

FAITH FOR EARTH COUNCILORS

India - 2021

Action Guide



FAITH FOR EARTH



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Mother Nature needs Everyone, Working Together **NOW**

“To resolve the Covid-19 pandemic and environmental emergencies, we must work together as an international community. Like the coronavirus, environmental crises respect no boundaries. Isolation is a trap. We should work together **NOW** and **TOGETHER.**”

- Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the UN, 2020

We are in a climate emergency. Climate refugees, drought, deforestation, species extinction, and the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic prove that humans are facing a catastrophe of indescribable proportions – potential societal collapse is no exaggeration. Huge, polluting industry, the oppressive practices of multi-national corporations, and the empty allure of consumerism reveal that the climate crisis is human caused. Scientists from around the world agree that there may be a small amount of time still left in which to reverse global warming. To do this, enormous shifts in infrastructure, economies, and human behaviour need to happen within the next 5-9 years.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a global framework for the world to address these challenges and develop solutions that bring about ecological balance, social equity, and healthy economies. The interdependent nature of the 17 goals further demonstrates our global challenges and local problems are linked; and that they can best be solved through an integrated approach.

Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) are a vital, necessary, and influential group of actors in attaining the SDGs and changing the current course of climate and societal catastrophe. On the ground, FBOs provide immediate support and care to people. Faith Leaders engender the trust of their communities and inspire action that brings social change and transformation to villages and cities around the globe, much of it in alignment with and working toward the SDGs. When appropriately informed and sufficiently prepared, FBOs invite widespread local participation and mass mobilization for broad behaviour change and cultural shifts.

As a global network in 109 countries with 16 regional offices, URI Cooperation Circles are responding to the climate crisis in potent ways. Through dialogue and hospitality, community organizing and co-created action, URI build bridges that connect us more deeply to ourselves, to one another and all life.

Within this context, the Faith for Earth Initiative (UNEP) and United Religions Initiative (URI) is well-matched to partner with other local entities to educate and equip Faith Leaders and community members to respond quickly and effectively to the climate crisis.

In 2021, a select group of individuals will receive initial training and support to create a growing network of Faith for Earth Councilors. The Faith for Earth Councilors will be appointed by faith-based organizations and/or spiritual communities to unite their faith with inspiring collective action to tend and protect Nature. Individually and collectively, Faith for Earth Councilors will connect, educate and equip Faith Leaders and community members, alike, to respond quickly and effectively to the climate crisis at the local and regional level.

Faith for Earth Initiative and Becoming a Faith for Earth Councilor

Faith for Earth, an initiative of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) finds its direction in the following:

Mission: To encourage, empower and engage with faith-based organizations as partners, at all levels, toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and fulfilling the 2030 Agenda.

Vision: A world where everything is in balance

The Faith for Earth Councilor¹ training creates an informed and well-prepared team of individuals ready to support and organize their communities in becoming aware of what's at stake for Humans and Nature in the short term, and to take life-affirming action for the long term. The Faith for Earth Councilors has the support of their Faith for Earth Councilor peers, as well as resources provided throughout the training, and recognition from their FBO.

As part of the training, Faith for Earth Councilors learn basic principles of community organizing, and share, with their communities, powerful ways forward by weaving together faith teachings, the SDGs and location-specific environmental education.

Faith for Earth Councilors serves as a resource and point of contact for their FBOs, schools and/or local communities. Like a “train the trainer” model, the Faith for Earth Councilors will be encouraged to grow grassroots environmental action in their communities (as determined in the training and using the tools provided) and increase the number of engaged people working to reduce global warming and to care for Creation. These efforts will foster stronger partnerships between FBOs, NGOs, and civil society.

In their work together, Faith for Earth Councilors will meet and work collaboratively with many stakeholders, creating valuable relationships. In the later part of 2021, Faith for Earth Councilors will meet online with other Councilors trained and performing activities in other countries, to exchange best practices and stimulate even greater success in each region and beyond. After the planning phase or project completion, Faith for Earth Councilors will be recognized at events determined by each region.

¹PLEASE NOTE: Faith for Earth Councilors may not use this designation in performing any other business but only as associated to the objectives, mission, and vision of the initiative. The designation will be for one year renewable based on mutual agreement and assessment of the effectiveness of this partnership. Designation might be withdrawn if the bearer fails to respect any of the above-mentioned principles.

Organize Participants, Create Plan, Grow Awareness, Act Together!

