



JESAM Social Apostolate Coordination  
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# AFRICAN CONFERENCE REPORT ON ECOLOGY

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## AFRICAN CONFERENCE REPORT ON ECOLOGY.

### I. INTRODUCTION: MAIN ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN AFRICA<sup>1</sup>

Even if it does not draw enough attention, the environmental problem is a key challenge to Africa today and tomorrow. Despite the fact that Africa possesses wealthy natural resources many Africans live in poverty unable to benefit from the African wealth. Africa has a vast majority of poor states and regions, and poverty is a major reason and consequence of the environmental degradation. In general a vast majority of countries in Africa depend more on their natural resource base for economic and social needs than any other region in the world.

It is also said that two-thirds of sub-Saharan Africa's people live in rural areas and rely on agriculture and other natural resources for income. The most compelling problem in Sub-Saharan Africa is that it has one of the world's fastest growing populations (approximately 2.2% a year). With this fast population growth the environmental challenge will increase.

According to some estimation, by the year 2025, the population of the African people will be over a billion. If this is the case, environmental challenges will double or triple.

Key issues and main environmental problems and challenges for Africa were addressed during the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) which was held in South Africa in August 2002. Some issues should draw the attention of Africans today:

#### 1. Water pollution and sanitation.

*“It is caused by oil transmission, shipping ports, poor management of water resources, lack of financial resources required for sustainable development and efficient utilization of resources, absence of effective regional and basin development plans and shared management, and under-estimation of the groundwater potential to supplement irrigation and drinking water supplies.... **Freshwater shortage** is the greatest limitation to development in Africa”<sup>2</sup>.*

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<sup>1</sup> For more information : Johannesburg summit 2002,

www.professays.com)

<sup>2</sup> Edem.

## 2. Energy.

According to many reports the use of wood for fuel is predominant in both rural and urban locations and accounts for approximately 70% of total energy use. This is one cause of deforestation. And Deforestation is one of the most pressing environmental problems not only in Africa but in other parts of the world and has negative implications for the local and global environment. During the 1980s, Africa lost 10.5 per cent of its forests. Thus, African forests are shrinking as a result of deforestation. The richness of African biodiversity requires also greater protection and a sustainable use that will ensure income for those who depend on it. There is a need to give priority to biodiversity areas close to areas of high population density.

## 3. Oil pollution.

In a number of countries such as Nigeria, Angola, Chad, Sudan, Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, oil is the principle source of income. However, new technologies used in oil exploration are extremely harmful to the environment.

## 4. Agriculture.

Land degradation is also a serious environmental problem. It increases food insecurity, agriculture and arable lands degradation, and mismanagement of available water resources. However, Africa owns vast areas of unexploited arable land which could be exploited in the future through the integrated management of land, water and human resources.

After the Johannesburg Summit it was clear that **the solution to environmental issues first of all lies in environmental awareness.**

The awareness is capital, because environmental problems in Africa are partly anthropogenic or human-induced (though not necessarily by Africans). It is the result of the effect of chemical and human waste on all forms of ecological and human life.

One should also note that in some regions natural causes cannot be overlooked:

Earthquakes (the Great Rift Valley is geologically active and particularly susceptible to this phenomenon), Hot springs and active volcanoes are also found to the extreme east of the Rift Valley, **erosion, deforestation, desertification, drought and Water shortages resulting from dry seasons.**

The socioeconomic impact of environmental deterioration on Africa continues to pose a major problem to development, stability, and lifestyles. Africa has contributed less than any other

region to **greenhouse gas emissions** that are widely held responsible for global warming. But **the continent is also the most vulnerable to the consequences.**

## II. REPORTS FROM PROVINCES AND REGIONS.

The African conference is composed by 8 provinces ( **Central Africa province** (DRC, Angola), **Eastern Africa province** (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, North Sudan and South Sudan, Ethiopia), **Madagascar** (Madagascar), **North-West Africa province** (Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Gambia), **West Africa province** (Chad, Central Africa Republic, Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Senegal), **Zambia – Malawi province**, **Zimbabwe province**) and 3 regions (**Mozambique** region, **South Africa** region, **Rwanda – Burundi** region) .

