G20 Interfaith Forum
Bringing Faith and Policy Together

G20i Regional Recommendations
Africa

The Africa Regional Consultation was launched on **August 24th** 2020 with a panel discussion providing guidance for deliberation in working groups that took place between August 31st and September 2nd 2020. The closing session on **September 14th** 2020 allowed for an exchange on all the recommendations and reflection in linkages with other G20 processes. Overall, more than 70 participants from at least 15 countries were present, representing 3 different religions.

The Recommendations focused thematically on:

1) the impact of the **COVID-19 pandemic** on concerns of daily lives for men, women, and children.
2) **hunger** exacerbated by locust swarms and lock-downs due to COVID-19,
3) deforestation and related **environmental** consequences,
4) the **financial situation** of African countries and the urgency to cancel their debts as well as

COVID-19

Presentation on the situation

Preamble

The world is facing a unique challenge with COVID-19 and its resulting problems, which have altered the lives of millions of people adversely. No one fully understands its nature nor yet have concrete answers to problems resulting from it emerged. COVID-19, a novel pandemic, caught the world by surprise and baffled the imagination of the leaders, scientists, philosophers, and the people of faith. There are no known cures, there is no sure treatment, procedures, or vaccine for combating it. The nature of the virus itself is said to be mutating with changing symptoms.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected almost all aspects of human endeavors posing serious challenges to health, education, politics, economy etc. The very fabric of the socio-economic life of individuals and nations has been greatly affected leading to increase in loss of businesses, lives and livelihoods and creating hunger and increasing poverty and fears in the minds of citizens and mistrust and conflict among nations. As a result of the above, there is a need for all good people to unite with a view to finding solutions to the problems it has caused.

The value of this exercise is for good people to think about the issues and formulate ideas that will help in creating policies in managing all the issues surrounding it. If government and its agencies can work together harmoniously with faith-based organizations, community leaders, scientists and medical professionals, they will be able to discover physical and spiritual healing necessary to stop the pandemic. hopefully in a record time.

With this in mind, a group of experts and opinion leaders from around Africa have come together to identify challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and suggested recommendations for submission in the upcoming 2020 G20 Summit as itemized below.

Covid-19 Challenges and Suggested Recommended Solutions

1. Issues with respect to the role of religion in responding to COVID-19

a. Restrictions on religious gathering and worship services

b. The need to recognize religion as essential services

c. The role of religion in changing behavior and attitudes

d. The role of religious organizations in creating messaging and information sharing

e. Failure to recognize Religious Leaders as partners in managing the pandemic

f. Lack of coordination with public sector and government organizations

Challenges

The disruption and halt of social and religious gatherings and rituals could impact the social fabric, mental health and contribute to rise in domestic violence targeting women and children. The closure of schools will further harm the morale and wellbeing of the youth and children. It goes without saying that resolution of COVID-19 problems cannot be achieved by religious establishments alone, but religion is very crucial in the lives of human beings, for religious worship is seen as a means of reaching out to the Creator, the master healer, who has the potential to solve or make bearable all human problems and suffering. The loss of that avenue of redress is one of the major concerns of people of faith. Other avenues of hope and redress that the pandemic shut down are access to other sources of hope and help such as traditional leaders, cooperative leaders and other opinion leaders and organizations.

In this regard, religious (that is faith-based organizations) become a primary source of support, comfort, and guidance. They can then share health information to protect members of their own communities in likely more acceptable ways than from other sources and can provide pastoral and spiritual support during public health emergencies and other health challenges and can advocate for the needs of vulnerable populations.

Recommendations

1.	A major recommendation coming from most participants in the working group was that government and international agencies need to find more effective ways to work with Ecumenical Councils, separate faith actors and communities and cooperative societies, councils of traditional rulers, captains of industries, community leaders, media and

humanitarian agencies in fashioning and implementing policies in areas of:

1.2. Training on the nature, prevention and management of the disease and the general conduct
of the populace in responding to it;

1.3. Developing sound messaging and information dissemination on all issues such as control, therapeutics, vaccines and other measures within each of their constituencies;

1.4. Helping public officials to understand the distinctive needs within different religious traditions with respect to religious worship and observance, and performances;

1.5. Structuring public gathering and cultural celebrations and performances in ways that are maximally protective of good health practices while maintaining sensitivity to religious needs and differences;

1.6. Supporting media to reserve prime time and otherwise effective slots for religious leaders of faiths to deliver lectures and lead prayers and to let believers pray from their homes and to reduce the need for religious gathering;

1.7. Support religious leaders, faith-based organizations and faith communities so that they may educate communities about various impacts of COVID-19, including violence against women and children, and assisting them in encouraging healthy hygiene and safe burial practices among participants in faith services.

