

KAICIID INTERFAITH FELLOWS AND YOUTH FORUM

8 OCTOBER 2020, ZOOM

WORKING GROUP 3 ON

“Ecological challenges: rainforest protection and purposeful action to protect the environment”

OVERVIEW ON CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

EXPERT INTERVENTION

Definition of rainforests. 5 lessons about rainforests:

1. Rainforests are home to over half of all terrestrial species; however, their size is decreasing dramatically due to deforestation and could be completely destroyed if the rate of degradation continues
2. Rainforests are a powerful natural solution to climate change
3. Rainforests play an essential role in maintaining the Earth’s limited supply of fresh water
4. Destroying rainforests via our consumption patterns (human activity such as agriculture and cattle ranching for remote customers)
5. 1 of 4 people worldwide depend on rainforests resources for their livelihood (1.6 billion people)

We are part of the problem, but also part of the solution: demand products, change consumption patterns, policies are adapting (zero deforestation)

CHALLENGES/RECOMMENDATIONS OVERVIEW



Challenges are inter-related, and so are the recommendations.

Challenge 1 – Awareness gaps between generations and among communities

Recommendation 1: Voices of affected populations

Awareness of the issue is not universal. Recognize affected (indigenous) populations' agency to speak for themselves without imposing opinions – they might be best suited to provide solutions and generate empathy (feeling of being concerned) among populations remote to rainforests.

Recommendation 2: Environmental literacy

Equip next generations with knowledge to consider the environment in the context of economic growth (and “accumulation of wealth”), alternative energy sources and political as well as legal considerations.

Raise environmental awareness and develop sustainable mindset through education, including in non-formal educational sector, art, music – important sources for most people.

Develop more educational programmes for youth to learn, explore, and reflect on ecological issues, incl. based on knowledge reflected in spiritual teachings and how to align life with the ideal of protecting environment.

Recommendation 3: Role of key influencers: religious and community leaders, media, young people

Develop a media policy, considering the importance of media to shed light on environmental issues and raise awareness.

Promote *dialogue* as a powerful tool for key stakeholders to raise awareness.

Challenge 2 – Community ownership and responsibility

Recommendation 1: Aligning religious and ecological values and practices

Ecological considerations in the context of faith: advocate “green worship houses” – can lead by practical examples that will be followed by communities; explore how provide training and understanding for people (of faith communities, incl. religious leaders) in adapting practices that are both religiously and ecologically correct (e.g. farming, etc.).

Recommendation 2: Role of religious and community leaders

Religious and community leaders are uniquely positioned to mobilize communities (bottom-up approaches key for policy diffusion processes) in participating in inclusive and evidence-based climate action based on shared norms and values.

Start within communities themselves; establish and build collaboration between youth representatives and religious leaders to leverage policy implementation bottom-up and equip stakeholders with tools for action to be taken.

Recommendation 3: Empower youth voices

Create space for / consult activists and organizations to encourage youth to be aware that they can have a leverage in shaping policy and ensuring ownership and accountability taken within communities / decision-makers (who are responsible for adopting laws and policies to regulate environmental protection and ensure sustainable development – empowering “enabling environment”, also to involve youth)

Example of “best practices”: environmental police force in SA (raising awareness and enforcing accountability)