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FROM PRACTICE TO POLICY TO PRACTICE: CONNECTING FAITH AND CONSERVATION IN AFRICA

A WHITE PAPER



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COVER PHOTO: Sunrise over Tarangire National Park, Tanzania

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ACRONYMS

ABCG	Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group
ADS	Automated Directive System
ARC	Alliance of Religions and Conservation
BATS	Biodiversity Analysis and Technical Support program
CI	Conservation International
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
EO	Executive Order
HHS	United States Department of Health and Human Services
IFEES	Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Services
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WASH	UNICEF's Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene program
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

*“You, tree, my brother...my sister
Today I plant you in this soil
I shall give water for your growth
Have good roots to keep the soil from eroding
Have many branches and leaves so that we can
-sit in your shade,
-breathe fresh air, and
-find firewood.”*

–Eucharistic ritual for planting seedlings, Zimbabwe¹

OVERVIEW

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), conservation groups, and faith-based organizations are all working to protect biodiversity in sub-Saharan Africa. Across major religious denominations, sects, and indigenous religions, faith-based conservation is and has been happening on the ground. Over the past decade, conservation and faith organizations have made high-level institutional pledges to work jointly on conservation efforts. Some of these pledges are now finding their way to concrete action, and smaller, community-based conservation interventions are beginning to scale.

Faiths have always had environmental messages in their teachings. In the past several years, faith groups have shown increased interest in the impacts, adaptation, and legislation related to climate change. The [United Nations Millennium Development Goals](#), particularly *Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability*, “creation care,”² and access to clean water, however, are issues that have most recently galvanized more faith groups to get involved. Each faith articulates the relationship between humans and nature within its set of beliefs. If USAID reaches out to faith communities for partnership, its project managers could learn about messages of faith and the environment that are more successful than technical approaches to biodiversity conservation. Information needed to identify and work with faith-based organizations during project development and implementation is not centrally located and not always well documented. Conversely, information about biodiversity conservation should be easily accessible to faith communities. There is also some concern over the rules, codes, and parameters for U.S. Government-supported engagement with faith groups.

This paper explores some of the current practices of connecting faith and conservation, provides information on some of the faith groups doing conservation work, and presents several case studies on faith-based conservation. Given all the activity that faith communities and conservation organizations are doing to connect faith and conservation, it is an effort to discuss and learn how best to partner with faith communities on biodiversity conservation in sub-Saharan Africa.

¹ www.clas.ufl.edu/users/bron/PDF--Christianity/Daneel--African%20Earthkeeping%20Churches.pdf

² A Christian movement that applies biblical principles of stewardship to the environment.

BACKGROUND

“By 2025, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss in Africa have been significantly slowed, people and nature are adapting to climate change, and species and ecosystem services are providing a foundation for human welfare in a society committed to sustainable economic development and equitable sharing of natural resource benefits.”

–[Dar Vision for the future of biodiversity in Africa](#)

In September 2008, the [Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group](#) (ABCG), with the support of the [International Union for the Conservation of Nature](#) (IUCN) and funding from USAID’s Biodiversity Analysis and Technical Support (BATS) program, convened a group of African biodiversity experts in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The group produced a vision statement for the future of biodiversity (the “Dar Vision”). The experts developing the Dar Vision went on to identify faith communities as important stakeholders to include in biodiversity conservation:

“Reach out to faith communities for dialogue and collaboration. The global urgency for a sustainable world demands multidimensional approaches and a persistent push for ideals based on innovative and pragmatic strategies. Faith-based communities comprise the largest social organizations in Africa, representing a repository of opportunities to spread the cause for sustainability in the continent. Conservation leaders should reach out to religious communities to collaborate in implementing these recommendations, with a view to enhancing the capacity for value-based sustainability decisions that link nature and human well-being.”

A purely technical template approach to environmental challenges can overlook the values that underlie the human behavior that ultimately results in environmental degradation. Conservation practitioners recognize the importance of understanding local culture when working with indigenous and settler communities. The same is true for religion and faith. A person’s religious beliefs help to frame his or her worldview. If we do not understand a person’s or community’s worldview, we cannot effectively communicate and we cannot convince them of the importance of a particular issue.

