

FAITH FOR EARTH



ONE EARTH
MANY RELIGIONS
ONE GOAL



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ONE EARTH – MANY RELIGIONS – ONE GOAL

Achievement | 2018-2019
Report

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Foreword

As the Climate Crisis continues to exacerbate and the deadline for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) draws closer, it is imperative that ever more actors are rallied for climate action, as transitioning to a sustainable future must be a truly global effort. The holistic vision of sustainable development embedded within the SDGs implores that all stakeholders, from individuals to nations, and from grassroots NGOs to multinational corporations, contribute to their achievement.

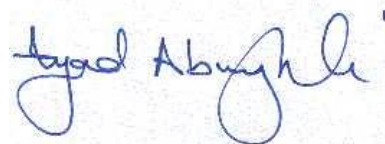
Previously untapped and undervalued contributors to these processes are Faith-Based Organisations (FBO's). FBOs have long existed on the peripheries of large secular multilateral organisations despite sharing intrinsic notions of moral responsibility and the valuable work they do in the field of development. FBOs are becoming increasingly active on environmental issues, as all religions contain messages of environmental care and stewardship for a planet that can provide for human flourishing, with notions of sustainability embedded in religious texts. FBOs are particularly valuable contributors to the SDGs given the immense influence they have. Over 80% of the global population is affiliated to a religious or spiritual community, and for many, faith is the main analytical lens which shapes their worldviews. FBOs are sustainable institutions in themselves, frequently existing for centuries and cultivating deep networks in the communities they are situated in, with faith leaders being viewed as reliable sources of guidance. FBOs are situated across the world, often operating in areas and serving communities that would otherwise be neglected.

We must embed the need for sustainable development in everyday life which can be achieved by tapping into the

spiritual wealth of people. Achieving the SDGs necessitates changes in mindsets, behaviours and consumption patterns, with faith leaders particularly well positioned to relay such messages in a more relatable manner than what may appear to be abstract climate science.

It is in this context, the Faith for Earth Initiative was launched in 2017. Faith for Earth foremost aims to strategically engage with faith-based organizations to collectively contribute towards the SDGs and fulfill the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. The initiative seeks to mobilize new inter-faith partnerships and utilize innovative approaches to unite around the common goal of sustainable development. With the strategic guidance and resources of the United Nations, the Faith for Earth Initiative has worked tirelessly since its inception to achieve its mission and expand the faith / environment nexus. As a testament to its progress thus far and the demonstrated value of engaging with faith communities to attain the SDGs, the Initiative has moved to UNEP's Executive Office under the direct supervision of the Deputy Executive Director.

We provide in this report a summary highlighting the work and achievements of Faith for Earth to date. We look forward to strengthening our partnership with FBOs and Faith leaders as part of the Faith for Earth Coalition to achieve our common goals.



Iyad Abumoghli

Director of Faith for Earth Initiative

Executive Summary

This report highlights the achievements of the Faith for Earth Initiative over the period 2018-2019 and progress made towards the attainment of its three overarching goals:

- 1) Strengthen Partnership with Faith-Based Organizations' Leadership for Policy Impact
- 2) Green Faith-Based Organizations' Investments, Operations and Assets
- 3) Establish an Accessible Knowledge-Based Support System

These goals were formulated to support the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and are intended to complement the holistic design of the SDGs. FBOs can positively contribute to sustainable development in comprehensive and diverse ways and the Initiative seeks to facilitate and catalyse these processes. This involves both broadly ensuring FBO's work is aligned to the SDGs, as well as contextual engagement that embraces the particularities of each faith. Given that Faith for Earth is primarily a normative advocacy initiative, much of the work focuses on expanding its network of affiliated FBOs and forging productive partnerships. These diverse partnerships may consist of linking FBOs with other FBOs, actors in the private and business sectors or with bilateral and multilateral institutions.