The questionnaire was sent on January 15, 2012 to all provincials' delegates in provinces and regions. Five reminders were sent between January and end of March. Only **three provinces (Madagascar, Central Africa and Zambia – Malawi)** responded to the questionnaire. We then took the initiative of sending the same questionnaire to the philosophates and theologates where all the provinces are represented. We received reports from two of them: **ITCJ (Institut théologique de la compagnie de Jésus - Abidjan)** and **Hekima college (Nairobi)**.

### 1. About Fr General's Letter on Ecology.

It was mainly used in community meetings. I have received few reports of these meetings. *“La communauté de l’ITCJ s’est réunie le 21 janvier dernier pour échanger au tour du thème: «**matinée écologique**», en réponse à la lettre du Très Révérend Père Général sur l’écologie, en vue d’y faire émerger les grandes idées susceptibles d’éclairer noter vision, comme communauté, de l’écologie. Après avoir écouté toutes nos petites communautés de vie, après avoir échangé longuement, quelques grandes idées ont émergé. De ces idées, nous avons formulé plusieurs propositions en Sept grandes catégories (Recherche et partenariat, Gestion des déchets, Consommation responsable, Gestion environnementale de l’ITCJ, Responsabilité individuelle, Ecologie humaine, Dimension spirituelle), à portée générale et locale »..*

*This was also the case for Kimwenza. “Fr Jacques Paulus (Professor at our Agricultural College) gave an introduction to help understand the ecological problem. Later on, the academic community organized another moment of sharing and discussions with the neighboring semi-rural population on the same issues. **Some practical steps have been taken as well, such as controlling the amount of what is consumed, managing and recycling of waste used later as organic fertilizers and planting trees by the community**”. And Ecology is mentioned at least in one apostolic plan (ACE Apostolic Project 2011, n. 86)”.*

## 2. Jesuit involvement.

Many Jesuits in Africa are concerned about the ecological problem. In fact most of initiatives have been taken by individuals. **“Individual Jesuits have taken different initiatives to respond to Fr General’s letter.** For example, Jesuits in **Chikuni are aware and some have tried to stop villagers from cutting down trees”** (Zambia). This situation seems to be general for most provinces. Some have integrated ecology aspects in retreats, spirituality; others are pushing for lifestyles changes. (Spiritual radio program: Zambia-Malawi).

## 3. Good practices.

- Environment Committee of Scholastics ( Hekima, Kimwenza, ICTJ).
- Training in protection of the environment (KATC (Kasisi - Zambia), ISAV (Kimwenza - DRC)).
- Reforestation projects (Iningi-DRC).
- Learning Programmes through Radi to mobilize children in particular to plant trees.
- Discouraging the use of fertilizers.
- Saving energy.
- Encouraging the use of non-burnt bricks.
- Water saving.
- Including ecological issues in school curriculum and extra-curricular activities.
- Including environment (awareness) programmes in teacher training colleges.
- Radio schools with agro forestry components.
- Communities writing charters on ecology and establishing ecological warning committees.
- Writing an ecology prayer.

## 4. Institutions providing leadership

- JCTR has some ecological advocacy linkages. The radio schools are linked with UNICEF and the department of forestry in raising awareness on climate change.
- The Jesuit Centre for Environment and Development (JCED) in Lilongwe will focus on ecological issues in both education and practice (e.g., simple cooking stoves to limit deforestation). Kasisi Agriculture Training Centre (KATC) is coming up with alternative models of development through use of appropriate technology.
- Two of our apostolic institutions are already clearly committed in the area of ecology. One with a systematic planning, CEFAP/Iniangi. As mentioned earlier, they work to empower local farmers and other peasants in their dealings with nature. The local practice is to exploit nature without renewing it. Tree planting for instance is not common practice in this area which has few trees. CEFAP has started a big project that is gradually changing the look of the area and, eventually people’s mentality. At the level the *Institut Supérieur Agrovétérinaire* (ISAV) based in Kimwenza, there are a few projects initiated with the help of sister institutions worldwide. These include bamboo planting project to fight erosion in Kindele-Kinshasa, by students from ISA Lilles and ESA Purpan. In collaboration with the

Alfred Campus of the Canadian Guelth University, ISAV is exploring ways of establishing an agro-forestry project consisting mainly of planting trees on their 50 hectares in *Plateau des Bateke* outside Kinshasa. Besides, ISAV organizes courses on Rural mobilization and empowerment, and on *Sylviculture* (on forests).

