

VALUES, CULTURE AND SPIRITUALITY FOR SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES

**A Roadmap for
People and the Planet:
Driving Values-based
Actions Across the Faith
Actors Network**

RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY: CATALYST FOR SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES

Faith values, rituals, and religious practices have historically influenced the outlook and relationship between humans and their surrounding environment, striving to achieve a purpose, to find the meaning of life, and reaffirm a spiritual connection through a culmination of actions.

The values inherent to almost all religions worldwide, and Indigenous spiritualities and teachings, can be drivers to enhance environmental stewardship, principles of the faith, and common environmental ethics. Religious and spiritual frameworks are a crucial part of the wider effort to for sustainable lifestyles.

Our lifestyle reflects our way of living and its impact on the world around us – it directs our habits, influences our behaviour and consumption choices, shapes our identity, affects our health, and determines our inclusion or exclusion in social relationships (UNEP 2016). Religions and spiritual beliefs profoundly impact the behaviour of their communities and by extension entire societies. Policies adopted by faith-based institutions and organisations also reflect their ethos guiding daily practices, social interactions, business relationships, and political affiliations.

The influence of religion on behaviour can be observed in various aspects, including promoting close-to-net-zero practices at houses of worship and faith-owned assets like institutional buildings, religious festivals and observances, pilgrimage, food and food waste, and leisure or tourism.



These belief systems adhere to an ethical and moral code and faith institutions demonstrate their leadership by adhering to it to guide the spiritual and faithful to make decisions aligned with core values.

This may include guidance on what to eat (or not), how to dress, how to express the principles of their faith through rituals, religious observances and festivals, and how their associate with other communities, civil society, etc.

Combining spiritual beliefs with pro-environmental actions can yield a powerful framework for addressing current environmental challenges.

Religious communities can inspire meaningful change by leading by example and ensuring the well-being of all life on Earth.

-Iyad Abumoghli, Director, Faith for Earth Coalition, UN Environment Programme (UNEP)

By promoting principles of stewardship, interconnectedness, balance, non-violence, respect for nature, protection of biodiversity, service and charity, the world's traditions can inspire individuals and communities to adopt practices and behaviours that sustain and enhance the well-being of the Earth.

Resources

[Faith & Sustainable Lifestyles Online Course](#) is a self-paced e-Learning Course delivered in partnership with the International Dialogue Center (KAICIID) focusing on faith actors, faith perspectives and faith-led action. This course seeks to contribute to building synergies amongst different stakeholders, highlighting the value of engaging with faith actors in addressing this challenge.

[REGISTER](#)

DRIVING CHANGE THROUGH BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS

The [UN Secretary General's Guidance Note on Behavioural Science](#) emphasizes the importance of integrating behavioural science into policy and practice to drive effective change.

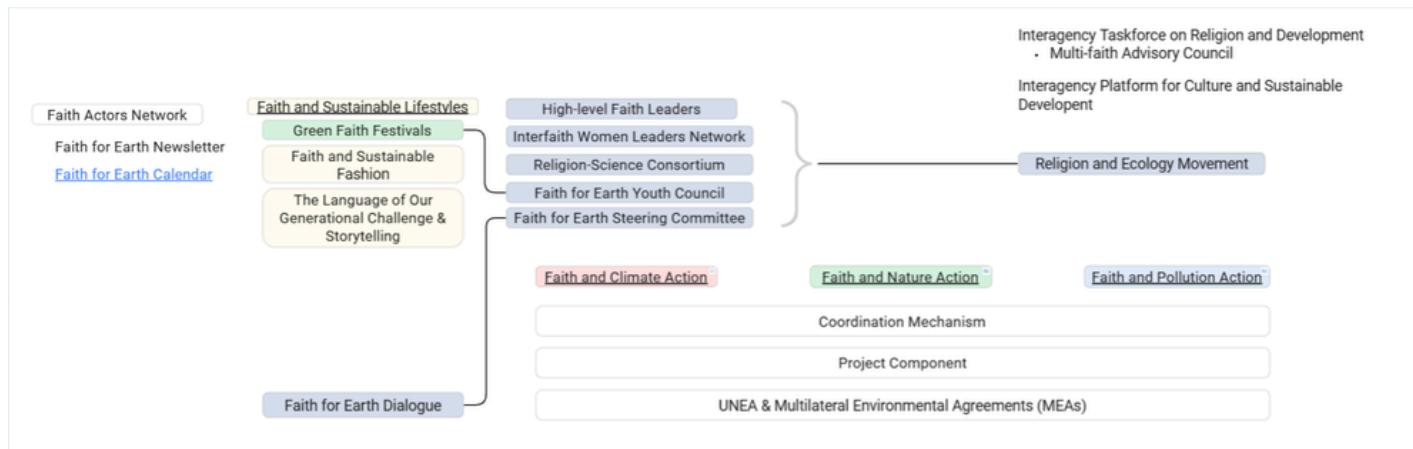
"Behavioural science enables us to diagnose barriers preventing people from adopting a certain behaviour, understand enablers that help people achieve their aims, and design and measure the impact of interventions on the basis of these assessments and the premise of ethical choice and transparency all premised on commitments to human dignity, transparency and respect for ethical requirements".

