

RIAP Consultation statement (April 2014)

Preamble

We the participants of four ecumenical Christian faith based organizations from South Asia namely Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB), Church's Auxiliary for Social Action, India (CASA), National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCCSL) United Mission to Nepal (UMN) met for a Regional Consultation in South Asia at Kathmandu from January 28 to 30, 2014. The focus of the event was on the impact of Climate Change in South Asia and the Role of the Church. Our Common commitment is to God's creation, God's kingdom and God's promise to give life in abundance. This was the focal reason to revisit the concerns and issues linked to climate change in the contemporary context from the theological and biblical perspective. We do realize and endorse that any delay in our response to contributing in resolving this issue in South Asia, as well as globally will be too late. We wish to record our personal and organizational lapses. We also acknowledge that the actions of the rich and powerful have particularly contributed to endangering creation. We seek forgiveness from God for such unfaithful and harmful action and urge those in emerging economies to avoid the same mistake.

Our conviction to work for restoring life and creation by taking side with the poor, vulnerable and the excluded communities has motivated all the four organizations of the Regional Inter Agency Partnership (RIAP) to share this statement of commitment for our engagement in our countries.

Theological Conviction

We believe in one God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who created all things good and made humans in His own image, giving us dignity and freedom, and entrusting us with the responsibility to nurture and steward creation. A creation that is beautiful and bountiful with rivers and streams, sandy deserts and beaches, mountains and valleys and every living thing that breathes life into the universe.

We believe that God bestowed this blessing that we may cherish and enjoy it responsibly bearing in mind the generations to come. But our sinfulness and disobedience have broken our relationship with GOD, with ourselves, with others, and with creation.

We worship Jesus Christ, as the agent, the purpose, and the sustainer of creation (Eph 1:15 – 20) who reconciled all things to Himself and liberated creation from death and decay through His death on a cross, and His resurrection from the dead.

We recognise our responsibility as members of the Global church, united under Christ, to build Gods Kingdom of peace and justice.

We will strive towards restoration and protection of creation and work towards the fullness of life that God intends for all people.

We affirm our work is underpinned by our Christian values. We however will not engage in or condone proselytization.

Key Issues and Call to Action

We affirm our conviction that the emission of greenhouse gases has increased as a direct consequence of human action. This has led to a rise in average global temperatures and unequivocal change in climate. As a result life on earth is beginning to transform as seasons are shifting, temperatures are climbing and sea levels are rising. This is impacting lives of millions of people globally with the worst effects being felt by women, children and vulnerable sections. In South Asia we are witness to the rapid recession of our glaciers and the flooding of our coastlines and islands. In our context climate change is increasingly manifested through anomalies in weather and related issues as listed below:

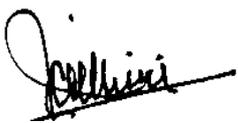
- Significant changes in the rainfall pattern and temperature fluctuations adversely impacting agriculture, a primary occupation of the majority of our communities leading to loss of livelihood, food insecurity and malnutrition.
- Increased incidence and severity of extreme weather events such as droughts and floods etc., leading to loss of lives, destruction of infrastructure, displacement of people, deprivation and poverty,
- Stress on water resources and shortages due to changes in precipitation, depletion of surface and ground water affecting health, agriculture and sanitation.
- Loss of biodiversity, an important contributor to both climate-change mitigation and adaptation through the ecosystem it supports, has negative consequences for all life.
- Proliferation of heat related illnesses, spread of vector borne diseases and pest infestations impacting human health, crops and forests.
- Displacement of people due to loss of traditional livelihoods and food insecurity as hundreds of thousands migrate nationally and regionally in search of alternative occupation. The future is likely to see mass migration leading to resource conflicts.

We realize that if we do not initiate collective action, climate change will rapidly alter air, lands and waters we all depend upon for survival, with devastating impacts which are already being experienced, especially by the poorest and most marginalized groups in our region.

We have therefore, by consensus adopted the following call to action.

1. Call for unity and alliance among the national, regional and global Church to better advocate and negotiate on the issue of climate change for justice to all
2. Upscale to the SAARC level in our advocacy work on this issue.
3. Join and contribute to other regional and international initiatives on climate change issues.
4. Intensify each organization's work on adaptation and mitigation with more opportunities to share and learn from each other.
5. Initiate research based projects on climate friendly practices, resilient livelihoods etc. and share the knowledge base among RIAP members and the wider community of practitioners.
6. Pledge to assess, monitor and reduce staff and organizational carbon footprint. Also work towards change in life style and reduction of consumption patterns.

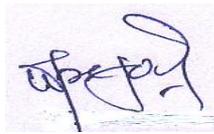
United in the need for a strong response to the climate crisis, the RIAP partners call on the global church, governments, civil society organisations and other like-minded institutions to unite and take effective and definitive action on climate change towards creation of a future that is fair and just for all.



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