An underlying premise governing the work of the Initiative is that many solutions already exist to address climate change, but that is essential to partner organisations that together can mutually implement these solutions. Therefore, SDG 17 on "partnerships for the goals" directs much of the work of Faith for Earth and is the recurring SDG that is addressed in all the work that the Initiative undertakes. Simultaneously, given that Faith for Earth seeks to encourage, catalyse, mobilise, scale up and render more effective FBO

engagement on environment and sustainability, SDG 13 on "climate action" is the other ubiquitous goal that is always targeted. Nonetheless, the qualities and diversity of FBOs means they can contribute to all the different SDGs, whether it be encouraging investment into renewable energy for the attainment of SDG 7 or engaging in conservation efforts for the preservation of life on land (SDG 15). Further, UNEP, as a science-based organization, utilizes scientific knowledge as an effective tool that needs to be embedded in everyday life to help foster behavioral changes in consumption and production patterns (SDG 12). This is where Faith-Based Organizations have a comparative advantage in addressing the cultural dimension of sustainable development through tapping into the spiritual wealth of people, and highlighting that faith and science should be mutually supportive when addressing environmental issues.

Special attention was also paid to ensuring that Faith for Earth supports the implementation of UNEP's 2018-2019

UNEP Subprogrammes	
Climate Change	SP1
Resilience to Disasters and Conflicts	SP2
Healthy and Productive Ecosystems	SP3
Environmental Governance	SP4
Chemicals Waste and Air Quality	SP5
Resource Efficiency	SP6
Environment Under Review	SP7

Programme of Work and UNEP's sub-programmes. This alignment ensures that Faith for Earth supports UNEP's broader Mid-Term Strategy (MTS) that outlines the approach and deliverables for this crucial decade leading up to the deadline for the SDGs. UNEP will, within its mandate, promote environmental sustainability while contributing to a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Faith for Earth contributes to all sub-programmes directly and indirectly. Thus, the Initiative seeks to address all seven

priority areas outlined in the MTS. Emphasis is placed on (SP1) climate change, (SP3) healthy and productive ecosystems, (SP4) environmental governance (SP6) resource efficiency and (SP7) environment under review as these are the sub-programmes where FBOs can contribute most efficiently and where the three overarching goals are oriented towards. Each of the activities in this report demonstrates clear linkages to a particular SDG and UNEP's Programme of Work (PoW), with the Faith for Earth Initiative and its partner FBOs, important contributors to the attainment of the SDGs and the successful implementation of UNEP's Mid-Term Strategy.

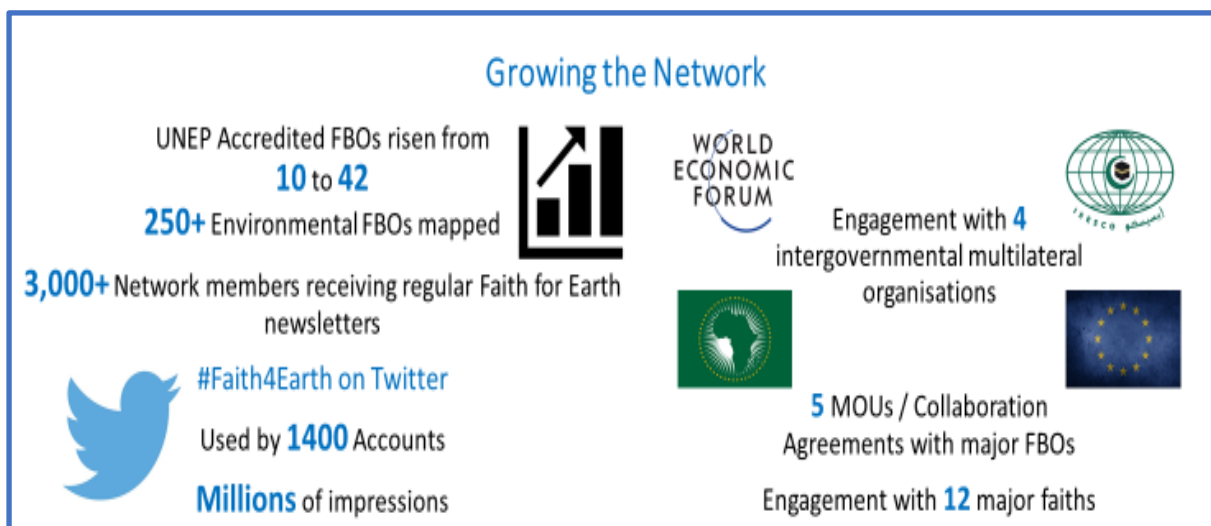
In practical terms, Faith for Earth has been able to increase the number of accredited FBOs from 8 to 45 during this period and enlist more than three thousand faith leaders in its emailing list for advocacy and engagement purposes. The Initiative has also been able to organize 8 global conferences, addressed more than 20,000 individuals, coordinated with 12 major religions, organized more than 30 webinars on environment and religion, and has worked on 15 thematic papers linking sub-programme priority areas with faith and published more than 20 articles as part of its advocacy campaign.