- [The UN Secretary General's Guidance Note on Behavioural Science](#)

The Faith for Earth Coalition of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) is dedicated to mobilising faith actors to address the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the [Medium-term Strategy of UNEP](#).

To achieve this, the Coalition is organised in the following ways to promote interfaith collaboration for effective policy-making:

- Through the **Councils** (e.g. High-level Leaders, Interfaith Women, Interfaith Youth, Faith-based Organisations, and Religion-Science Consortium) to understand and address the needs of specific groupings within the wider network; and
- Under the **Interfaith Thematic Working Groups** (Faith and Climate Action, Faith and Nature Action, and Faith and Pollution Action), a convening mechanism to co-develop thematic projects and as well to engage with groups ahead of international conferences and meetings



READ:
FAITH FOR EARTH ACHIEVEMENT REPORT

How Faith-based Organisations Can Incorporate Behavioural Insights

Adapted from Framework for Shaping Sustainable Lifestyles: Determinants and Strategies

1 Define the outcome and target behaviour

The Hope Cathedral, under the Borg Diocese of the Church of Norway is a safe space for open dialogue, community gathering, and spiritual upliftment, a symbol for communities to innovate and collaborate to protect the environment.

The Hope Cathedral is a symbol of cultural heritage and sustainable design. 11,000 hours of voluntary service was involved in its construction, adopting the structure of Norway's famous stave church, and incorporating 4,000 colourful tiles from recycled fish boxes discarded in the ocean.



Broadly establish the policy, strategic, programmatic, or administrative objective or challenge, and the associated specific and measurable targets. Define the audience and whether the target behaviour is achievable.

For example

Clearly identify the **Challenge** and set an **Objective**:

To promote interfaith understanding and harmony through shared physical spaces to address social, cultural, and environmental topics.

Target Outcome:

Increased dialogue and collaboration between

groups of all religious affiliations or denominations and age groups facilitated by the Church of Norway through the number of activities organised.

Set Specific and Measurable Target Behaviour(s):

- Behaviour 1: Number of groups or institutions engaged in the activities.
- Behaviour 2: Number of groups or institutions organising activities to promote religious and cultural understanding.

Target Population:

Congregation members, religious groups, primary to tertiary education institutions.

2 Understand the context and identify the behavioural factors at play



In Indonesia, a Pesantren is a traditional Islamic boarding school and the Ekopesantren Programme by PPI-UNAS adapts this cultural, religious and institutional form of values-based education to incorporate pro-environmental teachings on conservation and restoration. Ekopesantrens strengthen the understanding of Islamic teachings related to the environment.

Analyse the context of the target behaviour(s) and key barriers and enablers. Understand the settings and audience of focus, using methods such as literature reviews, stakeholder interviews, and/or survey research.

For example

Identify the **Barriers** and **Enablers** affecting sustainable behaviour:

A national scoping assessment of the number of Pesantrens in Indonesia and the extent to which values-based teachings on the environment are incorporated. Evaluation of the existing materials on environment, conservation, climate.

Focus Groups:

Identify local environmental challenges and tailor programs to them, providing contextual learning opportunities. Gather insights through collaboration with key stakeholders like the youth, women groups, volunteers, and organisations through interviews or workshops.

Revisit the **Objective**: Programmes should address the needs of the community and spur action in addition to theological/anthropological lessons on religion and the environment.



Laudato Si' Animators are members of the [Laudato Si Movement](#), a global community of prayer and action, who animate their local parishes and communities to engage in ecological spirituality, sustainable lifestyles and advocacy for climate and ecological justice. Animators work to bring Pope Francis's encyclical Laudato Si' to life and care for our common home through the [Laudato Si' Animators Program](#).

