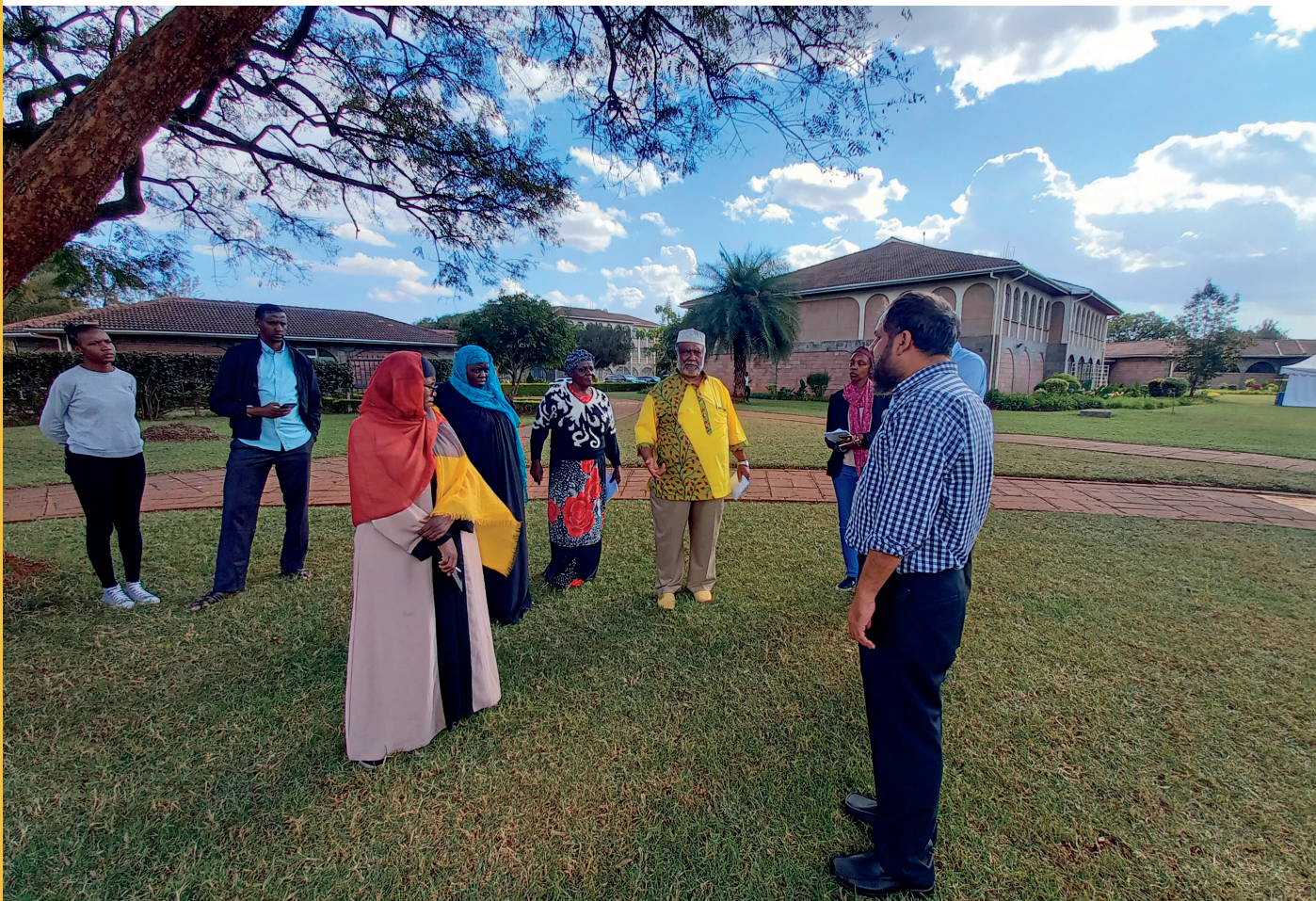


# THE POWER OF FAITH-BASED APPROACHES FOR LANDSCAPE RESTORATION IN KENYA

## WEBINAR SUMMARY REPORT



November 9, 2022

## WEBINAR PARTNERS



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## KEY MESSAGES

- Faith communities are already engaging in landscape restoration initiatives and environmental conservation programs, but more members need to engage in them.
- Religious leaders must be sensitive to their God-given role in leading their congregations in restoring degraded lands in Kenya.
- The primary motivation for faith communities' engagement in restoration is the divine obligation based on various holy texts and teachings.
- Land restoration contributes to climate change mitigation and adaptation as climate change impacts will directly affect our people, animals, and the habitats around us and will severely affect the livelihoods of people and communities around us.
- Faith-driven approach to land restoration is important because it promotes the understanding that land restoration is a viable way to improve livelihoods and enhance food security and climate change resilience.
- Due to their influence and resources, faith institutions and leaders play a pivotal role in land restoration movements.
- Faith communities require support in the following areas to scale up land restoration such as; partnerships in financing capacity building in workshops for religious leaders, seed grants to women/youth groups to grow tree nurseries for distribution, capacity building on tree seedlings maintenance, best farming practices, climate change adaptation, and mitigation, etc.

## BACKGROUND

The success and sustainability of landscape restoration depend on many factors, one of which is the involvement of all actors across scales. In recognition of this fact, several key messages of the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021 - 2030 stressed that everyone has a role to play in ecosystem restoration, adding that it requires actions by many. Moreover, concerted efforts are needed.

It, therefore, makes sense to involve faith-based organizations/institutions, leaders, and communities in restoration efforts, especially in Africa where religion permeates all aspects of its populations' life, as noted by Rev John Mbiti, a Kenyan philosopher and Anglican priest in his book -African Religions and Philosophy (1969) where he said ***'African people are notoriously religious (and) religion permeates into all the departments of life so that it is not easy or possible to isolate it.'*** They present several opportunities that can be leveraged to support, implement, and scale restoration efforts.

