



## RESPONSE TO LAUDATO SI' IN AFRICA REGION

[On the occasion of the 6<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Publication of  
*Laudato Si'*. ]

### Cover Photo:

*Caritas Zimbabwe on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020 won the Excellence in Community Empowerment Award, at the 2020 Zimbabwe National edition of the Environmental, Responsible Business and CSR Awards.*

*Caritas Gweru Coordinator, Sr. Blandina Makuvise and Caritas Gweru team member during the award-winning ceremony.*

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Caritas Africa is grateful to Caritas Norway for their technical and financial support which facilitated the celebration of the Anniversary of the *Laudato Si' Year*, through hosting a virtual online event for National Member Organizations.

We acknowledge the Member Organizations who contributed to producing this report by providing materials: reports, pictures, etc., including those who attended the virtual event. We recognize their efforts in the preparation, development, and presentation of the rich experiences and achievements, challenges, and lessons that were shared.

We are grateful to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for granting the Observer Status to Caritas Africa. We look forward to the available opportunities for collaboration as we channel the voices of those most likely to be affected by environmental problems and related policies in Africa.

We also recognize and thank all partners supporting the initiatives to protect the environment in the Africa Region.

We acknowledge the continued collaboration with Caritas Organizations implementing the PASAN program, in DR Congo, Mali, Niger, Uganda, and Zambia.

Our gratitude goes out to AMECEA General Secretariat for involving Caritas Africa in the development of guidelines for the implementation of *Laudato Si'* for AMECEA Region members.

Finally, we recognize the different initiatives by the 46 member organizations in the Caritas Africa network and their contributions to the mission of the Church in Africa.

May God bless us all.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On May 24, 2021, the Holy Father, Pope Francis celebrated the anniversary of the *Laudato Si'* Year, which coincided with the 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary since *Laudato Si'* was launched in 2015. Alongside this, the Pope also launched a seven-year journey for implementing the seven Goals of the *Laudato Si'* call. The concrete plans for this seven-year journey will be rolled out on October 4, 2021. As part of the celebration, an online *Laudato Si'* Action Platform was inaugurated. The platform offers an opportunity for interactive engagement, by those participating in response to the call.

Caritas Africa organized a one-day virtual online event that consolidated the work of its Member Organizations on May 20, 2021. The event sought to highlight positive changes towards attaining integral human development, integral ecology, and socio-environmental justice, the central theme of *Laudato Si'*, encouraging response to the un-abating environmental deterioration. The event was built on the SECAM Symposium on *Laudato Si'* held on April 12, 2021.

The overall process built on the PASAN project (2018-2021), which prioritizes information mapping, evidence gathering, and sharing through; engagements with National Caritas members. The engagement of PASAN facilitates the creation of themes and messaging that support advocacy actions to influence regional debates on sustainable food systems. In Africa, food systems are in jeopardy due to environmental degradation, declining biodiversity; the sidelining and exclusion of indigenous and endogenous practices in the care of the land, and the local ecology, inadequate production practices for local crops, and loss of indigenous food varieties.

*Laudato Si'* is relevant to Africa because of the serious threats to food systems and livelihoods. There is an urgent need to stem environmental and ecological degradation, loss of biodiversity and depletion of wildlife, and human habitats, desertification, pollution and contamination of the air, water, and land; climate change, weather variability, and humanitarian crises across the continent. This state of affairs reinforces the need for disseminating and integrating the message of *Laudato Si'* for action at all levels of the communities in Africa.

This report shares highlights actions by sampled Member Organizations in response to the *Laudato Si'* in the context of their country priorities. It highlights the possibilities available in Africa to create innovative solutions and concrete action plans to address relevant issues. The document captures a sample of response actions to priorities that address environmental, climate change-related crises and food systems in Africa. The interventions sampled illustrate wide-ranging engagements with governments, churches, and faith communities, the private sector, families, youth, and children.

PREFACE



**Albert MASHIKA**  
 Regional Executive  
 Secretary  
 Caritas Africa

In 2021 as we mark the 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of the *Laudato Si'* Encyclical by Pope Francis, "*On Care for Our Common Home*", I'm encouraged by the many examples of interventions and actions towards the *Laudato Si'* Action Plan as highlighted in the experiences recorded from Member Organizations in this report. This is in line with the 7 aspirations in Africa's Agenda 2063, which reflect the progress towards a prosperous and united Africa.