3 Design Behaviourally-informed intervention

Improvement of communal water efficiency through cooperation with religious authorities is led by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) Special Initiative on Stabilisation in the Middle East and North Africa and the Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation to use water economically by harnessing religious beliefs.

The project team develops information and teaching materials on resource and water protection with religious leaders and education experts. Partners use these documents to train imams and waithat – male and female religious scholars – so that they can serve as water ambassadors teaching believers in communities how to use water economically and why this is important. Dedicated teaching materials have also been developed for Christian leaders.

Design intervention(s) that are likely to address the behavioural challenge, based on the findings of the previous step and consultations with experts and key stakeholders.

For example

Design **intervention elements** for a range of stakeholders.



Faith-inspired Messaging: Highlight water conservation as a moral duty of stewardship.

Commitments: Create public pledges and display names (individuals, institutions) of positive contributors.

Social Norms: Share success stories to inspire others.

Convenience: Add accessible signs as 'nudges' and distribute shareable resources.

Incentives: Welcome initiatives/activities.



Test the behavioural intervention by measuring whether it has a causal impact on the behavioural outcome of interest in a sample of participants.

For example

Launch a **Pilot Programme** or **Workshop**:

Location: Test the interest, utility, and overall engagement of activities in a particular locality. Observe the level of engagement with the material developed (for a range of stakeholders).

Shrimad Rajchandra Mission, Dharampur (SRMD), under Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshji, showcased Jainism's Aparigrah (non-possessiveness).

The T-shirt-to-Tote upcycling drive brought 750+ youth (11-18 yrs) from Shrimad Rajchandra Divinetouch centers across India as part of the Faith for Earth Empathy Leadership (FEEL) Program, promoting sustainability & mindful consumption, textile waste reduction, and plastic-alternative solutions. The campaign merged Jain values with environmental action, proving faith can inspire youth-led climate solutions.

Data Collection:

Aim to increase engagement by recording the number of participants, age group, and substantive views shared about the activities.

Evaluation Criteria:

Evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention elements against the objectives set with the key stakeholders, collecting their feedback. Revisit the materials and activities and incorporate the feedback. Share experiences with other jurisdictions and consider their unique feedback.

5 Learn, adapt, and communicate findings

The Green Guide for Hajj and Umrah and mobile application that allows pilgrims to perform Hajj and Umrah in an environmentally friendly manner, consistent with Islamic values in protecting the earth and all life upon it.

It provides recommendations for communities, governments and institutions to enable a greener pilgrimage, the Guide shows the potential that 'the Ummah' has to be part of the solution not only through the direct environmental benefits of 'greening' these pilgrimages but also because of their potential to influence people as centres of culture, spirituality and community life.

Based on the results, the intervention design can be altered and tested again to make improvements, and/or communicated to relevant stakeholders as appropriate.

For example

Learn:

Identify which intervention elements worked best. Use feedback to refine unclear elements.



Adapt:

Adjust interventions (e.g. improve guides or resources, re-engage with decision-makers).

Communicate:

Share results with leaders, members, and other groups. Promote successful strategies for wider adoption.

KEY PROGRAMMES, INITIATIVES & PARTNERS

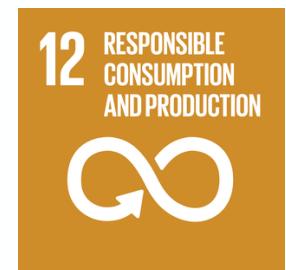
Sustainable Development Goal 12 (SDG 12)

UNEP's work on Sustainable Lifestyles and Framework for Shaping Sustainable Lifestyles: Determinants and Strategies presents a holistic approach to sustainable lifestyles and behaviours, looking at contextual realities and lifestyle solutions.

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

12.8: By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.

SDG 12 emphasizes the need to sustain intergenerational livelihoods considering the entire life cycle of economic activities and social behaviours - from the extraction of resources, processing these resources into materials and products, their use, and finally their disposal as waste or emissions.



Responsible production and consumption is critical for transforming how economies and societies address the triple environmental planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and chemicals and waste pollution.

Resolution UNEA 6.8: Promoting Sustainable Lifestyles

In March 2024, the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6) adopted a resolution to promote sustainable lifestyles globally.