In order to successfully change human choices, the values that drive those choices must be identified. In Africa, the basis of many of those values lies in faith, and often the only organizations in rural African communities are faith-based. As all major religions have strong beliefs in environmental protection, conservation groups need to understand how they are articulated. By understanding religious values, we can learn to communicate conservation messages that speak to those sacred beliefs.

This White Paper is an attempt to identify the range and diversity of organizations involved in faith-based conservation in Africa and the various tools, techniques, and methods being used to facilitate the discourse about religion and conservation. It is the hope that USAID will be able to guide its conservation managers and others to productive and successful engagement with faith communities to reach biodiversity goals.

U.S. GOVERNMENT FAITH-BASED INITIATIVES

The U.S. Government has provided direction and guidelines for engagement with faith-based organizations.

“The importance of engaging with religious organizations in addressing climate change and environmental concerns has become even clearer – as has the importance of faith-based organizations taking a prominent leadership role in influencing policy, education, and action in those areas.”

– President Obama’s Environmental and Climate Change Task Force of the Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships

On February 5, 2009, President Obama signed an [Executive Order](#) (EO)³ establishing a new White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, with a similar structure to President George W. Bush’s White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. President Clinton first created a faith-based initiative in 1996. The White House office works with 12 U.S. Government agency offices, including USAID, the State Department, Health and Human Services (HHS), and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The President’s Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships has an Environmental and Climate Change Task Force made up of faith leaders from major religions, faith-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and faith-based conservation NGOs. In 2009, the Task Force made several [recommendations](#) for international environmental engagement with faith communities, particularly regarding climate change.

Each federal agency has developed its own guidance for work with faith-based organizations; practices and policies vary across the U.S. Government. Operative guidance for USAID is found in [22 CFR Parts 202, 205, 211, and 226](#): Participation by Religious Organizations in USAID Programs and in the Automated Directive System (ADS) 303.3.28: Participation of Faith-Based and Community Organizations.

USAID’s Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives has worked with faith-based and community organizations to multiply the impact of foreign aid by leveraging existing resources overseas. Their [Strategic Partnerships Guidebook](#) details how best to partner with faith-based and local organizations. USAID has a library of best practices for partnerships on its [intranet site](#).

USDA’s Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships ensures that its NGO partners engage civil society groups, including faith-based organizations. Its Foreign Agricultural Service currently partners with many faith-based organizations on programs such as Food for Progress and the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program. HHS’s Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships most recently developed “[H1N1 Flu: A Guide for Community & Faith-based Organizations](#),” the [Strengthening Communities Fund](#) for faith-based and other NGOs, and the [Assets for Independence Fund](#). The President’s Emergency Program for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) encourages partnerships with faith-based organizations “as a key strategy for increasing access to services and building sustainability.”⁴

³ EO 13498 amended EO 13199 and set up the White House faith-based offices under Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush, respectively, and established their purpose and roles. EO 13279 details the rights and responsibilities of faith-based organizations seeking to work with the U.S. Government.

⁴ www.pepfar.gov/press/80248.htm

FAITH IN AFRICA

According to the [Alliance of Religions and Conservation](#) (ARC), roughly seven percent of the habitable planet is owned by religious organizations, and 15 percent of the world's forests are considered sacred.⁵ More than 90 percent of the population in Africa identifies itself as Christian or Muslim, and nearly all hold traditional indigenous beliefs as well.⁶

Both the Bible and the Koran include messages, teachings, and practices related to nature and stewardship of the earth in their teachings. Few written works have been produced to use as a reference for local indigenous beliefs. Instead, these religions focus on oral history, traditional practices, and the power of priests, chiefs, and others to deal with spirits.

