issue of poverty.

- ▶ Northern Ghana is noted for short rainfall periods, thus the practice of rain-fed agriculture does not support high agricultural productivity levels and this results in communal food insecurity. The problem of communal food insecurity coupled with the problem of poor dietary practice is evident in the high rate of malnutrition among children in the project areas. The harvesting of scattered savanna woods for charcoal burning or fuel wood also results in very deplorable environmental degradation. According to the Ghana Living Standard Survey, poverty is endemic in northern Ghana and 70% of the people are classified as poor.

- ▶ The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana launched a Sustainable Development [AGENDA 21] Project in collaboration with her German partners in 3 Districts of Northern Ghana in 2002.
- ▶ The AGENDA 21 Project was designed to address some of these problems.

- ▶ The project had 3 components viz:
 - **Environment;**
 - **Health & Nutrition;** and
 - **Sanitation.**

- ▶ **Environment;**
- ▶ Under the Environment component, the project established tree plant nurseries in the 3 project areas of Yendi, Saboba and Chereponi and assisted the communities to establish woodlots (forests).

- ▶ Previously, women and children had to go very far distances in search of fuel wood from the savanna shrubs and thickets. This practice had effect on the health of women and implications for the education of the girl child.

- ▶ Woodlots therefore, became necessary to help solve the problem of massive degradation of trees for the production of charcoal and fuel wood for domestic use.
- ▶ The people in the communities were subsequently trained on the harvesting of the woodlots for fuel wood without destroying the entire woodlots, thereby living sustainably on the woodlots. The EP CHURCH planted over 55 acres under this project.







- ▶ One innovation of this intervention was that in each community, fire volunteers were trained in bush fire prevention, fire education and fire fighting techniques to protect these woodlots (forests) against bushfires that were predominant in northern Ghana.
- ▶ The project to date had trained 425 fire volunteers across the 3 districts.
- ▶ This strategy worked well for many years and ensured the longevity of the woodlots.





- ▶ This intervention improved the soil structure positively in these communities and farmers attested to the fact that, better yields were harvested from those areas that were protected for so long.
- ▶ In 2010, one of the villages where the wood lots were promoted won the Regional Best Environmentally Protected area in Northern Ghana during the National Farmers' Day Celebrations.

- ▶ This was possible due to the fact that for over 6 years, the community protected the woodlots and no bush fire disturbed the area, hence the change in vegetation with its improved biodiversity and solution to domestic fuel wood problems.

CLIMATE CHANGE:

- ▶ Land degradation in the Northern Region is caused by a number of driving factors. Of significant concern to the livelihoods of those living in the region among others is the naturally harsh climate of the region including extensive soil erosion and the loss of fertile land for cultivation.

- ▶ In light of the above analysis, the EP CHURCH through its development arm, EP Development and Relief Agency [EPDRA-North] has held sensitization and awareness creation seminars for rural farmers on the integration of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in their farming practices.

- ▶ However, these Mitigation and Adaptation strategies are based on current livelihood coping mechanisms within the targeted communities and also aligned with Ghana's National Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies.

Coping Strategies By Farmers

1. The introduction of early maturing varieties of crops at the start of the farming season.
2. Planting very early along river banks and harvesting before the flooding starts.
3. Planting of different crops on the same piece of land as an insurance against crop failure.

Mitigation Measures Proposed By EPDRA

1. Adopt agro forestry practices by growing trees and crops on the same piece of land.
2. Adopt farming methods such as sustainable Agriculture that ensures that the land stays fertile for several years to avoid shifting from one place to another and causing more damage.
3. Education and sensitization on indiscriminate bush burning.

- ▶ Education and sensitization on indiscriminate bush burning.
- ▶ The development of drought tolerant crop varieties.
- ▶ Farm level adaptations such as modifying the amount and timing of fertilizer applications.

Southern Ghana

- ▶ Last year, the Inter Power faith and Light Ministries of the U.S.A., an affiliate of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation of the U.K. supported the EP CHURCH with a small grant which was used to start tree planting projects in some parts of Southern Ghana. This intervention yielded 8 acres of planted fields in 4 communities. However, extreme weather events [Floods & Drought] destroyed 2 acres of woodlots in the Adaklu Waya community in the Volta Region.