The Resolution calls on UNEP to assist countries in developing and implementing sustainable living practices, highlighting the critical role of education and individual skills in achieving sustainable consumption and production through:

- Behavioural Change: Highlights its role in achieving sustainability.
- Existing Initiatives: Supports the 10YFP and successful national models.
- Stakeholder Involvement: Engages governments, businesses, communities, and Indigenous Peoples.
- Collaboration: Calls for sharing best practices and research.
- Regional Dialogues: UNEP to facilitate discussions on sustainable lifestyles.
- Goal: Promote global adoption of sustainable living to support SDGs.

[READ THE RESOLUTION UPDATES](#)

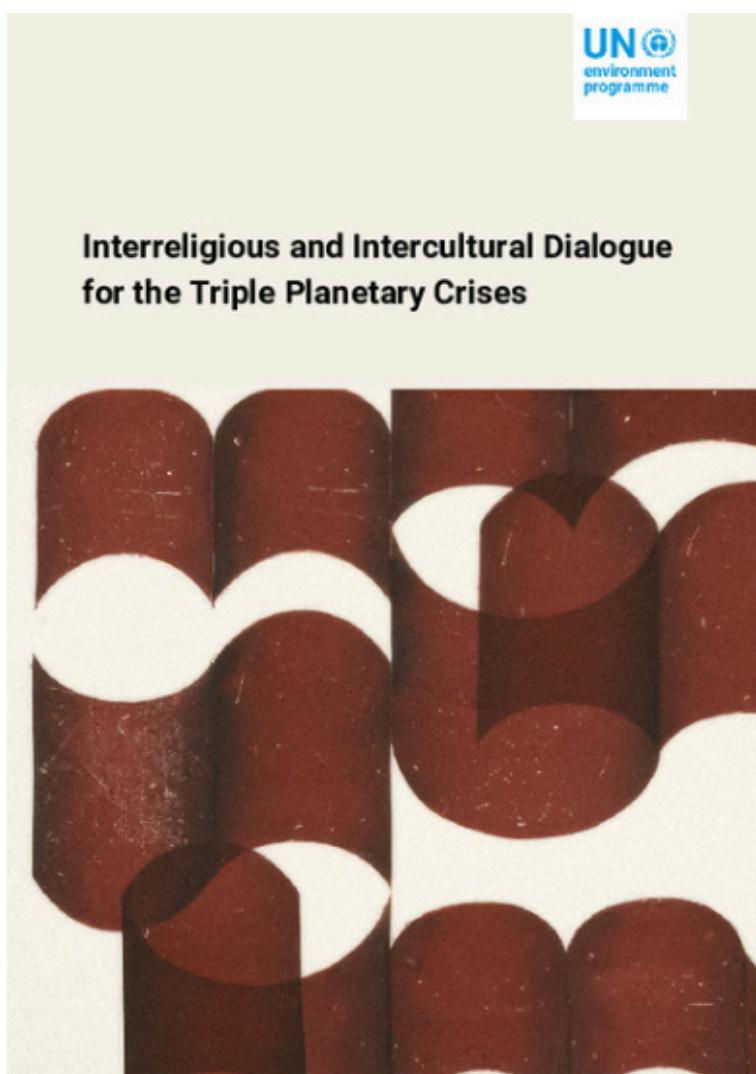
Inter-agency Platform on Culture and Sustainable Development (IPCSD)

UNESCO launched the [Inter-agency Platform on Culture for Sustainable Development \(IPCSD\)](#) in May 2021 as a means to foster structured dialogue and cooperation on culture and sustainable development between 30 international and regional bodies, including UN Agencies, regional or sub-regional intergovernmental organisations, as well as development banks.

The IPCSD have 4 workstreams:

- 1. Culture and human rights;**
- 2. Culture and Environment;**
- 3. Culture in the post-2030 Agenda; and**
- 4. The transformational impact of education**
- 5. and culture for resilience and innovation.**

UNEP, through the Faith for Earth Coalition contribute to the workstream on Culture and Environment leveraging the [interreligious and intercultural dialogue for the triple planetary crisis](#).



How Faith Actors Can Drive Forward Global Strategies to Promote Sustainable Behaviour

Based on the SCP Strategy as an example:

1 Mobilizing Faith-Based Networks for Systems Transformation (Outcomes 1 & 2)

- Integrate 'Sustainable Lifestyles' under the Workplan of the Faith for Earth Coalition Youth Council, as well as with the interventions of the Interfaith Womens Council and Interfaith Thematic Working Groups.
- Engage faith leaders in national dialogues and implementation of SCP National Action Plans (NAPs).
- Organize global interfaith consultations around key SCP themes, in particular under the Faith for Earth Coalition Youth Council Workplan 2025 (values-based environment education, green faith festivals, green houses of worship, sustainable fashion) and with the Interfaith Thematic Working Groups.
- Promote faith-aligned behavioural change campaigns aligned with SCP, such as reducing food waste, and promoting resource efficiency (ethical consumption).