CREATE PLAN

India's Faith for Earth project has three focus areas from which to choose. Each one is connected to 1 of the environmentally focused SDGs. On pages XXX you will find a few ideas and resources about each of the 3 areas. As needed, consult with your Faith Leader to think about what your community/organization most needs. Is there a way that one of the actions below could improve your building or grounds? Is there a project that supports the teachings of your Faith Leader regarding a local environmental concern? Choose an action and develop a plan that will work well in your community/organization.

DRAFT PLAN

Using worksheet(s) at the back of this toolkit, create your action plan and timeline. Some dates to remember:

[DATE] - action plan drafted and approved by Faith Leader/Institution/Community

30th April 2021 - action plan submitted to UNEP/URI for Faith for Earth Councilor consideration

5th June 2021 - Faith for Earth Councilors announced & recognized at World Environment Day

[DATE] - detail dates and steps to implement each phase of action plan between April 2021-Nov. 2021

30th October 2021 - final report due at URI/UNEP

27th November 2021 - Faith for Earth to acknowledge all completed plans and Faith for Earth Councilors

GROW AWARENESS

Using what you have learned in the training, create a short presentation that will work well to educate and inspire your audience and provide an overview of the plan to be implemented. Work with your Faith Leader and community/organization to establish and promote the date and time you will be sharing the information and inviting everyone to join you in implementing the action plan.

ACT TOGETHER!

Whether your plan is a one-day event, multiple days of action, or a longer period of implementation and transformation of your building or temple grounds, etc, be sure you document what happens with photos, video, and updates on social media.

ACTION AREA IDEAS: Waste Management

SDG in reference- SDG 12- Ensure Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns

Principal Question- In what ways religious shrines/places of religious significance can address Waste Management?



1. Become a Recycling Community. Installation of a system of different coloured waste bins/dust bins, in English, Hindi and any language-specific of the respective faith- institution for distinguishing between the composite food wastes and non- composite waste like plastic bags or cups and promote recycling on a regular and consistent basis. To ensure ongoing success, the collection of waste and its disposal should be recorded monthly to check whether the systems are in place. If the community learns to do this well, expand to share recycling capacity with other communities/organizations to collectively establish recycling places where all institutions can collaborate.

2. Make the next community event or festival a “NO Waste Event.” Use leaf plates, bowls, clay kulhads, bagasse plates, compostable paper plates, areca nut plates as alternatives to plastic, Styrofoam, or paper plates for distribution of “prasad” or offerings among the devotees. If the event goes well, begin the process of making your facility a “NO Waste Space” by establishing permanent protocols for all events to be “NO Waste.”

3. Take it Beyond your own Walls. Along with the devotees/volunteers, week wise/monthly wise clean up drives can be used to clean up streets and adjacent areas of the shrine. The drive up will allow the religious places to engage local people, youth, and students and aware the society and remind them of their moral duty in the society towards the environment.



4. Develop a Compost and Fertilization program. Kitchen and garden waste, when correctly composted, enrich soil. Recruit and train an on-site team of members who will tend to ongoing compost piles and provide a continuous way of using biodegradable material for the benefit of soil and gardens.

5. Reuse and Artmaking. Floral waste can also serve as a sustainable source of raw material in handmade paper production. These papers are 100% free from wood and other harmful chemicals thereby contributing to reduce, reuse and recycle concepts. What other materials commonly used in your community/organization could be repurposed or “upcycled” for additional use?

Manage your Waste!

- Abandoning Styrofoam and switching to Steel utensils
- Create plastic-free areas
- Focus on regular cleaning drives for your nearby areas

Tips for Composting

- COMPOST SHOULD HAVE MORE CARBON THAN NITROGEN, MAKE SURE THAT THE PROPORTION OF THE WASTE SHOULD BE 1/3RD OF GREEN MATERIALS TO 2/3RD OF BROWN MATERIALS
- REGULAR ADDITION OF DRY LEAVES AND CLIPPING FOR LONGEVITY OF THE COMPOST PIT
- MAKE SURE TO NOT WATER THE COMPOST TOO MUCH AS THE WASTE WON'T CONVERT INTO MANURE.
- ALWAYS USE THE LOWER LAYER AND MAINTAIN THIS CYCLIC USAGE