One of the ways to realize the fundamental call of *Laudato Si'* and the 7 Goals proposed in its Action Platform will entail not only using resources and adapting renewable green energy; but also focus particularly, to embrace the inclusion and engagement of the youth; the protection of the most vulnerable, the minorities, indigenous peoples; and the rights of communities to have access to assets for development, resilient and sustainable food systems.

Caritas Africa is encouraged by the engagement of the youth in environmental matters. In the words of Pope Francis on [Christus Vivit \(§ 75\)](#); young people continue to suffer forms of marginalization and social exclusion for religious, ethnic or economic reasons. This is also captured in the African Development Bank, which indicates that Africa's growing population and youth unemployment is a ticking time bomb (AfDB 2018). The youth in Africa constitute a bigger proportion of the population. According to Mo Ibrahim Foundation, more than 1/3 of the population is aged 15-34. The AU's African Youth Charter claims that Africa's youth is its biggest resource

and Africa's growing youth population offers enormous potential. This notwithstanding, the Ibrahim Forum Report (2019) asserts that unemployment, lack of opportunities to access sources of income; low level of education; inadequate level of skills, and employable competencies have been identified as key barriers keeping youth from gainful and sustainable employment. There is therefore a need for more inclusion and engagement of the youth in this environment protection agenda.

Through this report, we have captured a synopsis of a variety of interventions from **10 sampled Member Organizations in sub-Saharan Africa** to celebrate the Sixth *Laudato Si'* Anniversary.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Member Organizations for all their initiatives as they continue to embrace the *Laudato Si'* call in demonstrating the love of Christ for transforming lifestyles and care for all Creation in honour of Christ. I further encourage all our partners and different decision-makers in sub-Saharan Africa to engage us in working together "*On Caring for Our Common Home*", towards Africa's Agenda 2063 and UN Agenda 2030.

Finally, Caritas Africa invites its Member Organizations to register on the [Laudato Si' Action Platform](#) online, engage each other, and to join efforts of Caritas Internationalis General Secretariat that works closely with the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development in rolling out the overall seven-year Action Plan in October 2021.

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Caritas Africa is a network of 46 national Member Organizations in Sub-Saharan African countries including adjacent Islands in the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans. It is the socio-pastoral ministry of the Catholic Church and is one of the seven Regions of Caritas *Internationalis* Confederation. At the Sub-national level, Caritas Africa is represented by 507 Diocesan Caritas organizations that are part of the local communities they serve. The local Caritas organizations target local communities with a focus on human development, peacebuilding, economic justice, and complex humanitarian emergencies.

In response to *Laudato Si'*, Caritas Africa facilitates the dissemination of the *Laudato Si'* Encyclical Letter and collects analytical evidence on interventions that demonstrates practices, lessons, and structures that work towards the call, "*On Caring of Our Common Home*".

#### Laudato Si perspective in Africa Region

##### ♦ *The Importance of Environmental Protection in Sub-Saharan Africa.*

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis states that concern for the natural world is no longer '*optional*' but is an integral part of the Church teaching on social justice". Based on this call, in Africa, the Church and Caritas Africa are enjoined in a process of disseminating the message and response actions to the *Laudato Si'* by engaging at the sub-national, national, sub-regional, and regional levels. This process is using available opportunities, platforms, and forums the Church has in its engagement with communities, governing structures, the private sector, and society as a whole, to stir up action in response to the call, including the collection of evidence on interventions, innovations, and solutions that make a difference.

Africa has featured as a food-insecure continent for decades partly due to

the failure to embrace alternative practices that embrace the care of the environment. This has been exacerbated by natural disasters, the effects of climate change, and global warming including other emergent crises. The advent of COVID-19 pandemic has undermined the economic and social systems in Africa. Its impact has caused the devastating economic downturn, loss of business, falling incomes, disruption to trade, transport, tourism, and loss of jobs has made food increasingly unaffordable to many in Africa. Care of the environment would curb and reduce the emergence of disruptive disease outbreaks as people live healthier lives in a sustainable environment.

According to the FAO, 20 % of the population in Africa are affected by undernourishment and lack the essential micronutrients they need to lead healthy lives. **Food systems are undermined by unsustainable practices of production and inadequate care of the environment with measures towards posterity.** This has placed the protection and conservation of the environment in Africa in jeopardy.