- Since last year (February 21), the “Centre Social Arrupe” of Faravohitra has participated in the annual tree planting event in a location about 40 km from Antananarivo, the capital city of Madagascar. This year the event takes place on February 18, in collaboration with the rural communities of the place and the Jesuit agricultural students of Bevalala Antananarivo (École Professionnelle Supérieure Agricole or EPSA).
- - The “Centre Social Arrupe” has, in its short term plan, specific ecological and environmental activities, targeting urban and rural communities.
- The Jesuit Centre for Environment and Development (JCED) in Lilongwe will focus on ecological issues in both education and practice.
- Kasisi Agriculture Training Centre (KATC) is coming up with alternative models of development using appropriate technologies

#### **5. Jesuits and civil society organizations in ecology.**

No report has mentioned on the involvement of Jesuits in civil societies defending ecology. We can conclude that collaboration between Jesuits and Civil society is weak and is limited to individual commitment.

#### **6. Working with students.**

Work with students is the widest. This is the case in college Alfajiri (Bukavu-DRC), **the Loyola Jesuit Secondary School (LJSS) in Kasungu (Zambia), Charles Lwanga Teachers College (Zambia) etc.** In Kimwenza (DRC), students of ISAV (College of Agriculture) are informed and trained on the protection of the environment and the fight against soil erosion, by planting trees, especially every 5th December, the International Day of Trees. Kasisi Agriculture Training Centre, the Jesuit agricultural students of Bevalala Antananarivo (École Professionnelle Supérieure Agricole or EPSA).(Madagascar are also involve in the same activities.

#### **7. Protection of threatened communities.**

No report mentioned initiatives to protect threatened communities. But in other reports we found that (CEPAS – DRC) is involved in advocacy against the displacement of populations by mining companies in Katanga (south - DRC).

## 8. Alternative models of development.

As far as alternative models are concern, Hekima team pointed out the fact that: *“Social Centers, such as CEPAS (ACE) or CERAP (AOC), Agricultural Center like KATC (ZAM) and “École Professionnelle Supérieure Agricole or EPSA” (MDG) promote alternative models of development, by their research and publications”.*

## 9. Retreat and spirituality.

There may not be yet a systematic program on reconciliation with nature in our spiritual centres, but individual Jesuits integrate that dimension in the different recollections they preach in different places.

## 10. Natural disasters protocol.

The only Jesuit structure that seems to have a kind of approach to natural disaster is JRS. Mainly on food security, and displacement of populations due to earthquakes and conflicts.

## 11. Institution of reference.

At the level of the conference 3 structures have been identified as far as the question on ecology is concerned.

- Institut agro vétérinaire (ISAV-DRC),
- Kasisi Agriculture training center (Zambia) and
- “École Professionnelle Supérieure Agricole” (EPSA - Madagascar).

## 12. Advocacy: Geographic priorities.

The conference has established few advocacy priorities on ecology. The work will be done by different social centres and supported by the African coordination. In South Africa we will address the **question of pollution**. This country being the most polluted in Africa. In the East we will address the **shortage of water** and **drought** in North Eastern Kenya. **Water Pollution** is also one of the problems in mining areas (Zambia and DRC (Katanga). In central Africa, the concern is on the **rain forest** that must be protected. In the West the question of **oil pollution** is huge in Nigeria, but growing in Chad, Sudan, and Angola. In the conference we also have the huge problem of **drought in the Sahel region**.

### 13. Future initiatives

- **In every Province, we should have** a environmental committee (exactly as we have commissions of Justice and Peace).
- Sessions of Information on environmental issues should be offered by the Conference in our houses of formation, for the young Jesuits, but also in our Spiritual and Cultural Centers, for Jesuits and our friends and collaborators.
- Provinces could set policies for all the communities in terms of use of energy (promote renewable energy: solar lighting, for instance) and treatment of waste (recycling).
- Communities should reflect on the use of cars by their members and try to find a way of reducing the consumption of fuel.
- The Conference should be more involved in the resolution of conflicts and peace-building. This will help to prevent environmental catastrophes.
- The Conference should encourage projects such as CEFAP (Centre of Formation in Agriculture) which aims at helping populations particularly exposed to poverty and consequences of environmental destruction.
- The (SJES) secretary should inform on world events on ecology and facilitate participation of provinces and conferences.

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