ACTION AREA IDEAS: Water Conservation

SDG in reference- SDG 6- Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

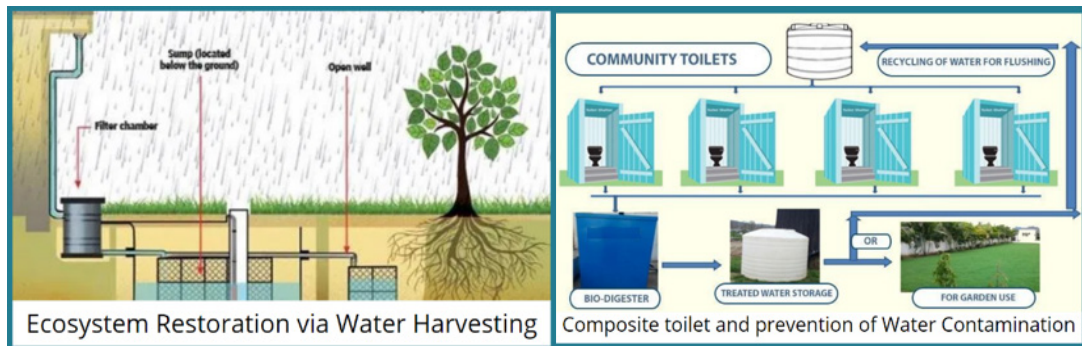
Principal Question- *What are the practices that can be adopted by religious shrines/ places of religious significance for the conservation of water?*



1. Water Clean-up and Conservation. Keeping in check that the shrine's water streams or lakes are not carrying any waste such as plastic bags and non-potable waters and making sure that nearby sources of lake waters and drinking waters are also not contaminated. Next, be sure all the taps and mechanisms in your facility are functioning well and not leaking unnecessarily. Eliminate plastic water bottles and provide clean, drinkable water in the ashram, temple and associated health centres, schools, offices etc. Create signage to support access to clean water for all.

2. Composting toilets. Installation and usage of bio-toilets will serve the dual purpose of preventing water contamination and creating fertilizer.

3. Rainwater Harvesting & Greywater Use. Installation of technologies that promote the harvesting of rainwater to provide for the water needs of the religious shrines. Use recycled, non-potable water (e.g., grey water waste from showers) for irrigating gardens and reserve potable water for consumption. Canals and ponds should be specially created within religious shrines to help recharge groundwater which can also be used for its own needs and supplies some for public use when rainfall is insufficient.



4. Establish Subaks. Collaborating and promotion of Subaks. A Subak is a collective of farmers within an irrigation district that congregate around religious shrines. The subaks are democratic organisations where farmers and priests discuss their irrigation strategy. Combining rational water management with religion makes the Balinese irrigation system unique.

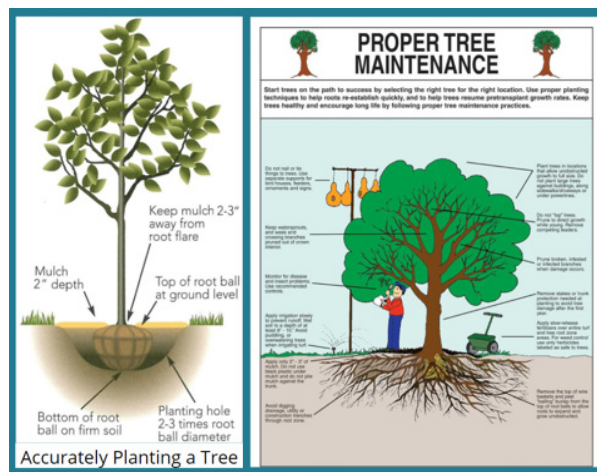
5. Perform Rituals with Care for Healthy Water. Use clay-based idols to prevent the runoff of chemicals into the water lines. Organic matter from rotting flowers contributes to the growth of algae, which can deplete oxygen levels and cause marine life to die. Collection of flora waste from the nearby water streams and temple ground and disposing into the shrine's compost will effectively help in recycling and keep the religious shrines clean. Hold a ceremony to honour the inherent rights of a river or body of water near you.



ACTION AREA IDEAS: Climate Crisis (Inclusive of Ecosystem Restoration)

SDG Reference- SDG 13: Climate Action

Principal Question- *how can religious shrines/places of religious significance address the climate crisis?*

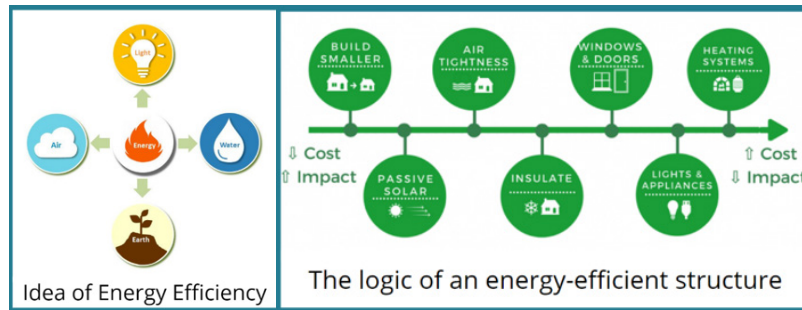


1. Energy Efficiency. Switch to energy-efficient light bulbs such as LEDs (Light-emitting Diodes) and CFLs (Compact Fluorescent Bulbs), increasing energy production efficiency. Install solar panels, and pumps where possible.

