



CYNESA

CATHOLIC YOUTH NETWORK FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY
IN AFRICA



Réseau de Jeunes Catholiques pour un Environnement durable en Afrique

Our Faith Plan

© 2022

Upendo House,
Mountain View Estate
Off Waiyaki Way, Nairobi, Kenya

37434-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254 700 047 240
info@cynesa.org

www.cynesa.org
 facebook.com/CYNESA
 twitter.com/CYNESA

About CYNESA

Founded in the year 2012, CYNESA is the network of young Catholics in Africa caring for our common home. Inspired by Catholic Social Teaching and guided by the encyclical letter, Laudato Si', CYNESA's

mission is to help young Catholics in sub-Saharan Africa – their movements and communities, individually and with their colleagues – to respond to the twin challenges of environmental degradation and climate change in an *effective, coordinated* and *evangelical* manner, *culturally sensitive* and *spiritually grounded*.



Inspired by St. Pope John Paul

II's 1990 message for World Day of Peace, in which he called for the need to upscale ecological awareness and to find fitting expression in concrete programs and initiatives, CYNESA's

vision is to nurture in Africa an ecological conversion that is rooted in Catholic Social Teaching on care of creation through an active network of young people bringing the whole human family together to seek sustainable and integral development.

Our **3 areas of work** are formation and awareness creation, networking and advocacy and support for local grassroots action.

The Seven Key Areas of the Long-Term Environmental Plan

1



As a young network run by volunteers on a modest budget, CYNESA has a comparatively small asset base as at now. However, CYNESA is committed to keeping her carbon footprint at the lowest possible levels. CYNESA is making conscious purchase decisions to keep our planet safe.

By 2027, CYNESA aims to have a fully-equipped Laudato Si' Centre for the formation of young people and nurturing of an ecological conversion. Committed to promoting sustainable and integral development, the design of the CYNESA Laudato Si' Centre will:

1. Feature optimum natural lighting to minimize on energy use
2. Run 100% on renewable energy including the installation of solar photovoltaic panels on the roof
3. Run exclusively on LED, energy-saving bulbs

1. Assets

4. Have solar thermal panels to heat up bathing and cooking water
5. Feature rainwater harvesting technology to ensure maximum water utilisation
6. Feature wastewater treatment technology to ensure zero water loss of greywater
7. Have an onsite biodigester system to treat human waste and generate biogas
8. Feature space to run wild and let nature thrive untouched in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi
9. Feature indigenous forest
10. Feature self-sustaining agroecology farming space for learning and innovative food security practices

2. Education and Young People

3



Formation and awareness creation is one of the three areas of CYNESA's work. Since our founding, we have been journeying with young people from tender school age to offer them sustainability and lifestyle education across our chapters and beyond. However, we have since learnt that education alone is not enough – we need to journey with every young person as we inform and form character in pursuit of individual and collective ecological conversion. Given this, we have since commenced formation series where we invite young people to an 8-week formation series. The core components of our formation plan are:

1. Scripture
2. Catholic Social Teaching Principles
3. Laudato Si'
4. Introduction to CYNESA
5. Introduction to policymaking

During the formation series, participants are prepared to be formators themselves in an attempt to ensure sustainable and continuing formation across the continent. While this is still very much in the pilot phase, we are confident that, by 2026, we will:

1. Develop a full formation plan and content in both English and French
2. Establish at least 3 formation hubs across 3 regions of Africa
3. Commence online formation by 2024
4. Form 1,500 young women and men into formators

Besides in-house formation, CYNESA shall, by 2026, establish formation programmes in:

1. 10 universities/colleges
2. 30 primary and secondary schools

3. 300 parishes across Africa

Given the significance of research in sustainability education, CYNESA shall:

1. Establish a fully-fledged research department to support sustainability research in Africa by 2027
2. Establish a research journal to publish faith-based environmental research by young African scholars by 2030
3. Establish a Catholic students' environmental research club by 2027
4. Create an African indigenous' science and knowledge repository by 2027
5. Digitally map out all Catholic action on the environment in Africa by 2025

In order to ensure practical and experiential-based formation, CYNESA shall work towards:

1. Facilitating (directly or indirectly) the participation of 300 young Catholics from Africa in major environmental policymaking platforms including the proceedings of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) Conference of Parties (CoPs), and the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA)
2. Organising annual immersion and exchange programs