The Power of faith-based approaches to landscape restoration in Kenya webinar, therefore, aimed to showcase the restoration initiatives of the members of the faith-based restoration action group that was formed after the Kenya National Landscape Restoration Scaling Conference 2021 to engage in capacity building for faith communities in restoration and explore how they can contribute to scaling restoration in Kenya. It also explored opportunities for supporting their participation in restoration. The specific objectives of the webinar were:

- Share the work of the faith-based restoration action group.
- Showcase the work of faith communities and institutions in restoration in Kenya, highlighting bottlenecks and discussing opportunities to solve them.
- Present a guide/call to action on promoting landscape restoration with faith leaders/communities/organizations.
- To discuss how sharing restoration knowledge with faith communities can be done.

The webinar took place on **November 9, 2022** and was organized by the faith-based restoration action group. This action group was formed to explore how the faith-based action group can contribute to the overall goal of scaling up landscape restoration in Kenya and strengthening the capacity of faith communities engaged in restoration. Several faith-based organizations (FBOs) presented during the webinar: Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA), Laudato Si Movement, Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM), Minda Trust, ELEKA Trust, Olive Branch Mission, Inter-Religious Council of Kenya (IRCK), Green Anglicans, and World Vision.

**An estimated 250 people attended the webinar.**

## **MOTIVATION OF FAITH COMMUNITIES TO ENGAGE IN RESTORATION**

All religions agree that nature is an act of divinity and should be treated as such. Thus, the primary motivation for faith communities' engagement in restoration is a divine obligation or duty, as all religions agree that nature is an act of divinity and should be treated as such. This is reflected in the various holy texts. In addition, faith actors also recognize the importance of land restoration to livelihood improvement, food security, and climate change resilience.

Table 1 below provides examples of excerpts from holy texts and beliefs about environmental stewardship.