2. Plant for the Next Generation. Establish a productive nursery that grows and distributes saplings from a variety of indigenous trees and plants. During worship, distribute young tree saplings as prasada, or offerings encourage the pilgrims to take them home and plant at home or nearby grounds. Choose areas along roads or rivers near your temple that can be made greener and begin a tree planting and care programme. Plant native trees and fruit-bearing varieties, where possible.

3. Become Anti-pollution Partners. The burning of biomass/garbage should be banned. Create a team within your community that will partner with State-based collaborations to keep a close check with the rising air and water pollution levels. Create a plan for how your team will keep your community/organization informed of its positive and negative progress.

4. Create Regular Conservation Efforts. Get your team/devotees/volunteers to reach out to local conservation organizations about how you can help with protection efforts in nature reserves and around your temple. Create a calendar of events and activity days for regular participation over 1 year.



5. Celebrate your love for Mother Nature. Plan a community-wide festival with a “green” theme, featuring locally and sustainably grown foods. Use NO Waste practices (detailed in Action Ideas for Waste Management, above). Install areas to collect all the offerings and left-over food to mitigate the pollution of local water bodies and create jobs in that process. Take measures to limit the noise made in the forest during religious celebrations so as not to disturb wildlife populations, particularly at night. Include intergenerational educational and awareness-building activities.

- Ecosystem Restoration

1. Creating restoration sites, that embody some of the key species characteristics that are representative of the native ecosystem Planting. all groups of flora such as grasses, shrubs, trees, etc is a key in this process.
2. Collective mobilization of faith-based communities to focus on expanding the commitments of composite pits. Barren areas can be used for the same purpose which in turn will help in the rejuvenation of areas and enable the growth of flora to grow in those areas.
3. Restoration of local or nearby lakes could constructively add to the revitalization of the newly self-purified capacity of water bodies. Removal of trash and invasive weeds by religious institutions could help in improving water security and restoring the natural cycle of water bodies for natural and economic sustainability



VIDEO RESOURCES

Action Area- Waste Management

- [*New life for waste flowers, and these women too - YouTube*](#)
- [*A colourful solution to flower waste - YouTube*](#)
- [*Phool | Charcoal-free Incense Made From Temple Flowers – PHOOL*](#)

Action Area- Water Conservation

- [*\(40\) Vedavathi River Rejuvenation | Art of Living under MGNREGA - YouTube*](#)
- [*Indigenous water conservation systems \(cpreecenvis.nic.in\)*](#)
- [*\(40\) Step wells of India : historical water management - YouTube*](#)
- [*https://e360.yale.edu/features/should-rivers-have-rights-a-growing-movement-says-its-about-time*](https://e360.yale.edu/features/should-rivers-have-rights-a-growing-movement-says-its-about-time)

Action Area- Climate Crisis

- [*Sacred sites in Bengaluru: Where heritage helps conserve biodiversity \(citizenmatters.in\)*](#)
- [*Sacred groves of Kodagu: How faith is helping conserve Karnataka's protected forests | The News Minute*](#)

ONGOING SUPPORT

Links and Resources:-

Link to United Religion Initiative- [Homepage](#) | [URI](#)

Link to Faith for Earth Councillors Program- [National Coordination Hub](#) | [UNEP - UN Environment Programme](#)

Resources Page to URI- Faith for Earth Councillors Program- [UNEP: Faith for Earth Initiative and URI Respond to Climate Crisis](#) | [URI](#)

Resource Page to Faith for Earth Councillors Program on UNEP interfaith harmony week webpage- [UNEP-URI India, Faith for Earth Councilors Training and Development program](#) | [World Interfaith Harmony Week](#)

Our Partners: -

United Nations Environment Programme- [UNEP - UN Environment Programme](#)

UNEP- Faith for Earth Initiative- [Faith for Earth Initiative](#) | [UNEP - UN Environment Programme](#)



Religion World- [Religion World - Religion, Spirituality, Faith, Belief, Traditions, Astrology](#)
Shristi- [Shristi](#)