Development models in Africa **have been extractive on natural resources** without recourse to investing in maintaining environmentally friendly practices. This makes environmental protection primarily important, and a priority of concern, for work and investments to reverse the adverse impacts created. Environmental degradation has been caused by a rapid increase in population and human activities. Among the key ones are urbanization, pollution, and contamination of the air, water, and land by multiple types of waste and gases; increased demand for new infrastructures, and spaces for large-scale industrial investments. Other factors include **deforestation, depletion of biodiversities, depletion of natural wildlife and community habitats; drying up of water resources, wetlands, lakes, and rivers; as well as the loss of grazing land for pastoralists, drought, and desertification across Africa.**

## INTRODUCTION

The emergence of climate change and weather variability has made an already grave situation extremely complex. Weather-related emergencies, among them floods, landslides, storms, cyclones, and drought have become common place in many parts of Africa. Africa contributes the least in factors that promote global warming and climate change, but it is bearing the most impact of the effects of climate change. Governments in Africa do not have all that it takes in policy, budgets, strategies, and technical know-how needed to measure and respond to climate change issues.

Climate change also contributes to the root cause for growing national and public debt. For example, Mozambique was hit by a spate of cyclones (*Idai March 2019 and Kenneth in April 2019*) and incurred over \$ 3 billion worth of loss, or a 22% GDP hole in the economy. Another result is that for women, who are the majority of subsistence farmers, the climate crisis remains the greatest single threat and arguably, a greater threat than the economic fall-out such as that caused by the current pandemic because it continues to undermine livelihoods unabatedly. With heavy debts, some of the countries cannot invest in strategies that promote their food systems or invest to remedy environmental degradation and preparedness for climate change adaptation.

According to the Climate Equity Reference Project and the Stockholm Environment Institute Report 2020, there is a need for governments, civil society, faith entities, and citizens to embrace and spearhead a change towards a green recovery now, more than before. Related to this, the UN has embarked on mobilizing governments and citizens in every country worldwide, under the call to host the Food Systems Summit focusing to embrace climate-friendly agriculture in 2021.

According to OXFAM, Africa is particularly confronted by climate-induced food crises. In its report key factors in this situation include an already bad situation of environmental degradation, climate change, and weather variability

which cause greater impact on assets such as water resources, biodiversity, and ecosystem destruction, and land fragmentation caused by human activity.

In its report to the industrialized countries and the G8, the Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) has called for a rights-based economy that puts people and mother earth in the center of development. The core purpose of this approach is primarily to guarantee the environmental, social, financial, material, and conditions necessary for all people to live with dignity on a flourishing planet. This resonates with *Laudato Si'*.

*Laudato Si'* will continue to be a useful reference point in guiding Caritas Africa and its Members Organizations towards mobilizing and collaborating with civil society, other faith entities, and communities in holding governments, the private sector, and others to account. It will continue to be a basis for initiating, planning, and managing the conservation of ecosystems, preservation of biodiversities, climate change, and global warming. It will be a reference point for creating benchmarks, and monitoring indicators useful for collecting evidence on transformation and change on how caring for the earth is conducted in real-time.

The Pope's Encyclical on Care for Our Common Home will continue to inspire the Member Organizations to engage at the community level with meaningful actions, and innovative responses to reduce the negative effects of climate change, the care, and conservation of the environment. Combined effort in these spheres will strengthen the inculcation of new attitudes, and practices towards conservation and the promotion of protection measures in the care of the planet.

## INTRODUCTION

### ♦ *Why should we consolidate the work of Caritas Member Organizations?*

The work of Caritas Africa Member Organizations invariably contributes immensely through the Church structures, their partners and counterparts, at the community level through the small Christian communities. This work reaches grassroots levels and awakens awareness, provides evidence-based information, and relevant knowledge on issues of climate change, environmental degradation, and the need to care to conserve local biodiversities and protection of habitats in the local ecology. This galvanizes interest, ownership, and commitment to address local issues with local solutions.

The work of Caritas Africa Member Organizations also reaches the local and national governance structures, influences policies, and informs government directives from a point of knowledge drawn from the realities and practical experiences of communities in the grassroots. Its work creates avenues for liaison, collaboration, and influence with policymakers. Access to evidence-based information and data from Member Organizations will continue to influence the creation of new attitudes and form a basis for the creation of new skills and competencies towards how to care better for the Earth.