2 Knowledge-Sharing and Narrative Shaping (Outcome 3)

- Contribute faith-based case studies and best practices to OPN's knowledge platforms (e.g., stories on faith communities transitioning to green energy, eco-mosques/churches/temples). Share the green houses of worship guidelines, Faith-based Action Towards a Pollution-free Planet, Sustainable Lifestyles Course, etc.
- Publish thematic briefs i.e. intrafaith toolkits to: promote values-based environment education; and sustainable food systems, similar to Islam and Food Systems.
- Integrate SCP themes into theological education by partnering with religious universities and seminaries.

3 Partnerships and Coalition Building (Outcomes 1–4)

- Activate its broad interfaith coalition and faith-based organizations (FBOs) to join existing 10YFP/OPN programs or form new multi-faith implementation partnerships through innovative approaches like the Green Faith Festivals or values-based environment education programmes.
- Engage in co-hosting or co-convening sessions at high-level events such as UNEA, or COPs to showcase successful faith-based circular movements to SCP.
- Leverage its Youth, Women Councils, and UNEA-Accredited Faith-based Organisations (86 in 2025) to participate in green entrepreneurship and sustainable lifestyle programs, aligning with the Green Jobs for Youth Pact ([Outcome 3](#)).

4 Communications and Behaviour Change (Outcomes 2 & 4)

- Develop targeted communication materials that use faith-based narratives to inspire sustainable living (e.g., sermons, liturgy toolkits, interfaith climate fasts).
- Collaborate with UNEP's Change for Planet Campaign to amplify faith voices and values around sustainability.
- Mobilize faith communities as trusted messengers in sustainability campaigns, particularly in regions where government messaging may face resistance.

5 Local Implementation Pilots (Outcomes 1–4)

- Support the implementation of joint pilot projects in faith communities (e.g., green pilgrimage, green religious festivals, faith-based eco-certification programs), and report outcomes via the OPN platform.
- Support faith-led circular economy enterprises to create more green jobs and to develop skills.

FOUR WAYS TO ENGAGE: FAITH & SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES

1. GREEN FAITH FESTIVALS

Every religious tradition celebrates a number of spiritually significant days, periods, or occasions each year. Some examples include Easter, Ramadan, Yom Kippur, Diwali, Christmas, Day of Vesak, All Souls or All Saints Day, and hundreds more.

[The Guidelines for Green Faith Festivals](#) takes a closer look at a handful of these festivals and observances offering them as sources of motivation and opportunities for pro-environmental behaviours through local events and gatherings, or awareness building activities.

2. FAITH AND SUSTAINABLE FASHION

Within the Guidelines for Green Faith Festivals, faiths showcase their rich traditions expressed through their traditional dress or outfits, holding deep religious and cultural significance.

This work prompts the discourse on dressing simply, minimising textile consumption and waste; use of organic or locally-sourced materials like cotton, linen, reducing environmental impacts; celebrating garments with cultural, religious, or familial significance; and more.



3. VALUES-BASED ENVIRONMENT EDUCATION

Religions are custodians of rich and intricate formal (primary, secondary, and tertiary education) and informal education institutions, networks, or setups (Sunday School, Ashram, Hebrew School, Madrasa, Pesantren, Dharma Talks, Bhagavad Gita Studies, and hundreds more).

The Language of Our Generation is a project by the [Faith for Earth Youth Council](#) to identify the extent to which values-based environmental education is integrated within the existing syllabus, programme, curriculum, or learning plans of these formal and informal education systems.

[Mindfulness for Earth](#) (Mindfulness, Spirituality and Planetary Health): Mindfulness in faith-based education promotes sustainable lifestyles by fostering awareness, deepening our connection with nature, and encouraging responsible actions that align with environmental stewardship and collective well-being.

4. GUIDELINES ON GREEN HOUSES OF WORSHIP

Identifying ways in which houses of worship engage in eco-friendly practices during worshipping activities, on faith-owned land, sustainable design, and as a powerful opportunity to encourage pro-environmental teachings through sermons, sharing of religious texts, and wisdom of their leaders.

[FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE PROJECTS AND CAMPAIGNS](#)