Traditional indigenous religions dominate in Liberia, Mozambique, Benin, Ivory Coast, and Guinea Bissau.⁷

Traditional indigenous religions include belief systems and rituals that “cannot be separated from subsistence, kinship, language, governance, and landscape.”⁸ In general, major religions recognize traditional indigenous religions through a deep respect for taboos, customs, and elders.⁹ However, some converts can face the challenge of incorporating previous beliefs into their new Christian or Muslim frameworks.¹⁰ Indigenous practices and beliefs are local, so they vary greatly in their practices, but broad beliefs are similar in their grounding in oneness with the earth.¹¹ For example, local religious leaders have designated many natural areas as sacred for rituals and worship; these designations have an important role in protecting biodiversity.¹²

Staff from the [Gorongosa Restoration Project](#) once visited the tribal chief on Mount Gorongosa in central Mozambique to discuss protecting its important rainforest. Unfortunately their helicopter was considered taboo because it was red, the color of violence and conflict. Just as the helicopter touched down on sacred ground, a blind skink, another bad omen, appeared in front of the group.

(See [Philip Gourevitch, in *The New Yorker*, December 21, 2009](#))

⁵ M. Palmer and V. Finlay, *Faith in Conservation. New Approaches to Religions and the Environment*. (Washington, DC, USA: The World Bank, 2003)

⁶ www.arcworld.org/projects.asp?projectID=263

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ W. Kelbessa, “Africa, Sub-Saharan,” in Callicott, J. Baird and Frodeman, Robert (eds.). *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*. Vol. I. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference: 2000)

⁹ Martin Palmer. *Personal communication*. July 29, 2010.

¹⁰ Ben Campbell. *Personal communication*. August 30, 2010.

¹¹ J.A. Grim, *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology: The Interbeing of Cosmology and Community*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: 2001)

¹² N. Dudley, L. Higgins-Zogib, and S. Mansourian, “Beyond Belief, Linking Faiths and Protected Areas to Support Biodiversity Conservation.” (WWF: 2005)

FAITH COMMUNITIES

For many years faith-based groups have been working on conservation policies and projects across sub-Saharan Africa. Today, interfaith groups and most major religious sects are committed to addressing climate change, assuring clean water, campaigning for eco-justice, or working on other environmental issues.

New Psalmist Baptist Church, a 7,500-member church based in Baltimore, is involving their network in WASH, UNICEF's Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene program, and has developed a [seven-year environmental plan](#) with ARC to strategically plan their commitment to protect the environment.

Faith communities have large networks of congregations in the United States and in Africa that use their own media to communicate with their members. Some denominations have larger networks for the environment, including the [U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Environmental Justice Program](#), the [Episcopal Ecological Network](#), and the [Southern Baptist Environment and Climate Initiative](#). Other ministries such as the [Evangelical Environmental Network](#) and the [National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Programs](#) help inform and mobilize groups to take care of the environment. Missionary groups are more loosely organized, making it difficult to catalogue practices and organizational structures. Duke University's [Faith & Leadership](#) website offers a place for Christian leaders to “reflect, connect, and learn,” including opportunities for conservation missions in the developing world.

Faith-based volunteer development organizations, such as World Vision, have partnered with the U.S. Government and conservation organizations internationally. USDA and World Vision work on agriculture and environment projects through USDA's Foreign Agriculture Service.

Each sect of each major religion has different beliefs and traditions. Conservation groups must understand the beliefs of individual religions, the differences among religions, and how each religion articulates its beliefs in order to work together effectively. However, shared beliefs and mutual concern have brought interfaith groups together on conservation projects, including the [World Council of Churches](#) and Inter-faith Action for Peace in Africa. The Network of Earthkeeping Christian Communities in South Africa, All Africa Conference of Churches, the [Southern African Faith Communities Environment Institute](#), and Mothers' Unions are examples of region-specific interfaith groups.

INTERNATIONAL SECULAR NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Most large international non-governmental conservation groups have worked on projects that have involved faith groups, whether incidental or by design. Several conservation and development organizations have set policies to work with faith communities. Some examples linking faith and conservation in Africa:

- [RARE's Pride campaigns](#) now include a guidebook for inclusion of conservation messages in sermons or “sermon sheets” by local religious leaders.
- The Jane Goodall Institute's [Roots and Shoots Program](#) is [working in Muslim Schools](#) in Tanzania.
- [Fauna & Flora International](#) is working with the Ugandan Wildlife Authority on protecting chimpanzees in [Rwenzori Mountains National Park](#) using local cultural values as a tool to manage the park and communicate with buffer zone communities.
- The [Green Belt movement](#) began in Kenya with women from local churches and uses faith messages in its tree planting outreach.