2. Health Impacts

a. Challenges of mental and psycho-social health

b. Inadequacies of a weak or fragile healthcare system cry out for reform

c. Effect on routine activities like immunization and antenatal/maternity services

d. Challenges of malnutrition as a result of starvation during isolations and lockdowns

e. Family Health

    i. Problems of spouse and child abuse and increase in Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

    ii. Vaccine Issues

    iii. Lockdown created unhealthy idle time for family members, encouraged child labour and teen pregnancies

f. There is an emerging and increasing danger of over-medicalization, over-professionalization of and over-commercialization of healthcare systems.

Challenges

The pandemic forced families to be in-door each day of the many weeks of the restrictions unlike during the pre-pandemic time. Resultantly, parents and children/wards became idle which in turn created lots of unpleasant frictions in the family. Many breadwinners lost their jobs and could no longer afford three square meals per day. Also, some parents could not keep their children/wards busy as schools were closed which coalesced to exacerbate family and mental health problems including increased child labour and teen pregnancies. As if that was not enough, many with underlying health issues, pregnant women and nursing mothers could not access medical care with attendant complications and death.

The pandemic has exposed the fragility of the health systems in many African counties. Non Covid-19 cases were denied care due to shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE) as many of these could not be imported during global lockdown. One should admire medical professionals, scientist and all who are working round the clock to stop the spread of, vaccines and cure for, COVID-19.

Additionally, during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, a marked increase in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) was recorded. The many measures and controls put in place to mitigate against GBV proved to be ineffective because victims could not distance themselves from their abusers or access external support designed to prevent and protect them leading to further health problems.

There is an ever increasing phenomenal of, first, over-medicalization of health which has disempowered communities, leaving them with little means and motivation to engage in community-based primary health care for health promotion and disease prevention; second, over-professionalization of health care whereby limited resources (doctors, other health workers, pharmacists and pharmaceutical, etc.) provide sophisticated treatment for a few while the majority are denied basic health care; and third, over-commercialization of health whereby commercial interests are driving the health agenda.

Recommendations

2.1.	There is need to set up mechanisms for reporting and monitoring of abuses during possible lockdowns especially in cases where there have been known prior abuse occurrences.
2.2.	Countries must invest in the healthcare system, to cater for the citizens.
2.3.	Local production of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should be encouraged.
2.4.	Vaccines should be made available to all as rapidly as possible at low or no cost, as need warrants.

2.5.	Messaging should be developed drawing on trusted leaders (e.g. religious, traditional, community, gender based, etc.) to enhance public willingness to accept reliable vaccines.
2.6.	There is a need to set up support for women's and children's rights groups and community leaders to effectively engage in awareness raising and hygiene promotion and domestic violence prevention activities.
2.7.	There is need for the integration of GBV and COVID-19 information in text message campaigns, radio, and other mass communication modalities and to involve women and youth (especially girls) in the development of Information, Communication and Education (ICE) materials on COVID-19 and domestic violence.
2.8.	There is need to set up the machinery and support to ensure that pandemic-safe surge housing is available for women and children at high risk of violence in their homes.
2.9.	There is need to restructure Healthcare Systems to remove or minimize over-medication, over-professional and over-commercialization.

3. Sharing understanding concerning worries about vaccines

a. There is fear, misinformation, general misconception and a lack of knowledge about vaccines for COVID-19

Challenges

Given that a cure or vaccine is not expected in the short term, success in reducing the spread of the disease and managing the fallouts depend on ordinary citizens trusting public authorities and changing their behavior in accordance with official advice.

Recommendations

3.1.	See 1-1.2. and 2-2.2
3.2	Support to strengthen public trust and cooperation by inclusively communicating technocratic policy.

4. Role of religious communities in dealing with these issues

a. Religious leaders were excluded from the management of all issues pertaining to the pandemic

b. See 1, 2 and 5 and other recommendation in other sections

Recommendations

4.1.	Ecumenical councils as well as distinct religious communities and faith actors should work with government and other leadership in executing common policies. See 1., and relevant sections of 2. and 5.