<p><b>Christianity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Bible says in the book of Genesis that humankind was placed in the garden of Eden to take care of it. Genesis 2:15 "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it".</li> <li>● Catholics have also been inspired by the Encyclical letter <a href="#"><i>Laudato si'</i></a> of the Holy Father <b>Francis</b> on Care for Our Common Home.</li> <li>● The Anglican Church of Kenya's Decade theme of '<i>Wholesome Ecology</i>' is an important integral part of "<i>The wholesome ministry for the Wholesome Nation.</i>"</li> </ul>
<p><b>Islam</b></p>	<p>Environment protection and restoration are essential aspects of Islam. As stewards of Allah's creation, Muslims are tasked with the maintenance and restoration of the environment proactively. For example, according to the Islam religion, a person is cursed who pollutes a water mass or goes to relieve themselves in a place where people are walking or using to rest. In addition, planting a tree from which either an animal or bird will feed, or a human being will feed or sit under its shade is considered an act of charity. Muslims are therefore required to conserve our resources as much as possible, plant trees as a means of good deeds, keep the environment clean and safe, practice sustainable consumption whenever possible, and lastly, take care of all of Allah's creation.</p> <p>Excerpts from the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad's teachings ("hadith") demonstrating these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Allah in the holy Qur'an states, <b>"it is He who has appointed you viceroys on earth ... that He may try you in what He has given you."</b> (Surah 6:165).</li> <li>● Surah 7:32 of the Qur'an where Allah (SWT) says, "O children of Adam... eat and drink: but waste not by excess, for Allah, loves not the wasters." Thus, the Islamic attitude towards the environment and natural resource conservation is not only hinged on the prohibition of over-exploitation but also on sustainable development.</li> <li>● Prophet Muhammad (SAW) encouraged Muslims to plant trees. In one of the Prophet's Ahadith, he states, "There is none amongst the Muslims who plants a tree or sows' seeds, and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, but is regarded as a charitable gift for him." (Sahih Bukhari).</li> <li>● Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was against the cutting or destruction of trees unnecessarily, as is evident in the following: "He who cuts</li> </ul>

	<p>a lote-tree – unjustifiably, Allah will send him to Hellfire." (Abu Dawud).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Prophet (SAW), "The earth is green and beautiful, and Allah has appointed you stewards over it", demonstrates that it's our responsibility, as caretakers, to maintain vegetation on earth.</li> <li>● The Qur'an glorifies nature and wildlife as an earthly heaven, a mirror to the lush forests of Paradise above. In the Islamic faith, faith in the environment is similar to good faith towards humanity and God since Muslims believe He created all. "...And do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption." <a href="#">Qur'an, 2:60.</a></li> <li>● When we don't restore these things to harmony, we only pollute our little bubble of survival. That is why God says our catastrophes are self-inflicted; "Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by what the hands of people have earned". As if to give a wake-up call, people are told these destructive processes can heal and eliminate social and natural disorders through belief in God and respect for nature. So... let them taste part of (the consequences of) what they have done that perhaps they will return (to righteousness)." (<a href="#">Qur'an 30:41</a>).</li> <li>● Quran 2:30 God almighty says, telling the angels, "I have created on earth the human being, and I have made him my representative on earth to make this world a better place.</li> <li>● <b>The Prophet said this about the environment: "The world is sweet and green, and verily Allah is going to install you as vicegerents in it in order to see how you act".</b> Based on this hadith, one of the many lessons we can extract is that the Prophet SAW showed much care and concern towards the environment and aimed at caring for and protecting it wholeheartedly.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Hinduism</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hindus are firm believers in nature and believe protecting the environment is a duty. "The earth is a goddess and a mother. The mother deserves our devotion and protection". Hindus also believe that the whole world is one family as we have only one earth, sun, and moon. As a result, they believe in offering gratitude to the earth for the benefits it provides is shown by protecting it.</li> <li>● Hindus participate in any activity related to improving mother earth and nature. Land restoration is one of the activities.</li> </ul>

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|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many Hindus touch the floor before getting out of bed every morning and ask their mother to forgive them for trampling on her foot.</li> </ul> |
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## THE IMPORTANCE OF A FAITH-BASED APPROACH TO RESTORATION

- All religions agree that the creation is an act of God and should be treated as such spiritual leaders at all levels are critical to the success of the global solidarity for an ethical, moral and spiritual commitment to protect the environment and God’s creation (UNEP Report - Religion and Environmental Protection).
- An estimated 84% of the world’s population is affiliated with one or more of the estimated existing 4,300 religious and spiritual communities.
- Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) own approximately 8% of the habitable land surface. Therefore, they can contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 15, by ensuring the lands they control are managed sustainably.
- FBOs run approximately 60% of the schools. This provides an opportunity for knowledge of the importance of achieving the SDGs and environmental stewardship, including landscape restoration, to be embedded in school curricula for students from a very young age.
- FBOs and faith leaders have a considerable influence over their adherents. They can mobilize, equip and deploy their many adherents to volunteer to support a cause such as land restoration. They can also greatly inspire behaviour change because the communities trust them. For example, the Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'* of the Holy Father Francis on care for our common home has inspired environmental action among Catholics, and catholic churches have made it a priority. This influence makes them important development and implementation partners for landscape restoration initiatives.
- Places of worship are strategically placed to create greening messages in sermons for sensitization and growing seed nurseries for distribution to congregants.
- Faith communities have structures, systems, and programs that can be leveraged to communicate and create awareness about landscape restoration and environmental stewardship. They can also be avenues for training and implementing restoration efforts. These include:
  - Programmes for women, youth, and children (e.g., Sunday school), Madrasas, etc.)
  - Educational institutions such as schools, colleges, and universities provide an opportunity to ensure that students are trained in landscape restoration.