Working with different faiths requires time, understanding, and trust. The [World Bank](#), [World Wildlife Fund](#) (WWF), the United Nations, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and ARC have been working with faith communities for many years, and all have successes and lessons learned. The following are more in-depth descriptions of larger efforts by international organizations that link faith and conservation in Africa.

ALLIANCE OF RELIGIONS AND CONSERVATION

Using networks of major religions, ARC, a United Kingdom-based secular non-profit started by Prince Philip in 1995, acts as a broker between conservation organizations and faith groups. Its main partners have been World Wildlife International, IUCN, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the World Bank. They have produced a variety of publications about working with major faiths and the relationships between faiths and the environment.

ARC Secretary General Martin Palmer has been working with faith groups for more than 25 years. ARC has developed [guides](#) for working with faiths on conservation. These are useful tools for understanding the customs, teachings, and culture of the 11 faiths that work with ARC.

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana launched its long-term environmental action plan for Ghana, with the help of ARC. The church committed to help mitigate the effects of climate change by raising awareness in its congregations; integrating the theme of climate change into worship, liturgy, preaching, and theological curricula; establishing green churches; and, engaging the government of Ghana to advocate policy change.

At a 2009 celebration at [Windsor Castle](#) sponsored by the UNDP, ARC began to work with faith leaders to develop seven- and eight-year commitments¹³ to the environment, use their media channels, and encourage celebrations to focus on natural resources.

¹³ Seven-year plans are used for Abrahamic religions that put emphasis on the number seven as a sacred number. Eight-year plans are for Eastern/Asian religions that view eight as a lucky or sacred number.

CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

[Conservation International](#) (CI) had an office of faith-based activities until its director left in 2008. This office supported a project in Kenya, as well as several in Asia and South America. CI and evangelical Christian groups partnered on creation care to apply biblical principles of stewardship to the environment. CI also partnered with ARC, [A Rocha](#), and the [Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Services](#) (IFEES) on faith and conservation initiatives. CI is now engaging with some development organizations, such as World Vision.

UNITED NATIONS

The [United Nations Millennium Development Goals](#) have galvanized many faith groups to get involved in conservation and climate change to help achieve *Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability*.

[UNICEF](#), like many health organizations, has historically partnered with religious leaders on health issues across the globe. UNICEF has categorized faith groups as Congregations, Religious Coordinating Bodies, Non-Government Organizations, and Community-Based Organizations.

The [United Nations Development Programme](#) has been partnering with ARC and others on faith initiatives in development. As noted above, in 2007, ARC and UNDP launched the Faith Commitments for the Environment program that has resulted in seven-year plans for the environment. There are several plans for Africa, including the [Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania](#), the [Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ghana](#), and the [Presbyterian Church in Cameroon](#). The Muslim Plan for the environment is not specific to Africa.

The [United Nations Environment Programme](#) (UNEP) founded its Interfaith Partnership for the Environment in 1996, that resulted in the 2000 publication, “Earth and Faith: a Book of Reflection for Action” and other active programs.

INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURE

IUCN has focused its faith-based conservation on the protection of [sacred natural sites](#). IUCN’s Task Force on the Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas, a part of the World Commission on Protected Areas, focuses on improving the stature of sacred natural sites as the world’s oldest protected areas through [on-going projects and workshops](#). IUCN’s World Congress on Protected Areas in Durban, South Africa, in 2003 addressed the issue and produced recommendations, including the [Delos Initiative](#), which focuses on sacred site management in the developing world. IUCN has worked with ARC on several projects to learn about working with different faiths. IUCN also sponsored “Environmental Protection in Islam” in 1994.¹⁴

Fauna & Flora International and the Uganda Wildlife Authority are working to harness local cultural beliefs to support chimpanzee conservation in Rwenzori Mountains National Park in Uganda. Chimpanzees are considered totems of the local Bathangyi clan.