5. Food, Shelter and Security Challenges

The numbers homeless people increased drastically and so do the associated

b. Problem of access to food during lockdown and isolation

c. Future possible food shortage due to low harvest as a result of the pandemic lockdown

d. Problem of security and enforcing compliance to lockdowns and curfews

Challenges

Food distribution has been almost at a halt thereby creating shortages of food and widespread hunger that led to scattered and sporadic violence and death. In addition, agricultural products were not deemed as essential; hence food transportation was preferentially allowed but farming was not, thereby creating potential low harvest and a resultant food shortage in the nearest future.

The economy could face a much bigger problem if the crisis disrupts the timely and proper purchase, supply and distribution of agricultural inputs like fertilizer, enhanced seeds and pesticides, which would have a devastating impact on food production.

COVID-19 is putting security under serious threat in areas of rising job loss and employment, domestic and gender-based violence, food security, human trafficking, terrorism, social unrest and domestic and international conflicts in all fronts of human endeavor.

Recommendations

5.1.	There is an absolute need to implement policies developed by public officials on the role of religious opinion leaders in identifying, monitoring and ensuring the distribution of food, essential drugs and palliatives to the people particularly the aged, widows, vulnerable children, and the ill (e.g. AIDS, Cancer, and other chronic diseases) with a view to avoiding unnecessary deaths.

5.2.	There is need to develop practical recommendations on how to secure lives and properties during lockdowns with associated preventive and punitive measures. This should be clearly identified, documented and disseminated; at the least, the policy should empower community security apparatus in helping law enforcement agencies of government in its execution.
5.3.	Support vulnerable populations to be identified in a non-stigmatizing manner and efforts should be tailored to reach hard to reach populations (for example, in rural areas) and provide care.
5.4.	Support existing infrastructures in churches/mosques and mobilize community–based response to COVID 19 and to provide support to vulnerable groups.
5.5.	Make provision for the support of agricultural systems and provide much needed support to farmers that have been heavily affected by recent locust infestations through a communal or cooperative based organized system which has been known to be more effective than individual outreaches.
5.6.	Support containment of the spread of the virus among internally displaced people (IDPs) and prisoners.
5.7.	Support regional agreement and mechanisms in dealing with migrant workers and refugees at this time of crisis and ensure a secure network for movement of people.

6. Economic impact

a. The pandemic caused a lot of damages to the economy of every nation in the world by creating

    i. Unemployment through loss of jobs

    ii. Loss of business opportunities especially hospitality and travel industry

    Iii. Negative impact on the economy and businesses

b. People and businesses were thrown into debt of various kinds with bleak prospect debt relief

c. The effect of the New Normal in business is an ever-growing concern

d. Expected effect of possible population growth from baby boom in the nearest future created yet unknown issues

Challenges

The pandemic caused a lot of damages to the economy of every nation in the world. It affected industries, commerce, trade, transportation, agriculture, tourism, marine, airline, education, etc., all of which were shut down, and many have since closed down permanently resulting in the loss of jobs thereby compounding already troublesome unemployment issues in almost all nations and more especially in African nations.

Recommendations

6.1.	Support a sustainable and accessible safety net and provide comprehensive financial support program along with a scheme to distribute basic food stuffs and a market stabilization program via community and cooperative organizations.

6.2.	Formulate a scheme for the distribution of food stuffs and market stabilization program via religious, community and cooperative organizations.

6.3.	Take advantage of existing support and distributions systems within religious communities and cooperatives to streamline and supplement delivery of vital goods and services.

7. Responding to stigmatization and discrimination

There is discrimination against and stigmatization of COVID-19 patients and those that test positive creating a fear of contact with them

b. There is misinformation in diagnosis and the nature of the way COVID-19 is spread

c. There is a general confusion about the very nature of the virus creating additional mistrust among the populace

Challenges

Social distancing in crowded schools, housing conditions, prisons, and public transportation may lead to stigmatization of already marginalized groups. Misinformation arising from various sources in society causes confusion in assessing the risk level from the pandemic and what individuals should do.

Several groups may experience stigma during the COVID-19 pandemic. These include health workers; people who tested positive for or have recovered from COVID-19; those who have been released from

COVID-19 quarantine; emergency responders or healthcare workers; people who have underlying health conditions that cause coughing; and people living in congregate (group) settings, such as people experiencing homelessness.

