

The Pilot Projects

The AACC and ARC have compiled a short list of practical potential pilot projects, including:

- * An afforestation project in The Congo, which would be conducted through the Salvation Army
- * Restoration and conservation of degraded lands in Ghana, which would be conducted through the Evangelical Presbyterian Church
- * Conservation programmes in the Kilimanjaro region of Tanzania through Tanzania's Evangelical Lutheran Church
- * Eco-training through theological institutes and parish visits by the Anglican Church of Kenya
- * An organic farming and alternative conservation programme run by Ethiopia's monasteries
- * A South African project to make coffins out of timber from invasive trees and distribute them to poor families.

What Happens Next?

Once a project is finished, both parties will discuss how to proceed, including whether the project could be replicated within the same community and whether it could be expanded or replicated elsewhere in the country. It is hoped that the relationship between the twinned churches will last for longer than the project itself, and that this will be just the beginning of a long-term friendship and discussion on how to work together to help the global natural environment. We hope other faiths and their diasporas will create something similar.

How can we develop our own eco-twinning?

ARC will not be running these projects, but in the beginning we will act as advisors while the churches take the idea and run with it. If your faith community already has a twinning arrangement, then setting up eco-twinning could be as easy as talking with your partners, discussing how the degradation of the natural environment is affecting your communities and what, with your shared energies and knowledge, you can start to do about it together. We always like to hear about partnerships as they happen - so please keep us informed.



A South African project to employ people to make coffins out of wood from invasive trees and distribute them to the poor could be one of the first Eco-Twinning projects.



Discussions between faith leaders in Zambia in 2006 on how to respond to the challenges of the environment together.



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ECO-TWINNING

Making links between churches sharing in the planet's future



Girls from the school at Ethiopia's Sebeta nunnery help construct the nunnery's bio-gas digester - a project funded by ARC and an ideal example for eco-twinning.

What is Eco-Twinning?

“Twinning” is the practice of towns, parishes, schools or dioceses developing long-lasting relationships of mutual benefit between communities in two distinct places. “Eco-twinning” takes that idea further - linking churches in the global north with those in the global south experiencing the detrimental effects of climate change at first hand. Initially we are focussing on Africa, where a third of the population is already experiencing droughts, floods and resource-based conflicts resulting from global warming.

What does it achieve?

Eco-twinning offers an opportunity for those in the developed world not only to understand the impacts of climate change on the lives of other communities - but also to do something to help. It is more than just carbon offsetting. Rather than making a one-off, token gesture as so much carbon offsetting has already proven to be, it is about allowing understanding, relationships and practical actions to develop over the long term. It is a practical and viable next step for church communities to take on the journey of reacting responsibly to climate change, once they have changed their light bulbs, insulated their roof spaces, assessed car-pooling and moved to Fair Trade.

Where does the idea come from?

The germ for this idea came in 2007, after the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) in Nairobi, Kenya, published the results of research they had undertaken among four national church councils and 71 churches in mostly sub-Saharan Africa. The research - commissioned by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) - revealed that the majority of churches in Africa were already aware of the importance of ecologically sustainable development and also that the level of awareness had steadily increased during the last few years. One of the reasons for this was probably because climate change was already having substantial impact on many local communities in sub-Saharan Africa - including changes in rainfall patterns, water flow, land degradation, crop cycles and other imbalances. While many African Churches were already involved in

promoting the conservation of the natural environment, the majority of people surveyed said that if they were to expand their environmental outreach they needed more training, finance, and perhaps most critically they needed the confidence that they were not facing these issues alone. ARC then had the idea of putting communities already affected by climate change in partnership with those who have yet to experience its effects, in the hope that everyone - and the earth - will benefit. Eco-twinning was endorsed by African Church leaders at an AACC consultation on climate change in Kenya in June 2008.

How does it work?

A church in the global north is matched with a project proposed and managed by a church in Africa. It is important that the projects are proposals from the grassroots and so reflect what Christians affected by climate change perceive as their needs. It does not just mean richer parishes in the north paying for eco-projects in the south. Web-based communication links could be set in place, building ongoing relationships. Additionally, church schools in both places would be encouraged to tailor their environmental lessons around what they learn from each other's communities and their environmental concerns and passions. The projects would be run and managed through the local church. The two churches twinned would directly manage the funding relationship and the development of the twinning. ARC's partner, Conservation International, will provide technical expertise and assistance particularly for US-based eco-twin arrangements, either through its field offices or its vast network of conservation partners.

How are projects proposed?

The initial projects will come from those suggested by the AACC in 2007. Or, if a church group or diocese already has a twinning relationship with a church or diocese in the global south, eco-twinning can be added as another dimension to that existing relationship. This idea can be expanded to include eco-twinning a town or city (with all its faith groups) with a larger eco or climate change project in the global south, building on existing twinning arrangements.



“We live within the covenant God makes with all living things, and we are in relationship with them... We must listen to the people who fish the sea, harvest the forest, till the soil, and mine the earth, as well as to those who advance the conservation, protection, and preservation of the environment...”

from an Evangelical Lutheran Statement on the Environment



One of the pilot projects is in Kenya, where there has been heavy logging, and clearing of land to grow flowers and vegetables for export.