Consolidating the work of Member Organizations provides an enriched basis for learning, sharing, and exchange of what works and creates a difference in the protection of Mother Earth. This provides platforms for learning and creating opportunities and options for strategies to scale up for impact.

### ♦ *How can we position the profile of members of the Caritas Africa Network?*

The work of Member Organizations has the potential to capture local practical solutions, innovations, and practices that respond to environmental and climate change challenges, land and water resources degradation, tracking and responding to pollution and contamination by waste including shifting land-use practices.

Caritas Africa has a liaison with the media which is invited to profile best examples, case studies, and innovative solutions to the public. The examples and case studies are also shared and exchanged for knowledge development among the fraternity of Member Organizations, their partners, and collaborating agencies across the sub-regions for scaling up of solutions that work.

The work of Member Organizations will continue to include documenting and publishing best practices and models for learning sharing and exchange to enrich each other and create platforms for community learning.

As best practices are identified from different contexts, Member Organizations will provide an opportunity to build synergy in action at the wider community, national and regional level. This builds dynamic kinetics for executing *Laudato Si'* in a contextualized manner for Africa.



## 2.0 RESPONSE TO *LAUDATO SI'* BY CARITAS AFRICA MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

During the virtual event, Caritas Africa member organizations from different regions and countries presented the following overview of their interventions based on *Laudato Si'*.

### 2.1 Caritas Malawi

Caritas Malawi is **popularizing the *Laudato Si'* across its 8 Dioceses in Malawi**. This is raising overall awareness and community mobilization on environmental conservation and climate change through multiple channels; among them Radio and TV stations, social media platforms, and newspapers. The content of the interventions focuses on the role of the Church in conservation matters, linked to the call of the *Laudato Si'*, and the Global Landscape Restoration Cause. This has also included public statements which have been put across to the nation through these channels.

Caritas Malawi promotes practical community-based work in reforestation programs such as the 2,500 trees planted at St Paul Seminary in Mangochi in 2020; and the establishment of a woodlot at Utale II Parish in 2021. Promotion of energy-saving technologies, conservation agriculture practices in the communities, and advocacy on Climate Change issues focusing on the implementation and monitoring of environmental management policies in terms of conserving the environment; as well as awareness on the need to minimize the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases to enhance the Climate Justice.

Caritas Malawi encountered some challenges among them, the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions on public gatherings; knowledge gap on the role of the Church in natural resource management that; *we are created and called to exercise responsible stewardship over creation on behalf of the loving Creator* and the fact of low awareness about conservation issues hence receiving minimal support at the Church structure level.

As a way forward Caritas Malawi plans to intensify sensitization campaigns, lobby Governments to plan and provide resource allocation to conservation, and implementation of environmentally sensitive laws and policies. Caritas Malawi will also support research on environmental conservation, evidence-based gathering to future programming in conservations issues. It will promote and invest in conservation agriculture and energy-saving technologies.

### 2.2 Caritas Ghana

Since 2016, Caritas Ghana has developed a comprehensive **Care for Our Common Home Program**. The response to the call to action of *Laudato Si'* in Ghana is a whole Church-wide program. The Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference is building partnerships, encouraging other lay societies and organizations to respond to the call. This led to the creation of a broad program of work, which is inspired by the Papal Encyclical *Laudato Si'*. The programming approach adopted what they called Social Impact Investing focussing on 3 main areas; tree planting, electronic and plastics waste management, and sustainable solar energy.

The initiative is designed with a business approach, investing for the common good instead of just profits, so that it is sustainable. It is focusing

environmental issues such as pollution from burning hazardous pollutants (*plastics, electronic waste, and industrial pollutants*). It has an impact as it creates decent employment opportunities for unemployed youth.

This has created a new business model, for instance, the Plastic Recycling Plant is currently employing over 40 youth who were displaced and unemployed in the cities (Accra and Kumasi) as a result of the impact of the Covid-19 impact. Of these 40, 20 are employed full-time, the remainder is day workers who deliver plastics every day for a commission and in this way, they are gainfully employed. At the end of April 2021, 12,000 kg of plastics from the streets and gutters of the city had been taken out in which Caritas Ghana has this intervention. Under the inspiration of the *Laudato Si'*, the plan to plant One Million trees this 2021 has already started.