Recommendations

7.1.	Support provision of the right information about COVID-19.

7.2.	Address the issue of misinformation and rumours and find other ways to build trust within communities: i. Take care to assure that messaging defuses and does not contribute to stigmatizing and stereotyping; ii. Engage communities, religious leaders and other influencers to relay the right information and help reduce fear and misperceptions concerning those who are ill with the virus.

7.3.	Encourage media channels, including social media, to speak out against stereotyping groups of people who experience stigma because of COVID-19.

7.4.	Support social support services for people who have experienced stigma or discrimination.

8. Impact on Education

a. The pandemic has profound negative impact on education

b. Anxiety of lost time and of education opportunities and what the New Normal in eLearning will be

c. Internet based learning was only available to the privileged few through use of Technology (e.g. online and internet-based learning)

d. Possible flare up of infection in schools due to crowding in post lockdown era

Challenges

COVID-19 pandemic has profound negative impact on education as it affected learning in public places like schools and centers. Institutions of learning were closed, and students of all ages were unable to go to schools and have been left with nothing to do. On the other hand, most private institutions were able to continue using e-learning while poor students and those living in rural areas and those attending public schools were left out. Many were exposed to unnecessary child labor and abuse among other things and many may never be able to go back to school, especially girls.

Recommendations

8.1.	There is need to develop new ways of learning using the many available technologies such as radio, television, internet etc.
8.2.	There is need for the development of policies on educational technology that will make the internet and means of using it available to schools and students for e-learning at all levels of education.
8.3.	The third necessary policy development is that which completes and or complements the above two recommendations; it is the need for a new or integrated curriculum, study materials, and guidelines for homeschooling or learning, or self-education (that is autodidactism) including religious organization owned/run primary and high schools. This may be wholly informal (an alternative to formal) or may complement formal education. The important point is that new methods need to be found to minimize interruptions of education it times of pandemics and the like so that no children will be left without access to education and needed materials.
8.4.	There is an urgent need to set up procedures to prevent, contain and manage possible flare up of infection in schools due to crowding.

9. Government Responsibilities

a. Bridging confidence gap

b. Ensuring dissemination of authentic information about the pandemic

c. Establishment of non-religious, non-tribal and non-partisan working relationship with religious opinion leaders

b. Ensure due process and the rule of law is followed and that any emergency provisions are constitutional

Challenges

The level of preparedness of government authorities to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in providing valid information and taking urgent measures to adequately save lives is still not adequate in reaching and resonating within the African society. This is as a result of inadequate existing structures and systems to address the menace in communities.

In some countries the only legal instrument available for the implementation of a lockdown is through "Disaster management Act" a "State of Emergency" act and it can only be declared by the parliament. It only allows for restricting some freedoms (e.g. movement and assembly) but doesn't provide for national lock-down. Hence there is a general no constitutional provision for lockdowns, so Covid-19 measures was viewed through the lens of law enforcement and not as service delivery. A consequence of this is that in some countries, many people died at the hands of the police enforcing lock-down measures than by the disease itself.

Numerous vulnerabilities and inequalities exist, where millions in the communities lack access to basic necessities of life such as potable water, health care, housing etc. In addition, the lock down measures, coupled with lack of palliatives in many places and obnoxious policies in easing the lockdown led to trust deficiency and became a divisive factor between the government and the citizens. There is also a trust deficit between the leaders and the citizens leading to disbelief and disregard for preventive measures.

Recommendations

9.1.	To bridge the confidence gap that attends the pandemic, there is need for periodic systemic public briefing associated with the various recommendations in items 1 and 2 above especially on training, message and information dissemination.
9.2.	Government should set up and ensure a well-defined 'one stop go to platform' for the dissemination of reliable information about the pandemic.
9.3.	Establishment of non-sectarian, non-tribal and non-partisan working relationship with religious and other opinion leaders in connection with 8.2.
9.4.	Provide stimulus packages to various segments of the society.
9.5.	Government should ensure that all emergency regulations are legalized and that any curtailment of human rights should be proportionate and the minimum and least intrusive means consistent with the health and well-being of the public.