While Faith for Earth is working on its resource mobilization strategy, it has mobilized more than one million USD in in-

kind contribution in organizing its global events including holding the Vatican Laudato Si conference for more than 300 participants at UNEP as well as holding the global Faith for Earth Dialogue during UNEA 4 where 160 faith leaders covered their own participation for five days and organized 13 sessions with 63 speakers.

Faith for Earth is working with Intergovernmental organizations to adopt a strategic approach to engaging faith communities in environmental work. The most obvious success is the adoption of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation of a strategy based on major contributions from Faith for Earth.

Creating institutional partnerships is one of the major goals for Faith for Earth. Five Memoranda of Understanding, regional and global, were signed with United Religions Initiative (URI), the Parliament of World's Religions, the Responsible Finance and Investment Foundation (RFI), World Congress of Mountain Jews, and the Islamic Scientific, Educational and Cultural Organization (ISESCO).



Conferences & Capacity Building



Faith for Earth has (co)organized **8** major conferences & capacity building workshops



Faith for Earth participated in **16** further events

Nearly **USD 1,000,000** was raised from in kind contributions

20,000 people from diverse backgrounds have been directly addressed

Above **50%** female representation at events

30 Webinars & Online Conferences



Bridging the knowledge gap on linkages between religious teachings and the scientific approaches to fighting environmental degradation is an undertaking that Faith for Earth has prioritized. A text book "Faith for Earth: Time to Act" will be published in the coming few months in partnership between the Initiative and the Parliament of World's Religions and the Yale University Forum on Religion and Ecology, using UNEP's sub-programmes as the focus of the publication. The book will provide practical tools for FBOs and Faith Leaders in addressing environmental issues, but also scientists and environmentalists with much needed knowledge on religion's approaches to environmental issues.

Faith for Earth is conducting its work in full coordination with and participation of FBOs. Several meetings have been held and several surveys have been conducted to assess Faith for Earth approach and identify environmental priority areas where FBOs and Faith Leaders are most interested. In this context, Faith for Earth contributed to global meetings on Faith for Climate, Faith for Water and Faith for Ecosystems Restoration.

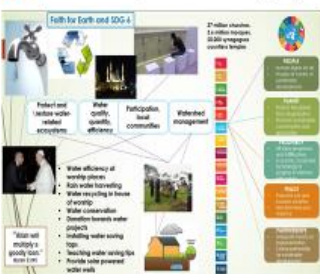
Engagement of young faith leaders is one of the priorities of Faith for Earth. Several workshops, conferences and webinars were conducted targeting and engaging young faith leaders to unleash their potential in designing and running innovative approaches to finding solutions for environmental challenges. The concept for establishing a council of young faith leaders is in the making as part of the Faith for Earth Global Coalition.