3. Wisdom



Intergenerational wisdom passed down as Catholic Social Teaching/Thought and often presented through Catholic literature and homilies is vital in ensuring that young Catholics in Africa keep connecting their faith with care for our common home from a personal level. However, there is need for consistency in how such wisdom is presented and depicted. By 2027, CYNESA will:

1. Work with suitably qualified Catholic theologians and liturgists to:
 - a. develop homily guides based on Scripture, Science, Laudato Si', and indigenous African knowledge
 - b. develop prayer guides and novenas for different liturgical calendars
 - c. develop a union with creation order of Mass for celebrating the Eucharist in union with all creation
2. Document 54 African stories of conservation and sustainability from the 54 countries of Africa
3. Map out sacred spaces (both Catholic and non-Catholic) in Africa
4. Organise annual young Catholics' prayer chains during each season of creation
5. Participate actively in activities organised and promoted by the Catholic Church through the local Bishop Conferences and the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.
6. Provide eco-theological formation to 900 catechists across the continent concerning the teachings of the Catholic Church on care for creation and preferential option for the vulnerable poor.
7. Provide eco-theological formation to 3,000 teachers and administrators of Catholic schools and tertiary institutions across the continent concerning the teachings of the Catholic Church on care for creation and preferential option for the vulnerable poor.
8. Employ 2 contact liaisons for every Catholic bishops' conference in Africa to tap into and contribute to the growing wisdom of the Catholic Church.

4. Lifestyles

7



In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis laments how “a misguided anthropocentrism leads to a misguided lifestyle” (para 122) and calls for humanity “to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle...” (para 23). At the centre of the worrying anti-environmental lifestyles being lived by many people today, is the “throwaway culture which affects the excluded just as it quickly reduces things to rubbish” (LS 22). This is why achieving an ecological conversion that enables the embracement of an eco-spirituality that places the common good at the centre of our daily lives is inevitable. It is why ecological conversion is at the centre of the CYNESA vision. As of today, CYNESA uses her purchasing power to refuse plastic bottled water in all her events and prefers a common watering point where everyone comes with a reusable/refillable water bottle. This way, CYNESA has been able to influence business enterprises such as accommodation service providers and their perceptions toward plastic use and water conservation. CYNESA refuses services from unrelenting service providers. By 2027, we will work with the young people to:

1. Train 1,500 young people in Africa on how to eco-audit their daily lives
2. Train 1,500 young people in Africa on the wealth and meaning of simple living as a Catholic value
3. Create awareness among 150,000 young people in Africa on the importance of saying no to planet-unfriendly products
4. Create awareness among 150,000 young people in Africa on the importance of shunning consumerism and the throwaway culture
5. Organise 9 lent pilgrimages in three regions of Africa to appreciate creation in conservation parks, etc. to learn about nature protection
6. Immerse 100 young people in Africa in simple living spaces such as convents, monasteries, and African villages
7. Run advocacy campaigns on simple, meaningful, and purpose-filled living with a reach 150,000 young people in Africa using such tools as social media
8. Run educational advocacy campaigns on how the conscious purchasing power of young people in Africa as the biggest age demographic in Africa can be used to influence care for our common home
9. Engage 15,000 young people in conservation practices such as organic gardening, innovative plastic reuse and refusal, and forestation

5. Media & Advocacy

9



With young people being our target group, media and advocacy are central to our work. None of the targets in the other areas would be considered to have achieved full potentiality without the use of media and advocacy. One of CYNESA's areas of work is in networking and advocacy, which centres on creating meaningful networks of young Catholics in Africa and their communities and parishes that ultimately influence more young people to make conscious choices and decisions daily in their lives. While we appreciate and value conventional media, our biggest catchment so far has been social media (especially Facebook and Twitter) and radio has been used occasionally. The major impediment is that CYNESA has relied solely on volunteer manpower and this has its challenges with consistent media engagement. By 2027, CYNESA will:

1. Establish and register 40 chapters
2. Employ a dedicated communications' department
3. Set up a recording studio to encourage young African artists to produce music and related content that speaks to care for our common home
4. Run 1 weekly radio programme on Laudato Si' in the Eastern, Western, and Southern African regions
5. Hold bi-monthly YouTube conversations on conservation
6. Continually run advocacy campaigns on need-basis to influence lifestyle choices and policy
7. Develop scientifically-backed content for handbooks, guides, and videos that appeal to young Catholics in Africa
8. Run annual social media and conventional media advocacy campaigns that promote conservational African traditions such as those on sustainable consumption and production
9. Produce 1 illustrated children's storybook on lifestyle choices based on African Catholic stories of caring for our common home in English and French
10. Influence policy through dialogue, demonstrations and protests, legal processes including litigation, and such other structures that exist within the Catholic Church
11. Organize annual forums with Catholic Clergy in Africa on how to use their pulpits and influence to evangelize their faithful into consciously caring for our common home