Caritas Ghana and the Catholic Bishops' Conference celebrate the *Laudato Si'* in that, it inspires long-term concrete action plans that promote integral human development and ecological integrity.

### 2.3 Caritas Zambia

Caritas Zambia is working in a context with disturbed ecosystems, rampant deforestation; and affected by pollution in the air, land, water, burning fossil fuels and by industrial equipment, and technology waste. These have affected the environment and habitats for flora and fauna including land denudation affecting *earth, water, land masses, and the entire ecology*. These have their dignity and purpose in sustaining the environment and climate cycles.



***Caritas Zambia recognizes that everything is connected.*** Thus, it is integrating environmental support and protection in its daily actions and links this with all other development issues of concern. Caritas Zambia also undertakes capacity-building activities in local communities in the way they live centered on ecological *conversion-influencing lifestyles and environmental behavior* to changes ways of living to avoid destruction of our common home.





Caritas Zambia is promoting the integration of environmentally friendly technologies in local activities on land use i.e. *Agroecology, green charcoal, agroforestry, energy-efficient stoves* including the promotion of advocacy messages incorporating ecological justice.



Caritas Zambia has formed climate justice clubs for children to raise awareness among the children that care for the environment and care for our common home is extremely important.



It has also promoted Agroecology among local farmers and the communities that work by use of organic fertilizer, using biodiversity in the field (using different crops), and how to create and make organic manure. Caritas Zambia has engaged the government to develop an Agroecology policy and with political parties to make sure that Agroecology is included in their manifestos.



This has a focus on awareness creation on Africa indigenous trees as part of reforestation to reclaim lost forests through regeneration. This links with development issues and the need to creatively find solutions innovatively to address the challenges in the local community.

### 2.4 Caritas Sierra Leone

Caritas Sierra Leone has **engaged the Parliament** as that is where to lobby for policies of change and effectiveness in carrying out certain objectives within the framework of *Laudato Si'* and the SDGs.

Caritas Sierra Leone has observed the frequent annual flooding caused by environmental problems and is working towards improving the environmental and sanitation problems that contribute to the flooding and other disasters such as mudslides as experienced in the year 2017. Already a project has been rolled out in collaboration with the Freetown City Council in cleaning all the drainages within the capital city to mitigate environmental disasters caused by mudslides.

Environmental issues have caused many communities to have limited access to potable water. Caritas Sierra Leone is working towards the provision of potable water especially for deprived communities in collaboration with the Sierra Leonean government; women empowerment targeting the most vulnerable and those affected by the outbreak of Ebola. Through research, it was concluded that these families are still undergoing economic problems in terms of livelihoods, their children, shelter, and Caritas Sierra Leone has been working towards empowering them in terms of setting up livelihood structures.

### 2.5 National Commission for Justice Peace and Caritas (NCJPC) Liberia

NCJPC Liberia has worked to **raise awareness on Laudato Si' through Church structures in different Dioceses with the Bishops**. The Caritas and Justice and Peace are spearheading this engaging different structures and sectors (health, education) in different dioceses to get involved in the promotion of *Laudato Si'*.

In the future, the creation of the Diocesan Action Plan will have indicators to bring everyone together where the bishops themselves can hold those who have been assigned accountable for milestones related to the execution of the *Laudato Si'*.

NCJPC Liberia recognizes that everything is interconnected and to sustain interventions on climate change and environmental conservation and ecological conversion the process of bringing the entire Church together will be imperative. With the emergence of Ebola and COVID-19, Caritas Liberia had to deal with emergencies. This demonstrated that there must be a plan that is effective where all structures within the Church should be involved and everyone should know these preparedness plans including priests, the community.

### 2.6 Caritas Zimbabwe

At the beginning of the *Laudato Si'* year, Caritas Zimbabwe convened a **meeting of all 8 Dioceses in the country to submit their annual plans** which included *Laudato Si'* work plans for the anniversary year and the launch of the "*Go Green Campaign*".

Other arms of the Church were engaged by Caritas at the level of the Dioceses. Based on this, remarkable work has been done to Care for Our Common Home at the Diocesan level.



Caritas Zimbabwe supported sustainable agriculture systems as the means to mitigate climate change and included Tree planting, Agroecology, greenhouse technology to grow crops throughout the year to increase food production, conservation agriculture, in-field water harvesting, and conservation technologies, environmental management awareness-raising, community-based DRR Plans, and formation of community-based DRR Committees.