Group Members

Abakar Walar Modou; Abdullahi Lantana; Abiola Akiyode-Afolabi; Abuom Agnes; Adetiloye Victor A.; Adewole Isaac F.; Adeyemi Imam Fuad; Ahalo Harriet; Alkhaily Fatima; Amamnsunu Johnson Elijah; Baccino Alfredo; Brillant Sr. Barbara; Chelba Jalel; Durham Jr. W Cole; Elsanousi Mohamed; Falako Francis; Fasooto Kemi; Ahmed Garba Salisu; Gaye Yacine; Greyling Christo; Hackett Rosalind; Hill Mark; Ilesanmi Simeon; Joshua Ibrahim; Kabajuni Agnes; Kra Emmanuel; Makinde Abdulfatah; Makoka Mwai; Michuki Grace; Mohammed Kassim; Mombo Esther; Mussie Rahwa; Mustapha Zainab; NgwobiaJustina Mike; Ojapah Stephen; Oladosu-Uthman Habibat; Olukanni Adesina; Oré Sylvain; Ouasselegue Abdoulaye; Sanni Ishaq; Simon Sunday K.; Suleiman Fatima; Svatmananda Swami; Tegulwa Nageeba Hassan; Teshale Adane Dechassa; Tirha Khadijah; Toha Shamsoo Issah; Williams Uzoaku Juliana.

Fighting Hunger

1. Position FBOs on the Issue Hunger

Challenge

Governments have not sufficiently leveraged on the potentialities of faith-based organizations in their efforts to solve food crisis on the Continent. How can governments setup collaboration with faith-based organizations on fighting food insecurity and how can FBOs make themselves as critical stakeholders and position themselves in a coordinated manner?

Recommendations

1.	The G20 should support the creation of structures to allow for joint efforts of religious actors and government entities in fighting hunger.
2.	FBOs should register poverty alleviation initiatives and request collaboration with relevant agencies, such as development agencies and state institutions.
3.	The G20 should foster and create strategic partnerships on a local level among FBOs and regional organisations fighting hunger, for example, through the implementation of agro-pastoral projects.
4.	Governments should leverage on the credibility of FBOs in the implementation of recommendations.
5.	FBOs to partner with government/ institutions in building agriculture community centres to implement food security responses.

2. Collaborate to Mechanise Agriculture

Challenge

Most of farming activities are inefficient and not sustainable and there is a lack of training for men and women in the field of food processing, production, storage, and marketing.

Recommendations

1. Governments should support mechanization of agriculture including food storage and processing. FBOs can provide supportive sensitization on the mechanization for their communities, whereas government should ensure monitoring of mechanization of activities.

2. In partnership with FBOs, governments should foster agricultural commercialization in order to increase investment in African countries towards food sufficiency.

3. FBOs/RA should speak out and advocate for regular training, that such relevant trainings and engagements should be offered and accepted by both men and women.

4. Governments need to ensure infrastructure that allows sellers and buyers to circulate with their vehicles and / or their means of transport.

5. Explore the potential and strengthen the role of religious networks in sustainable Agroecology: new methods of farming to be energy efficient, water efficient; protect the quality of soil; limit harmful pesticides.

6. Encourage and create favourable conditions for local community sustainable food production (e.g. community gardens) – allocate public land for community gardens (rural and urban areas).

7. There should be investment in research and manpower development. This will bring about new techniques in food production for boost in agriculture and human capital.

8. Faith based organizations can influence their members/communities to generation funds for investment in agriculture to curb food insecurity eg in my community my faith group has for 5 years now become the food storehouse of the host community through its Food Processing Program. No waste of any kind, tubers and grains are preserved at the time of harvest, processed and stored in bags. For many months the community and the neighborhood continues to enjoy proximity to food supply at affordable prices.

3. Conduct needs assessments and ensure up to date data on hunger and livelihood distribution

Challenge

There is a lack of evidence and data to allow for an assessment of appropriate and necessary actions in fighting hunger.

Recommendations

1.	Government should work closely with population agencies to ensure that up to date data is available on census and needs of livelihood. Faith communities should be part of this process and advocate for truthful and comprehensive research.
2.	There should be efforts to combine emergency food distribution with the collection of important social and health data – to be able to design safety nets for vulnerable families (young and old) – whilst strengthening health and social systems.
3.	Review national agricultural policies – to support both small and commercial farmers, as well as "cooperative networks".