- Hospitals.
- TV and radio stations.

## EXAMPLES OF RESTORATION ACTIVITIES BY FAITH ACTORS

Faith actors engage in a variety of restoration approaches, including capacity building for faith leaders and members on landscape restoration, events to raise awareness about the importance of environmental restoration and their role according to their faiths or religions, such as tree planting or growing, forest restoration or rehabilitation, mangrove restoration, clean-ups, kitchen gardening with desalinated recycled water, and advocacy for a variety of issues, including land reforms.

Table 1 below summarizes the restoration of the various faith actors in Kenya.

ORGANIZATION	RESTORATION ACTIVITIES
Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Capacity Building through various approaches, such as exchange visits for learning.</li> </ul>
Laudato Si Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Events for creating awareness on landscape restoration:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Laudato Si Week - Happens during the month of May when we celebrate the release of the Encyclical Laudato Si</li> <li>● Laudato Si Chapters - Chapters have nationwide projects that are geared towards restoration.</li> <li>● Season of Creation - SOC runs for a whole month from September 1 to October 4.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Capacity building through the Laudato Si animators training and Laudato Si contemplation training.</li> <li>● Climate advocacy.</li> </ul>
Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tree planting.</li> <li>● Forest rehabilitation, e.g., the rehabilitation of the Narok forest.</li> <li>● Mangrove restoration.</li> <li>● Clean-ups.</li> <li>● Capacity building and advocacy.</li> </ul>

Minda Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advocacy for land reforms to ensure land rights for women.</li> <li>● Mangrove restoration in collaboration with fishermen and income-generating activities such as keeping beehives in the mangrove trees for honey production. Have planted more than 200 000 mangroves to date.</li> <li>● Encourage community members to engage in kitchen gardening to reduce expenses on vegetables.</li> <li>● Plan to distribute tree seedlings in mosques for land restoration.</li> </ul>
ELEKA TRUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fruit trees and herbs seedlings are distributed in places of worship to children and families.</li> <li>● Kitchen gardening using desalinated recycled water with women's Mangrove tree planting for all.</li> <li>● Religious leadership capacity building for Landscape Restoration.</li> </ul>
Olive Branch Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tree planting exercise where 120,000 trees were planted in South Kajiado.</li> <li>● Reforestation activities with Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and Loitokitok Prison Staff Team.</li> <li>● Restoration of Kimana Sanctuary wetlands.</li> <li>● Amboseli Ecosystem Restoration Program through which the following has been accomplished: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Founded the Greening Oloitokitok and Green Village.</li> <li>● Established community 20 tree nurseries in Entonet, Kimana, and Namelok areas of Kajiado South to facilitate tree distribution in the community.</li> <li>● Partner with schools and other educational institutions to start Greening Clubs, which focus on planting and nurturing trees in those institutions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Inter-Religious Council of Kenya (IRCK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Creating awareness among faith leaders on environmental conservation and protection through workshops and webinars.</li> <li>● <b>Reclaiming Our Green Initiative</b> is a faith-led initiative that strives to prevent, halt and restore degraded landscapes at the congregational level. It has several pillars, including one on tree growing and land restoration, whose primary goal is to promote environmental conservation and food security at places of worship. The initiative's accomplishments include establishing</li> </ul>