The interventions also targeted small-scale farmers to encourage them from conventional farming to sustainable climate change adaptive farming systems. Caritas Zimbabwe promoted the replacement of conventional farming systems. This comprised interventions that included the establishment of Agroecology centres and Adoption of Agroecological principles which embrace among other technologies, moisture conservation, water harvesting, drip irrigation and piped water schemes, hybrid seed Vs, OPV Seed saving, promotion of small grain storage, food processing, value addition, and market linkages.



Caritas Zimbabwe promoted the diversification of livelihoods to reduce the risk of livelihoods failure and food insecurity through off-farm activities apiculture, craftwork, sustainable harvesting of non-timber products e.g., Mopani worms, and microfinance schemes were also promoted. Mono-cropping Vs -mixed cropping and mixed farming, small livestock production-resists drought, improved breeds, and calving percentage, use of natural pest and predator management, and the replacement of synthetic fertilizers with natural soil fertility management practices.



Based on these and other interventions Caritas Zimbabwe received a recognition award from the government of Zimbabwe.

The Bishops and priests had the opportunity to celebrate *Laudato Si'* in all Dioceses. A video clip is provided to sample and depict the experience. The link to the Video from Caritas Zimbabwe is provided below: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pn5a1WUeMyLvOYagNIFaAT-Pa4uL42Fu/view>

### 2.7 Caritas Benin

Caritas Benin has **implemented projects and initiatives under the *Laudato Si'* intervention plans** among them, *Integrated management of reforestation and fertilization of agricultural soils in the diocese of Dassa-Zoumé*. The intervention promoted reforestation using soil-improving species with the fertilization of agricultural land.



This contributes to carbon sequestration while improving productivity in the area and allowing farmers to have better yields. Caritas Benin supported the populations of the Archdiocese of Parakou to reforest around 15ha. of land

with fruit trees (grafted mango trees, lemon trees, orange trees, papaya trees, coconut trees, grafted cashew trees) and non-fruit trees (Gmélina, Teak, Cassia siamea, Kapok tree). The fruit trees are intended for food, medicinal, etc. and non-fruit trees for service wood needs.

Producers are also supported in adopting environmentally friendly agricultural production practices such as the initiatives to promote agroecological transition in the Diocese of Natitingou. These targeted interventions to strengthen food and nutritional security and to support populations exposed to the adverse effects of climate change in the diocese of Natitingou to adapt to it. Caritas Benin has trained and closely monitors 597 producers and market gardeners in agroecological techniques such as the manufacture and use of solid compost, liquid biofertilizer.



*Windrow compost being prepared in Maréborou,*

## 2.8 Caritas Uganda

Caritas Uganda reports that Uganda is faced with a massive degradation of the environment due to massive tree cutting and destruction of wetlands. According to experts, Uganda is losing close to 55,000 acres of vegetation cover per annum. Pollution mainly in urban areas is caused mainly by the use of obsolete technology e.g. old factories, secondhand vehicles, *Boda boda* (motorcycles) which are very many in Uganda, and also uncontrolled rubbish burning in urban centres. In the rural localities, land degradation has led to natural disasters, e.g. floods, landslides, loss of wildlife habitats, and loss of pastureland among pastoralists have also been reported.

It is reported that in the last few years an upward trajectory in the amount of greenhouse gas emission in Uganda of around 5.53 million tons of carbon dioxide (2018). The Uganda government has also come out very strongly to support and promote increased tree planting. Currently, the government is targeting to plant about 20million trees in one year and this is happening in many places with support from NGOs.

Caritas Uganda has made a lot of contributions in response to *Laudato Si'* towards the **development and putting in place relevant legislation to address these issues**. It has also initiated programs to **mainstream Ecological protection and integrity, the promotion of tree planting among smallholder farmers**, holding Caritas week celebrated annually, as a platform for tree planting.

It has taken part in national events such as the commemoration of the World Environmental Day, engagement with government structures the National Environmental Management Authority in the Steering Committee which organizes this event every year and coordinate civil organizations to participate; promoting clean energy such as solar cookers cheap and very clean cooking

energy for rural households in collaboration with Denmark company that works with young people to assemble the cookers thus creating employment.