4. Provide training and capacity building to ensure equal participation

Challenge

How can faith communities be engaged in crafting curricula to increase equal participation, just distribution of goods and sharing or livelihoods?

Recommendations

1.	Promote the concept of participatory engagement in the educational and pedagogical curricula and realizing the principle that wealth's enough for everyone and it exists to be shared with justice.
2.	FBOs/Religious Actors should engage in advocacy with bodies concerned with curriculum development in order to add aspect of just livelihood distribution.
3.	The G20 should identify and support FBOs with training and resources to engage in sustainable endeavors toward food availability and sufficiency for the less privileged, the unemployed and victims of violence and natural occurrences.

4.	Trade policy model by the nations to increase food supply at lower prices especially where the poverty rate is high. On the other hand, government can increase the cost of food supply produced by the poor to increase their earnings.
5.	Preaching of Peace and Stability as indispensable keys to policies and programs formulation that affect food security at all levels.

5. Adress the sources of conflict that lead to hunger, poverty and scarcity of livelihood

Challenge

Conflicts are often resource based.

Recommendations

1.	Governments should engage religious actors as mediators between parties of resources-based conflicts.
2.	G20 should encourage national governments to emphasize interreligious/interfaith education as an important long-term strategy to fight conditions that produce poverty and hunger.
3.	Ensure structured dialogue (formal agreements) between faith communities and national governments, multilateral organisations – to ensure effective implementation and collaboration; and to curb fraud in distribution of food and procurement of services.

Environment

Background

Africa is rich in natural resources ranging from arable land, water, oil, natural gas, minerals, forest reserve, wildlife, human and natural resources. The continent holds a huge proportion of the world's natural resources, both renewables and non-renewables. For example, Africa is home to 30 per cent of the world's mineral reserves, 40 per cent of the world's gold and up to 90 per cent of its chromium and platinum. Africa holds 65 per cent of the world's arable land. Over centuries, the world have benefitted in one way or the other from the natural wealth in Africa. Africa served and is still serving nations of the world.

Unfortunately, conflicts, socio-economic inequalities, and most importantly environmental issues such as climate change predicted to impact more on this continent due to its numerous vulnerabilities plaguing the continent. In Africa, religious beliefs are main drivers for cultural values, social inclusion, political engagement, and economic prosperity. And almost all religions agree that the sanctity of nature is an act of divinity and should be treated as such. Therefore, In sub-Saharan Africa, religious communities have increasingly started to raise awareness, mobilize faith inspired action, provide organizational support, and advocate for policies that fulfil and expand government commitments to protect rainforests and the rights of indigenous peoples; which is providing the needed socio-economic and environmental support; however, these activities are often uncoordinated, fragmented and competing. This is the major gap that requires world leader's attention to ensure sustainable development of the continent.

The Challenge

The environmental crisis facing the African continent is increasingly seen as a crisis of values and, religion. Therefore, integrating spiritual values into countries' recovery plans, to rebuild back better their economies after COVID-19, can shape the 21st century economy in ways that are clean, green, healthy, ethical and more resilient. The current crisis is an opportunity for a profound, systemic shift to a more sustainable economy that works for both people and the planet. Over 70 per cent of people living in sub-Saharan Africa depend on forests and woodlands for their livelihoods. A significant share

of these resources is, however, used unsustainably while others are lost through illegal activities. Africa loses an estimated $195 billion USD annually of its natural capital through illicit financial flows, illegal mining, illegal logging, illegal trade in wildlife, unregulated fishing, environmental degradation among others. Some of the key environmental issues worthy of consideration are:

Land degradation: Africa is the second largest continent in the world with a landmass of 30 million square kilometers. In 2013, the annual contribution of livestock to the economy was $65 billion USD. However, 500,000 square kilometers of land in Africa is being degraded every year due to soil erosion, bush burning, salinization, building, industrialization, road networks, pollution, chemical fertilizers, pesticides/herbicides, drought, earthquake, desert encroachment, over boring of the earth surface in search for water, deforestation, and other Natural disasters.

Climate change and energy crisis: Most of the continent has been classified as hot spot due to both underlying environmental and socioeconomic issues. This Climate change is already inducing conflicts, migration, freshwater scarcity, loss of biodiversity, energy poverty and dwindling agriculture. This has resulted in over 86% of the population rely on solid fuels for cooking, heating and lighting; using wood as domestic energy, which in turn is depleting the forest reserve. This effect amounts to a large number of deaths recorded each year from hot weather.