Policy on Climate Change

- ▶ In order to give further boost to its work in the area of Environmental Protection and mainstream Climate Change activities, The EP CHURCH adopted a Climate Change policy at its 3rd General Assembly held in August 2011.

- ▶ **The Policy goal of the EP CHURCH is to become the foremost 'green' Religious Institution in Ghana with the specific objective of involving all the structures of the church and other Religious Bodies in Ghana to promote and undertake environmental activities that will enhance living standards and ensure environmental sustainability.**

- ▶ The EP Church has also introduced the concept and practice of Eco clubs in basic and secondary schools and trained school head teachers and supervisors on the need for such interventions. ECO CLUBS have so far been formed in 10 basic schools. The target is to form 100 Eco Clubs by the close of 2012.
- ▶ Members of the clubs are tutored in basic environmental studies, basic agricultural skills, water harvesting and personal hygiene techniques and sanitation.

- ▶ They also form a ready core of volunteers who will assist in the future planting of trees in communities and schools.

RELIGIOUS BODIES NETWORK ON CLIMATE CHANGE

**IS ORGANISING A 2 DAY TRAINING WORKSHOP
FOR TEACHERS ON FORMATION OF**

ECO-CLUBS IN SCHOOLS

DATE: 10TH - 11TH AUGUST, 2011

TIME: 9⁰⁰.AM

VENUE: KEKELI HOTEL - E. P. CHURCH

HQST ORGANISATION: E. P. CHURCH, GHANA





▶ **Eco Congregations**

- ▶ The EP Church has decided to introduce the concept and practice of eco-congregations within its setup in Ghana. My visit to Scotland is in fulfillment of that desire and quest.

Alliance of Religions and Conservation

- ▶ In February 2012, the Alliance of Religions and Conservation and Tree Aid of the U.K. partnered the EP Church to undertake a 3-day workshop on tree management and conservation for religious bodies in northern Ghana.

- ▶ As a result, the EP Church and other Religious Bodies in collaboration with the forestry service will plant 20,000 seedlings in religious schools and faith communities this major raining season.
- ▶ The ARC is assisting the EP Church to draw up a comprehensive environmental development plan for the next seven years that will address issues of land degradation, water management, sustainable land management and sustainable agricultural practices

within the context of religious principles and values underpinned by CARE FOR CREATION philosophy that is found expressed in virtually all religions on earth. The plan will also seek to integrate religious principles and values in the teaching and learning practices in schools and colleges run by religious bodies in Africa.

AWARDS

The EP CHURCH has won several awards in recognition for her Environmental Protection Activities. They include:

- ▶ United Nations Environment Award – 2009 [Presented in the U.K. Jointly by Prince Phillip and the UN Secretary – General, Ban Kim – Moon.]

1. Ghana National Environment Day Award – 2010.
2. Ghana National Farmers' Day Environment Award – Northern Region – 2010
3. Environmental Protection Agency Regional Award – Chereponi [Northern Region] – 2006

RELIGIOUS BODIES NETWORK ON CLIMATE CHANGE

- ▶ The EP CHURCH led in the formation and launching of the **Religious Bodies Network on Climate Change** in Ghana in July, 2010. The formation of RELBONET was to fill a vacuum that was left and recognized by some independent development institutions,

when in 2009 National Consultations organized towards the Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen by Government and Civil Society, completely left out Religious Bodies.

- ▶ The EP Church exhibited leadership and with assistance and facilitation by the World Bank Office in Accra, organized a sensitization seminar on Climate Change for Religious Bodies and thus RELBONET was born to fill that vacuum and satisfy that need.

- ▶ **RELBONET** is the major **Faith-Based Organization** in Ghana that is devoted to work in the area of Climate Change. It has over 10 (Ten) major mainline Religious Bodies in membership including the 3(three) Major Muslim Organizations', and the Federation of Muslim Women Associations' that are officially recognized in Ghana, and also includes very key Ecumenical (Faith) Bodies and Institutions that serve as affiliates to RELBONET.

- ▶ The numerical strength of RELBONET is conservatively in excess of over 5 Million Ghanaians. RELBONET therefore has the ears and voices of over 5 Million Ghanaians every week and is best positioned to carry out effective dissemination of any climate change messages or actions directly to citizens.