Caritas Uganda has participated in public dialogues of concerned key stakeholders on climate advocacy at local, national, and international levels to influence policies such as the contributions and consultations of Caritas Uganda for the amendment of the National Environment Act in 2019 and the drafting of the Climate Change Bill of 2019 which was passed into law. It also participated in the drafting of the National Determined Contribution by Uganda which is a commitment to be made by every country for the implementation of the Paris Agreement (2015); collaborated with government agencies in the stop plastic campaigns to end the use of plastic bags in Uganda. These actions are part of implementing the *Laudato Si'* Action Plan in Uganda.

## 2.9 Caritas Guinée

Caritas Guinée 17 Acre land **produces vegetables, livestock, cattle, and is a visible demonstrable example to communities** that models as a pilot project on how to implement *Laudato Si'* practically at the community level. The member organization has also translated the *Laudato Si'* in local languages. It is working with the government on the protection of the Basin of the Niger. At the Diocesan and the National levels, it promotes Agroforestry, how to reduce the pollution of river waters, by the reduction in the use of pesticide and fertilizers.

## 2.10 Caritas Gambia - Catholic Diocese of Banjul

Caritas Gambia promoted the *Laudato Si'* week by **highlighting its interventions addressing deforestation due to timber logging**. Targeting Fulabantang in the Central River Region of the Gambia, it provided Avocado **pea seedlings** purchased and transported to Fulabantang in the Central River Region of the Gambia.

## RESPONSE TO *LAUDATO SI'* BY CARITAS AFRICA MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

These were planted in the premises of the **St. Lazarus Clinic** and at **St. Therese Junior and Senior Secondary School**. Fulabantang is one of the communities where deforestation has greatly affected the forest and as a result, most of the land is without trees.

The school principal appreciated and thanked Caritas for the initiative and said, *“This will go a long way in encouraging the students to develop the culture of caring for the environment as we have already started by growing*



*oranges and other kinds of trees around the school to provide both food and shade in the complex”.*

Fulabantang also hosts one of Caritas Gambia's sub-units - the St. Lazarus Clinic, which started operations in 2002 offering MCH, Primary health, out and in-patient services to the community and its surrounding villages.

A similar activity was carried out in the urban area in another mission Secondary



school. Photos were taken with the students in front of a Laudato Si' banner printed to celebrate the week.

The week was climaxed with the **celebration of the Holy Eucharist** at the St. Therese Catholic Church in Kanifing, attended by Caritas staff and members of the community. Caritas provided copies of the *Laudato Si'* sixth-anniversary common prayer which was prayed by the entire congregation. Rev Fr. Anthony Gabisi - Parish Priest, concelebrated the Mass with Rev Fr. Tanislas Ndecky as Chief celebrant. In his homily, Fr. Ndecky spoke briefly on *Laudato Si'*, reiterating the Pope's message for people of the world to care for the common good of our environment and each other.



*Some of the Caritas staff with Fr. Ndecky*



### 3.0 CALL TO ACTION : *LAUDATO SI'* ACTION PLATFORM

Underpinning *Laudato Si'* is a call to profound internal personal, family, communities, and businesses to pay attention; and proactively act to avert the unfolding ecological crisis. It seeks to address factors driven by selfish exploitation of the environment that does not take careful consideration of the inter-relatedness of ecosystems, biodiversity, and the ecology; and the causes and effects of climate change and global warming. The call is about a process of genuine reflection and conversion to respond affirmatively and quickly with holistic approaches. Reflection and conversion entail a genuine "a re-examining of our relationships with the Creator, with all creation, and with each other in a spiritual and cultural revolution to realize integral ecology".

Whereas the *Laudato Si'* call will be used as an informative reference for government and private sector policy. It will continue to create a basis of reference to influence governments, the private sector, and society to revamp the various climate change strategies across Africa. It informs faith entities, civil society, households, and individuals on viable options for action together in catalyzing processes in the right direction for appropriate responses.

Response to the *Laudato Si'* call has seven key spheres based on which action plans will be based across all echelons of society. The below is a concise summary of the key response spheres thus:

⇒ ***Response to the Cry of the Earth*** by protecting "our common home", for the wellbeing of all creation, equitably addressing the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ecological sustainability in the use of green renewable energy; embracing the protection and conservation of land, water including protecting of all life forms in posterity now and in posterity.