Air quality: Indoor and outdoor air pollution poses a major problem for both the environment and human health. About 90 per cent of people in Sub-Saharan Africa are exposed to indoor air pollution. The key drivers of poor air quality in Africa are urbanization, industrialization and fumes/combustion from automobiles, war (use of chemical and biological weapons), ethnic and religious crisis, etc. Poor air quality affects human health, with an estimated 600,000 deaths per year in Africa.

Illegal trade in wildlife: The illegal trade in wild flora and fauna poses serious economic and security risks for Africa which is estimated to be worth up to 150 billion USD per year. Local demand for wildlife products is equally high, and the illegal local harvesting of biological resources may actually be higher than the global organized crime. A considerable proportion of species of all kinds are now rated threatened or endangered by the international union for the conservation of nature (IUCN), and some are now extinct

Biodiversity/Epidemics: Given the rapidly growing human populations in most of African countries, the interactions between human and wildlife species is also on the increase. This affects the symbiotic lifestyle between man and wildlife and there are also the likely implications for transmission of zoonoses back and forth between humans and wildlife, such as Ebola, Lassa fever and Corona viruses. etc.

Freshwater, marine and coastal resources: Africa's expanding economies are resulting in greater demand for freshwater, but its quantity and quality are decreasing as a result of over-exploitation, climate change and pollution. More than half of the population in sub-Saharan Africa still do not have

access to portable drinking water and improved sanitation, compared to 90 per cent coverage in North Africa. Land based activities are polluting freshwater bodies and causing degradation especially that there are 320 coastal cities in Africa.

Recommendations

In order to address the above highlighted challenges, the followings are recommendations to the G20:

1. Promote the participation of African Faith Based Organisations (FBO) in international dialogue on global environmental issues.

2. Establish a Fund that will enable FBOs in Africa to sensitise and train religious leaders and their congregations on environmental protection and climate change in Africa.

3. Request the establishment of a Faith for Earth Africa Chapter and adoption of strategy for interfaith collaboration for the environment.

4. Request the empowerment of youth and women, representing more than 70 to 80% of the population in Africa as drivers of change, and the leaders of today and tomorrow.

5. Establish resource mobilization drives to take action on environmental issues from global and regional faith-based solutions to environmental challenges.

6. Recommend to the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and Ministries of education to introduce Climate Change education, Environment Club and renewable energy as disciplines in the Education Systems, from early stages of education to Institutions of Higher Learning.

7. Recommend policy frameworks by the G20 to recognise indigenous peoples and empower them in establishing and managing biodiversity and ecosystem restoration in their territories and for their livelihoods and resources.

8. Facilitate the establishment of a regional African hub for the Green Climate Fund; and strengthen the implementation of African Union 2063 Agenda, by providing capacity building support and financing from the G20 to be able to deliver on its aspirations.

9. Establish an African independent body (African Working Group on Environmental Conservation) as a major regional step towards monitoring the commitments of various African states in focusing on Climate Change within the structure of the African Union.

10.	Recommend the inclusion of interfaith voice, demonstrated via the introduction of Interfaith Roundtables in the Global and Regional Heads of States Assemblies; as a Policy, effected through a UN declaration and ratification by the various Member States, or via any other viable means. This could ensure that the vital voices of the Faith sector are captured at the highest level of decision making.
11.	Recommend reviews to the selection criteria for accessing the GCF for local projects by Countries under the Paris Agreement to make it more accessible for Countries that have not previously had the capacity to win grants. Secondly, they could also amend the criteria to allow NGOs and Faith-led Institutions to equally qualify for the awards.
12.	Adopt and enforce legislations against all that constitutes hazard to the environment affecting both man and nature; and implement policies to halt illegal wildlife trade, poaching, land, marine and ecosystem degradation.
13.	Adopt by the African Union and national governments practical strategies to engage faith actors in conservation as an important implementation arm for the SDGs and the 2063 African Agenda.
14.	Maintain and support traditional techniques of water management for agriculture by rural households that preserve water, the ecosystem, and ensure food security. Some traditional water management techniques, such as the noria (water wheel) and khottara (traditional underground water channels) are resilient and can be maintained by local families and communities.