	<p>demonstration sites, planting trees, and developing information packs and toolkits on tree growing. The process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mobilize and coordinate faith-based communities to participate in the conservation, restoration, and sustainable utilization of terrestrial ecosystems and their services, especially ecosystem-based adaptation initiatives that will provide nutritious food, fruits, and medicine and improve their livelihoods.</li> <li>● Build the capacity of religious leaders to take urgent action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats and halt the loss of biodiversity through tree growing at places of worship.</li> <li>● Undertake tree growing at places of worship.</li> <li>● Improve visibility of faith-led forest and landscape restoration interventions through a faith forests digital communication strategy.</li> </ul>
Green Anglicans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tree growing.</li> <li>● Waste collection and recycling.</li> <li>● Promotion of Green energy.</li> <li>● Green garden for seedlings.</li> <li>● Climate-smart enterprises.</li> <li>● <a href="#">Farming God's way</a></li> <li>● The ACK has developed a strategy for mainstreaming Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction.</li> <li>● The Green Anglican Movement in Kenya with the Diocesan Bishops leading the process as Green Ambassadors.</li> </ul>
Hindu Council of Kenya (HCK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Hindu Council of Kenya has done tree planting twice a year since 2005, planting more than 187,000 seedlings.</li> <li>● For any activities or events, we start with tree planting. Recently during Diwali, we gave two seedlings to each guest to plant, nature, and grow them.</li> <li>● Give fruit seedlings to schools. The students take the responsibility to plant, nature and grow trees.</li> </ul>
World Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>World Vision uses the Empowered World View (EWW) approach in faith-based land restoration. EWW is a dynamic faith-based empowerment approach that encourages individuals and</b></li> </ul>

	<p>communities to examine beliefs, mindsets, and behaviour in light of scripture and God’s plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Application of EWV in Faith-Based Land Restoration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faith-Based Land Restoration in Oloitoktok.</li> <li>• Faith-Based Land Restoration in Elgeyo Marakwet.</li> <li>• EWV training for the Faith-Based Restoration Action Group in Elgeyo Marakwet and Nairobi on June 27 – July 1, 2022, and <b>20<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022, respectively.</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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## CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY FAITH ACTORS ENGAGED IN RESTORATION

- Challenges in accessing land, particularly for women.
- Political interference, red tape, and corruption.
- Droughts and prolonged dry spells affect the growth and survival of trees planted.
- The sub-division of group ranches in Oloitoktok, Kajiado County, leads to more land degradation as land will be subdivided into smaller parcels sold and cleared for agriculture. Indigenous forests and trees are lost in the process.
- There needs to be more awareness across communities of the adverse effects of land degradation on their well-being and livelihoods, as well as the associated cost of degradation. There is also limited knowledge of the significance of land restoration, thus continuing to engage in activities that cause land degradation.
- The pressure of influential faith leaders for faith communities to invest in long-term ecosystem restoration initiatives is relatively small compared to the pressure to invest in other sectors such as health care, education, etc.
- Limited technical knowledge and capacity in the design and implementation of restoration initiatives.
- Inadequate funding to support restoration initiatives, especially sustainable funding.
- The high cost of indigenous seeds and seedlings.
- Restoration efforts are labour-intensive.
- The slow adoption/uptake and replication of restoration practices. For example, the idea of desalination wastewater from washing clothes and utensils has yet to take root; thus, more sensitization is essential.
- Restoration takes time because trees have a slow growth rate and extensive degradation takes time to restore.

## **OPPORTUNITIES TO PROMOTE A FAITH-BASED RESTORATION APPROACH**

- There is a lot of land available for restoration.
- There is a growing awareness among faith communities of the significance of land restoration.
- Working with religious leaders to spread the message about land restoration and its benefits to their members.
- Faith leaders can advocate for existing laws on land restoration to be implemented.
- There is a lot of funding for climate change initiatives from the government (County and National Governments) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).
- The integration of alternative income-generating activities that promote restoration, e.g., beekeeping in mangrove forests, selling fruits, etc.
- Restoration efforts have opened employment opportunities for locals, e.g., in tree nurseries. Waste management can also generate employment opportunities, especially for the youth.
- The high demand for tree seedlings as more people embrace tree planting in their homes.
- The prioritization of tree planting and land restoration by the new government regime.
- Engaging the children, teens, and youth in restoration.
- Using approaches such as Empowered World View (EWV) to help faith leaders and actors across multi-faith contexts develop restoration plans based on the degradation issues in their specific contexts.