Faith / Science Nexus

15 papers and **20** articles produced
52 briefs and presentations prepared



Mapping of faith contributions to the individual **SDGs**



8 Surveys conducted



Collaboration with **10** academic institutions in **4** different continents

Introduction

Following a 2008 General Assembly resolution, the United Nations established the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-Based Actors for Sustainable Development in 2010 to promote interreligious, intercultural and policy dialogues. This Task Force emerged after an acknowledgement that faith-based organisations (FBOs) had long been on the peripheries of secular multinational development organisations, despite their significant potential, and actual, contributions to areas such as education, human rights and conflict prevention, resolution and mediation. With increased calls for more partnerships and the participation of civil society and NGOs to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the important role of FBOs in this field could no longer be neglected.

It is in this context, that the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) launched [the Faith for Earth Initiative](#) in November 2017. In January of 2018, the [UNEP Strategy on Engaging with Faith-Based Organisations](#) was released, which established the dynamics of such engagement and guides the work of the Faith for Earth Initiative. UNEP has included engaging with faith leaders and faith-based organizations as a strategy for implementing its sub-programmes in the [2020-21 Programme of Work](#). As a UN programme, the Initiative will be working under the overarching framework of the SDGs and encourages FBOs to do the same.

The overarching objective of this strategy is to integrate faith values with efforts to tackle environmental challenges and for faith leaders and FBOs to integrate the environment into their work and messages, all towards achieving the SDGs and Agenda 2030. Attaining this will be derived from achieving the following three goals:

- 1) Strengthen Partnership with Faith-Based Organizations' Leadership for Policy Impact
- 2) Green Faith-Based Organizations' Investments, Operations and Assets
- 3) Establish an Accessible Knowledge-Based Support System.



UN Organizations members of the UN Task Force on Religion and Development

Addressing these three goals will largely depend on mobilising local communities, coordinating communications and advocacy, encouraging knowledge exchange, advancing South-South cooperation, engaging in faith-environment thematic discussions and fostering new and innovative partnerships.

This report is structured by highlighting the different achievements and activities undertaken in 2018 and 2019 that correspond to each of the three goals outlined above. However, it is important to note that these goals are largely interlinked and that progress towards one goal may impact upon the other two, thus this report's structure is a rough categorisation to facilitate the presentation of achievements to date.

Goal 1: Strengthen Partnership with Faith-Based Organisations' Leadership for Policy Impact

The aim of this goal is to inspire action, empower and engage faith leaders, their institutions and followers to adopt holistic practices designed to tackle environmental challenges and transition to more sustainable practices. Due to notions of environmental stewardship, there are clear synergies between FBOs and sustainability agendas, with religious groups and leaders able to provide additional means of mobilising societal engagement for environmental protection in an unprecedented manner.

This Initiative will foster increased interfaith collaboration through identifying and addressing mutually prioritised issues. Such issues are ones where behavioural changes can have successful outcomes, such as addressing food waste or unsustainable consumption practices. FBOs are very well placed to encourage normative lifestyle changes at local levels, raising awareness and diffusing environmental proactivity. Achieving this goal in mobilising the full potential of diverse faiths and FBOs requires substantial advocacy campaigning to grow the network of FBOs participating in the Faith for Earth Initiative.

[social media](#). It has been used by 1,400 accounts, reaching several hundred million impressions. It is frequently being used by major faith-based organisations and individuals when referring to issues and intersections of faith and environment. This has been complemented with the creation of an innovative, inclusive and unique logo (seen at top of document), that reflects the diversity of faiths, the mission of the Initiative and the centrality of the sustainable development goals.

Simultaneously, a newsletter is prepared and shared via email with

#Faith4Earth
Used by 1400 accounts
Millions of impressions
3,000+ Newsletter subscribers
42 UNEP Accredited FBOs



network members on a regular basis highlighting the achievements and activities of the Initiative, as well as soliciting coordination and cooperation from members. This ensures that collaborating FBOs are kept up to date with the work and progress of the Faith for Earth Initiative.

Early into its inception, the initiative organized consultation meetings with prominent FBOs, including the [World Council of Churches](#), [The Alliance on Religion and Conservation](#), [Green Faith](#), the [World Evangelical Alliance](#), the [Joint](#)

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