The newly created cultural values conservation association will develop inter-clan games, make presentations for local radio stations, and work with the Rwenzururu kingship.

WORLD BANK

The World Bank has been engaging religions and their networks for many years. Their goal is driven by the need to address poverty, which aligns well with the goals of many faith organizations. The World Bank began working with ARC in 2002 and published “Faith in Conservation,” a discussion about how religions work with conservation and development organizations, by ARC’s Michael Palmer in 2003.

¹⁴ Bagader et al. *Environmental Protection in Islam*. IUCN. (Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK: 1994)

This book is a useful tool for understanding the principles of each religion and learning the larger concepts for working with particular faiths.

In Accra, Ghana, in 2009, the World Bank held a [high-level meeting](#) that brought together faith and development leaders to discuss opportunities for partnership in the future and, in particular, to turn their policies into activities on the ground.

WORLD WILDLIFE FUND INTERNATIONAL

In 1986, World Wildlife Fund International invited representatives from five major faiths – Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism – to Italy to explore how they could work on environmental issues. WWF International’s network for religions and ecology later became the independent ARC. WWF International has continued working with the World Bank, ARC, and others on faith dialogues. In 2005, ARC and WWF produced “[Beyond Belief: Linking Faiths and Protected Areas to Support Biodiversity Conservation](#),” which drew connections between sacred designations for natural resources and modern day protected area management. The document provides guidelines for balancing the needs of faiths with biodiversity conservation in protected areas.

INTERNATIONAL FAITH AND CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS

There are several international faith organizations specifically dedicated to the environment. They hold trainings and workshops to help teachers, conservation managers, and others weave religious messages into conservation projects and vice versa. They also work to alleviate poverty through conservation programs such as tree planting and farming projects. They have the ability to provide both the technical and the spiritual contexts for work on the ground. Organizations such as A Rocha, the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, and Plant with Purpose are active in Africa.

A Rocha. A Rocha is a network of independent, interdenominational Christian organizations in 19 countries that focuses on conservation through research and community development. Established in 1983, A Rocha is the only faith-based organization with IUCN member status. A Rocha is working in four sub-Saharan countries: Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, and Uganda.

Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES). The IFEES is a Muslim conservation organization established in the 1980s. It has been involved in research, teaching, and training throughout the world to raise awareness of Islamic teachings on the environment. The IFEES has developed a series of guidebooks for training on Islamic connections to the environment. The IFEES has partnered with ARC, CARE International, the MacArthur Foundation, WWF International, and others on a variety of trainings and projects around the world.

Plant with Purpose. Plant with Purpose works to reverse deforestation around the world. With projects in Tanzania and Burundi, Plant with Purpose has programs to restore land productivity in order to create sustainable economic opportunities to lift communities out of poverty.

Misali Island, located west of Pemba, is one of the most important turtle nesting sites in Tanzania and home to delicate coral slopes. In the 1990s it was under severe threat from dynamite fishing. The Government and environmental agencies launched an education program that proved unsuccessful.

The fishing villages of the East African coast are mostly Muslim. IFEES conducted two environmental ethics workshops based on the Qur'an in 1998 and 2001. Mosque leaders and Qu'ran schoolteachers attended the workshops alongside leaders of the fishermen. The core message was that dynamite fishing was illegal according to Islam, and the fishermen responded by ending this practice immediately.

RESOURCES

Many publications and websites that link faith and conservation can be found in the hyperlinks in this document and in the attached bibliography. Some key Internet forums, such as the [Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology](#) and the Society for Conservation Biology's [Religion and Conservation Biology](#) group encourage discourse and are referenced in the bibliography as well. Many faiths have discussion groups or conservation meetings groups that engage in international conservation projects. Given the larger number and scope of these types of projects, they are not catalogued here.

A single listing or anthology of faith and conservation projects and initiatives does not currently exist, but each organization has extensive resources listed on its website. USAID is committed to bringing this topic to its practitioners, managers, field staff, and partners on its Resource Management Portal to make information more readily available to interested groups.