⇒ ***Response to the Cry of the Poor*** by promoting eco-justice defend and protect human life from conception to death, celebrating all forms of life on earth, standing in solidarity with vulnerable people, protecting the Indigenous People, the Minorities, and their rights.

⇒ ***Ecological Economics*** as a subsystem supporting ethical and sustainable investments and businesses that genuinely support the circular economy, fair and sustainable purchasing, ensuring the dignity of workers, and gift economy.

⇒ ***Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles*** is underpinned by the concepts of sufficiency, and the principles of sustainability, that promote sobriety in the use of resources and energy.

⇒ ***Ecological Education is guided by the call of Laudato Si'*** in re-thinking and re-designing learning curricular in learning institutions, taking on institutional reform in government and all human institutions, and creating learning opportunities to embrace the spirit of integral ecology to foster ecological awareness and transformative action.

⇒ ***Ecological Spirituality*** is borne of a religious vision of God's creation, celebrating and praying for all creation on earth, and encouraging the community to embrace conscious reflection on *Laudato Si'* themes with commitment and engagement of community leaders in this process.

⇒ ***Community Engagement and Participatory Action*** that advocates for and develops social policy for organizing towards resilient social action, that addresses changes likely to affect communities resulting from effects of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Response plans in line with these spheres of action create a basis from which Member Organizations in Caritas Africa can engage meaningfully with

evidence-based results within their countries of operation. This frame of the seven spheres also provides a basis for evidence-based monitoring and collecting evidence on interventions, innovations, and solutions that work. This will inform and create dialogue and ongoing discourse at all levels of society for meaningful and genuine transformation of communities, faith institutions, and institutions of learning, the private sector, and government departments.

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

The different experiences shared by the 10 Caritas Africa Member Organizations indicate that 6 years after the publishing of *Laudato Si'*, a lot of work is going on in response to the call by the Holy Father to *Care for Our Common Home*. The interventions shared during the one-day virtual event and sampled in this report show by example how the dissemination of the call to build community awareness, provides scope for an engagement at its different echelons of society, creating options for dialogue with Civil Society, governing structures, private sector, and other actors. The examples also demonstrate case studies on where and how youth can be included and engaged productively for change. The experiences also show that a lot of positive advocacy work is going on.

There is evidence that governments are increasingly recognizing the role of faith-based organizations, and Civil Society in the sphere of addressing issues on environment and food security, climate change, and care of the earth. This is highlighted by the case of the recognition of Caritas Zimbabwe by the government and the roles of Caritas Uganda in the making relevant legislation and policies and the engagement of the government of Sierra Leone with civil society in the preparation of the 2021 VNR report.

Caritas Africa will continue to collaborate with the Bishops to reach the sub-country levels through Diocesan and Parish Caritas Organizations. It will continue to liaise with Bishops and with other platforms to catalyze the facilitation of awareness creation and response at the grassroots. Caritas Africa will seek out opportunities for collecting evidence on local solutions and innovations of the most relevant practices in responding to the call for the *Care for Our Common Home*.

As an observer at the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), Caritas Africa will continue to explore ways for sharing written reports and also submitting relevant messages to governments and the UNEP.

The sharing during the *Laudato Si'* Event points to the urgent need of redefining how to improve awareness and action as a basis for mobilizing civic action in advocacy for policy reform in favor of Integral human development and Care for Our Common Home.

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## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS: VIRTUAL MEETING ON LAUDATO SI' HELD ON 20 <sup>TH</sup> MAY 2021		
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3	Revd. Father Benoît HODANOU	Caritas Togo
4	Revd. Father Jean Marie TWAGIRAYEZU	Caritas Rwanda
5	Revd. Father Philippe SANHOUEKOUA	Caritas Benin
6	Revd. Father Jean HABA	Caritas Guinea
7	Revd. Father. Stephen AMOAH-GYASI	Caritas Cape Coast Archdiocese, Ghana
8	Rev. Sr. Regina Ignatia AFLAH	Caritas Ghana
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12	Mrs. Beatrice Youma Mrita SIMTAYA	Caritas Africa
13	Ms. Nduta KARIUKI	Caritas Africa
14	Mr. Samuel Zan AKOLOGO	Caritas Ghana
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16	Mr. Eugene KABILIKA	Caritas Zambia
17	Mr. Michael Kabere BANGURA	Caritas Sierra Leone
18	Mr. Marius ZIBGWI	Caritas Zimbabwe
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