6. Partnerships



In our Catholic faith, partnerships and collaborations are imminent in the organisation of the Church structures with each organ contributing to the Body of Christ as St. Paul puts it in Romans 8. Partnerships are also important in policymaking and global development to the extent that they constitute the 17th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). CYNESA's partnerships commence at the unit level of the individual young Catholic in Africa to interagency levels as high as the United Nations to which the organisation has accreditation. By 2027, CYNESA will work to Establish collaborative working partnerships with:

1. 900 parishes across Africa to offer ongoing formation to Catholic faithful using Laudato Si' as the principal resource
2. 100 youth chaplaincies across 100 dioceses in Africa
3. 100 Catholic bishops across 100 dioceses in Africa
4. 100 caritas directorships across 100 dioceses in Africa
5. 250 formation houses and convents in Africa
6. 3,000 Catholic educational institutions (primary and secondary schools, tertiary institutions, and universities)

To utilize the opportunities that exist for young people to learn, CYNESA shall model an approach to partnership such as the one it employed successfully to host the Second Laudato Si' International Conference in July 2019 at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) in partnership with the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), St. Dominic Savio Primary School, Mwiki, and other faith and nonfaith actors in the environmental and scientific space. All these activities were run on volunteer basis due to scarcity of resources and this has stunted/impeded growth. To further grow the partnerships, CYNESA will, by 2027:

1. Employ 20 dedicated staff
2. Continually partner with young people, their movements, institutions, and organisations to implement environmental conservation projects and campaigns
3. Continually partner with local and national governments to infuse the voice of faith in all policy and project decisions especially the nationally determined contributions (NDCs)
4. Continually partner with other faith-based environmental organisations and particularly Catholic ones to amplify the voice of faith in local, national, subnational, regional, continental, and international discourse on the care for our common home
5. Continually partner with other youth environmental networks across Africa to amplify the voice of faith in local, national, subnational, regional, continental, and international discourse on the care for our common home
6. Continually partner with other civil society organisations across Africa to promote care for our common home
7. Join and form youth and faith alliances to push, influence, or oppose timely conservation agenda

7. Celebrations

13



At the epitome of the Catholic faith, is the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. This has been central to the CYNESA tradition and can only be enhanced going forward. In union with all creation, CYNESA shall hold creation eucharistic celebrations every first Saturday of every year and broadcast the same. Such celebrations shall be held in every country where CYNESA has a chapter. This will be a moment to unite and broadcast a celebration of the Eucharist with and for the entire creation as a means to inculcate a tradition of connecting faith with care for creation among the young people of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Beyond the Eucharistic celebrations, CYNESA has been congregating her chapter leaders to the CYNESA Summit. The idea is to hold the CYNESA Summit every two years as a way of celebrating the successes garnered and making future plans to build on such successes. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and lack of resources has made it difficult to bring as many young people from our chapters to the CYNESA Summit every two years. Subject to availability of resources, CYNESA will hold 5 summits in 2021, 2023, 2025, 2027, and 2029 with a target of bringing together 160 CYNESA leaders from 40 chapters in the 2029 CYNESA Summit.

From purchasing the land to building the Laudato Si' Centre where CYNESA shall be headquartered and provide conservation-oriented retreat spaces, a new beautiful place featuring sustainable development shall have been built for the young people of Africa to benefit from regardless of their nationalities, faith, and/or creed. The Laudato Si' Centre shall be an exemplar of living in harmony with nature and one another, a space for tolerance and peace, and an icon of refuge for the broken and fragile requiring healing.

CYNESA shall commit to participate in African traditional festivals such as harvest festivals and cultural festivals in consistency with her culturally sensitive element of her mission. Similarly, CYNESA shall encourage and support young people to join traditional, cultural, and religious festivals in their communities, parishes, dioceses, countries, and regions.

In 2025 and 2030, CYNESA shall organise two conservation-oriented mini-world-youth-days in two different countries of different regions in Sub-Saharan Africa to celebrate creation from a Catholic faith perspective while simultaneously creating awareness about faith and care for creation.