## **LESSONS LEARNT FROM FAITH-BASED RESTORATION**

- Faith and traditional leaders best spread the gospel about land restoration using the scriptures.
- Faith is a powerful motivator of environmental stewardship, which makes it essential to combine science and faith-based approaches to land restoration.
- Faith leaders and institutions have the influence and resources to create much-needed awareness and greatly inspire behaviour change.
- Faith leaders can play the vital role of stewards of peace through land restoration. For example, Reclaiming Our Green Initiative has engaged faith leaders in the Kerio Valley Belt Region to plant trees during peace initiatives which help restore land and security along the belt.
- Communities will only practice land restoration if they derive benefits from it.
- Children are fast learners in matters of greening, starting with tree nurseries.
- Clergy are beginning to appreciate their role in restoring degraded landscapes.

- Places of worship, and other related infrastructure, can serve as sites for tree nurseries and demonstration sites for training on restoration practices implementation.
- We must underscore the importance of a multi-sectoral approach in addressing climate change and restoring our land.
- There is a need to create ownership within individuals and the greater communities on the importance of conserving their environments and participating in environmental restoration initiatives.
- There is a need for sustained advocacy and awareness of the impact of climate change and how to build adaptation and resilience.

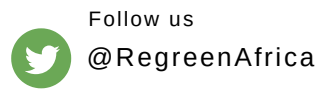
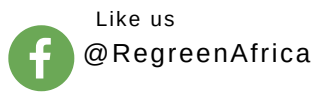
## THE WAY FORWARD

- Implementing the faith-based action group action plan for 2023 that will focus on the following:
  - **Advocacy:** distributing a call to action for all faith communities, documentation of success stories and testimonials of faith-led landscape restoration initiatives and creating visibility of existing success stories and testimonials.
  - **Capacity building:** Training of faith-leaders in land restoration techniques & methodologies and developing faith-backed key messages and toolkits on land restoration.
  - **Partnership building to complement and scale restoration efforts.**
- Continuous creation of awareness among faith communities on the importance of environmental protection and restoration by sharing knowledge on restoration with them in the following ways:
  - Building the capacity of the faith leaders who are credible voices trusted by faith communities.
  - Ride on the available platforms that exist, like mosques, churches, temples, etc.
  - Leveraging media houses owned by faith communities to reach many communities that listen to them.
  - Develop a restoration guide for faith-based communities.
  - Using platforms like the faith-based restoration action group to build synergies among faith communities and create joint programs, e.g., field activities, conferences, etc.
- Growing the faith restoration movement.
- Taking advantage of opportunities to promote a faith-based approach to restoration, such as land available for restoration, the growing awareness of the significance of restoration among faith communities, working with religious leaders to spread the message about



land restoration and its benefits to their members and advocating for the implementation of existing laws that promote land restoration; tapping into existing funding for climate change initiatives, the integration of alternative income generating activities that promote restoration and create employment, prioritization of tree planting and land restoration by the new government regime, high demand for tree seedlings and using approaches such as Empowered World View (EWV) to help faith leaders and actors across multi-faith contexts develop restoration plans based on the degradation issues in their specific contexts.

- Developing interfaces with research, human rights defenders, and the government. Three key areas that research can support faith-based institutions in restoration are capacity building (skills and knowledge), monitoring and researching what is happening in the restoration space, and bringing that knowledge back into the planning and implementation.
  - **Capacity building:** capacity building on restoration integrating local collective knowledge and scientific knowledge. For example, training in agroforestry involves integrating trees within the various landscapes and focusing on the right tree, in the right place, for the right purpose. A capacity-building and strengthening program has been developed through the restoration movement in Kenya for faith actors involved in restoration.
  - **Monitoring:** monitoring restoration through citizen science tools such as monitoring apps like the Regreening Africa App that puts monitoring power in the hands of communities. This tool can monitor restoration progress on the ground and gives them access to that data. Such apps can be used to show the contribution of faith-based communities toward restoration in the country.
  - **Research:** It is vital to know the benefits of restoration and the type of impacts it has to enable actors to implement it, see what has worked and scale that and see where things have not been successful, and share those challenges. It's equally important to understand the processes, integrate the knowledge we collect collaboratively, and bring that knowledge to inform future planning for implementation for restoration.



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