Roles of FBOs

Acknowledging that, dozens of faith-based organizations are already providing the needed socio-economic and environmental support; and commending the current practices of connecting faith and conservation in Africa; these organizations need to focus on some distinct strategic approaches including:

a. Strengthen education and awareness of the linkages between religious values and environmental stewardship knowing that around 65% of educational institutions are owned by religious institutions.

b. Provide sustainable and nature-based solutions to socio-economic challenges, through their aid work, such as cooking stoves, etc.

c. Enhance interfaith collaboration to fight illegal trade in wildlife as God's creations.

d. Establish Religious botanical gardens to protect biodiversity and contribute to sustainable biodiversity economy.

e. Facilitate the creation of networks to promote ecosystem stewardship that improves livelihoods, boosts economic growth and maintains environmental sustainability.

f. Ensure that institutions owned by religious institutions adopt green buildings standards including switching to renewable energy in the planning, construction and running of these institutions.

g. Facilitate setting up and running local nature reserves to control farming, grazing of domestic animals, hunting, tree cutting or other destructive practices.

h. Establish national and continental project for tree planting, organic farming, environmental cleaning, and sustainable waste management.

Conclusion

Faith actors in Africa and around the world have been providing important socio-economic support at global, regional and national levels. Environmental stewardship, however, has not taken the center stage in ensuring the sustainability of the continent and there is a major

role for the faith actors to play. While, faith leaders and faith communities are ready for a systemic and transformational change, they require support, capacity building and empowerment not only through the much-needed financial assistance, but through the adoption of the requires institutional mechanisms, regulations and policies to strengthen their role in environmental sustainability.

Our commitments are strong and our aspirations are high. The recommendations we are providing are all possible and can be implemented through our commitment to intra and inter-faith collaboration and national and global support through mechanisms provided by the G20.

Debt

Background

Debt issues and overall finance will be central to the G20 deliberations and there will be further meetings of the G20 finance ministers. A number of religious groups are engaging with advocacy on the stand still issue including which countries are covered, dealing with China and the private sector. The issue of middle-income countries for Africa is important. One of the objectives is to get ideas on how to sharpen the analysis country by country and to strengthen the advocacy. Within the discussion it will be crucial to consider the interconnectedness of issues around debt, illicit financial flows, corruption, and reparations.

General Recommendation

1. Since South Africa is the only African country represented in the G20, the G20i should engage the South African Sherpa's office to ensure recommendations that are beneficial to all of Africa, are being put forward.

Challenge

African Countries and Africa as whole are largely dependent on developed economies. COVID-19 has made the existing inequality among African countries more visible, particularly the gap between rich and poor. (Cf. Pope Francis speaking on interdependence during Wednesday General Audience, Sept. 2nd, 2020).

Recommendations

2. Develop a strategy for Africa to become sustainable economies through fostering expertise and development in the countries.

3. Work towards equitable societies where everyone has access to the basic necessities regardless of their background and status.

4. Work with faith-based communities to build a global economy based on principles of solidarity and thereby reduce financial inequality within and among countries.

Challenge

Governments have made decisions that have been harmful to the weakest and poorest off the population, but beneficial to big business.

Recommendation

5.	Ensure a structural separation between state and business where state consults business as any other stakeholder and is not unduly or exclusively influenced by business.

Challenge

Africa loses more money through illicit financial flows than it receives in aid, investment and loans combined and thereby creating and increasing inequality in Africa.

Recommendations

6.	G20 needs to make sure that it includes strategies to curtail illicit financial flows from Africa and the developing world for example through combatting harmful tax competition and tax havens globally.
7.	Strengthen international standards regarding beneficial ownership and automatic exchange of information.
8.	Frozen assets should not be kept in banks that are complicit in receiving these assets. Rather they should be kept in an ESCROW account in regional development banks, which in the case of Africa is the African Development Bank. In addition, countries where illicit financial outflows have been held secretly should not have the prerogative of stipulating the conditions for their return.
9.	Illicit funds, when recovered, should be returned to their countries of origin.
10.	Strengthen the judicial system globally to ensure accountability and transparency in tackling illicit financial flows.
11.	G20 should engage in a global discussion on reparations for historically incurred financial losses, stolen assets, and damaged resources and review the legitimacy of the debt of the African countries.
12.	The G20i joins in the call for a comprehensive debt moratorium for African countries.