It can be difficult for small organizations, particularly faith-based organizations to learn how to navigate the funding structures of the U.S. Government. Each Federal Agency's Faith-Based Office has staff to help smaller groups learn about the resources available to them. USAID's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives can provide contacts and information for development and conservation projects around the world.

OPPORTUNITIES

Faith-based conservation has momentum and interest. As evidenced by the many programs and projects highlighted in this White Paper, there are many successful examples of faith and conservation partnerships. Pledges by major conservation organizations and major religions to work together show that there is a commitment to form these partnerships. USAID has an opportunity to act as a catalyst for new activity with conservation NGOs, other Federal Agencies, and faith communities. By stimulating interest in the linkages between conservation and religions, USAID can contribute to successful activities on the ground and encourage projects that conceptualize partnerships between faith communities and conservation groups.

USAID can help further the discourse by promoting current projects, making information easily accessible through the African Biodiversity Collaborative Group, electronic mailing lists, its Resource Management Portal and FRAME websites, and major media outlets. USAID can also promote references, primers, and websites for further understanding and interest.

Groups guided by missions to link faith and conservation can help USAID reach out to faith communities. USAID has the opportunity to link established faith groups with conservation organizations and other faith-based organizations that have successfully worked to link conservation and religion. Many institutions have dedicated decades of time to build trust with faith communities. USAID can support those institutions with financial and technical resources to continue their good work.

USAID can study and collaborate with other U.S. Government faith-based programs, particularly those at HHS, USDA, and the Department of State. Each agency uses different guidance for work with faith-based communities that will inform USAID of successful strategies for partnership with faith communities. USAID can also involve higher levels of the U.S. Government in this issue to increase interest and action. USAID's biodiversity programs can also learn from the many faith-based partnerships run by USAID's other sectors, particularly its health programs.

The [Interfaith Power and Light](#) campaign has partnered with Presbyterian churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Mission, and Muslim communities of Cameroon to raise awareness about tree planting.

Experts in the field of faith and conservation can provide USAID with guidance for moving forward. A gap remains between policy and action. ARC has been successfully brokering partnerships with religious networks for many years. USAID is beginning to explore more of these partnerships. By working with international organizations like A Rocha, IFEES, and other Africa-based, faith-based conservation organizations, USAID can strengthen the connections between faith and

conservation that have already been established. Many interfaith groups have learned to bring together different faiths on issues of mutual concern, and USAID can learn how they structure these partnerships and communicate about them.

NEXT STEPS

This White Paper is just a beginning of the discourse on engaging faith communities in USAID's sub-Saharan Africa biodiversity conservation programs. Next steps will involve learning more about other U.S. Government Agency involvement with faith communities, publicizing the connections between faith and biodiversity conservation, and establishing partnerships with faith communities. USAID will reach out to its missions, faith communities, and other conservation practitioners to gather information about additional faith-based connections and possibilities for new partnerships. Close work with established projects and organizations that link faith and conservation will provide additional insight into successful programs in the future. Participation in ARC's planning with religions across Africa will help USAID understand how best to learn from different faiths and their approaches to conservation across the continent.

Wider distribution of this White Paper will hopefully stimulate interest in engaging faith communities in conservation of natural resources in Africa. Publication of the Paper on various electronic mailing lists, to partners at ABCG, and on USAID's Resource Management Portal will be important tools for reaching a wider audience. Presentations of the Paper to ABCG partners, USAID missions, and other Federal Agencies will provide an opportunity for discussion about future partnerships. USAID will publish additional information about successfully connected faith and conservation projects to inform partners and faith communities about ongoing opportunities. These success stories will also provide lessons learned for partnerships in the future.

Additional research on USAID's work with faith communities in other sectors and other U.S. Government Agencies will be necessary guides for USAID's BATS Team. USAID will also reach out to conservation NGOs to help make and learn about connections with faith communities. This collaboration could result in a USAID-supported project with the faith community.

Interested groups and energetic individuals are leading the way on this complex issue, but USAID can support a community of practice on faith and conservation. Experts should continue to weigh in on the best way to encourage and enable future engagement with faith communities so that USAID can achieve the 2025 Dar Vision for the future of biodiversity in Africa.

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