Affiliated Institutions

- Christian Council of Ghana
- National Catholic Secretariat [Dept. of Human Development]
- Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council
- Office of the National Chief Imam
- Council of Independent Churches

- ▶ The Vision of RELBONET is: **“To Become a Lead Advocate and Actor on Issues of Climate Change; Based on Our Faith and Beliefs”.**
- ▶ Since inception, RELBONET has carried out Climate Change Education among Islamic and Christian Religious Bodies in Ghana.
- ▶ In 2011, we held a 3 day National Workshop for Religious Bodies and their Leadership on key Climate Change issues to enable them understand the effects and remedies that may be available in stemming the tide.

- ▶ At the workshop a representative of the Ministry of Environment came to educate us on the National Policy Framework on Climate Change, while representatives from the Forestry Commission also informed the house about REDD+ Project issues and preparations that are needed to qualify applicants for such projects. This was done to enable RELBONET position itself to take advantage of any opportunities that might exist in the implementation of these national projects.





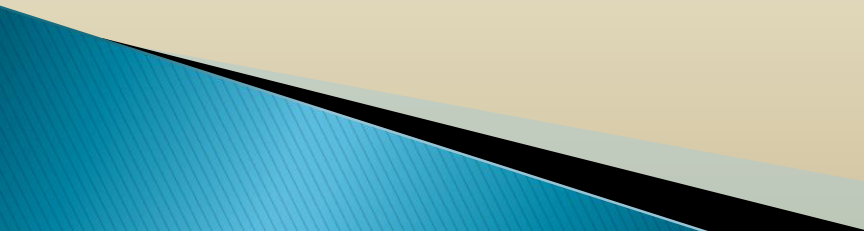




STRATEGIC PLAN

Under the RELBONET Strategic Plan we have 5 CORE Objectives:

1. ENGAGE POLICY MAKERS AND PROJECT IMPLEMENTERS REGULARLY TO POSITIVELY INFLUENCE POLICIES ON CLIMATE CHANGE.
2. TO PROVIDE THE PUBLIC WITH RELEVANT AND ADEQUATE INFORMATION; EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION [IEC] ON CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES TO THE PUBLIC.

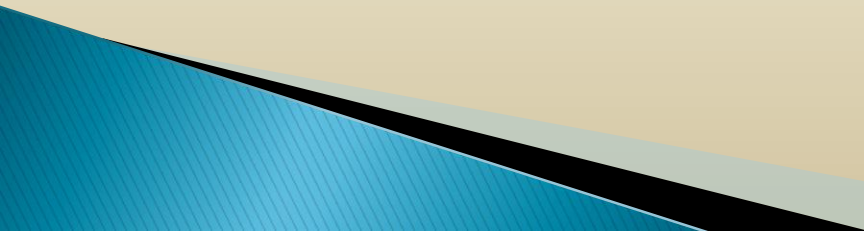
3. STRENGTHEN ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY THROUGH THE BUILDING OF ADEQUATE AND EFFICIENT HUMAN RESOURCE BASE.
 4. MOBILISE FUNDS FOR PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION
 5. PROMOTE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING; RESPECT; TOLERANCE AND TRUST AMONG MEMBER ORGANISATIONS OF RELBONET.
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- ▶ Specific activities aimed at achieving all these objectives are outlined in the Strategic Plan and I wish to encourage your leadership to look into these activities and plans and indicate which areas we could undertake jointly.
- ▶ RELBONET intends to participate in the National Afforestation Programme that has been launched by the Government and provide mass education to citizens on the effects of climate change, using our large numbers and constituencies.

CHALLENGES

- ▶ Inadequate Funding Sources for Project Implementation
- ▶ Inadequate Education on Climate Change Issues especially among the grassroots population of citizens
- ▶ Inadequate Technical Capacity.

WAY FORWARD

- ▶ Establish Useful and Enduring Partnerships.
 - ▶ Mobilization of Financial Resources for Climate Change/ Environment Activities.
 - ▶ Capacity Development.
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CONCLUSION

- ▶ We look forward towards an improved relationship with the Church of Scotland especially in the areas of Climate Change and Environment to enable us achieve our goal of becoming the foremost “green” Church in Ghana.

Prepared and Presented

by

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[RELBONET]

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