

Who is to Speak for Mother Earth?

Faith and community engagement -
Fostering responsible behavior

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Soil Conservation Service



SCS Iceland

Helping people heal the land

Transformation of lifestyles and societies – Hallgríms Church -October 21th 2018



Born and raised in Reykjavik, and partly brought up at a farm where the people took good care of both land and livestock. Within the farm boundaries was

Nature is alive!

Fostering environmental stewardship



.... this prehistoric creature that thought me much.
The initial interest in Nature further developed into the ethics that ...

As global citizens

Kindness and respect for
the the gifts of nature
that we depend on



Step gently
to earth



Live in peace and harmony



Sensitive resources



Limited carrying capacity



The natural resources of the world are fragile and unsustainable utilization can do much harm.

Nature

Needs constant love and care



**But – how do we
appreciate, respect and
protect the gifts of
Mother Earth?**

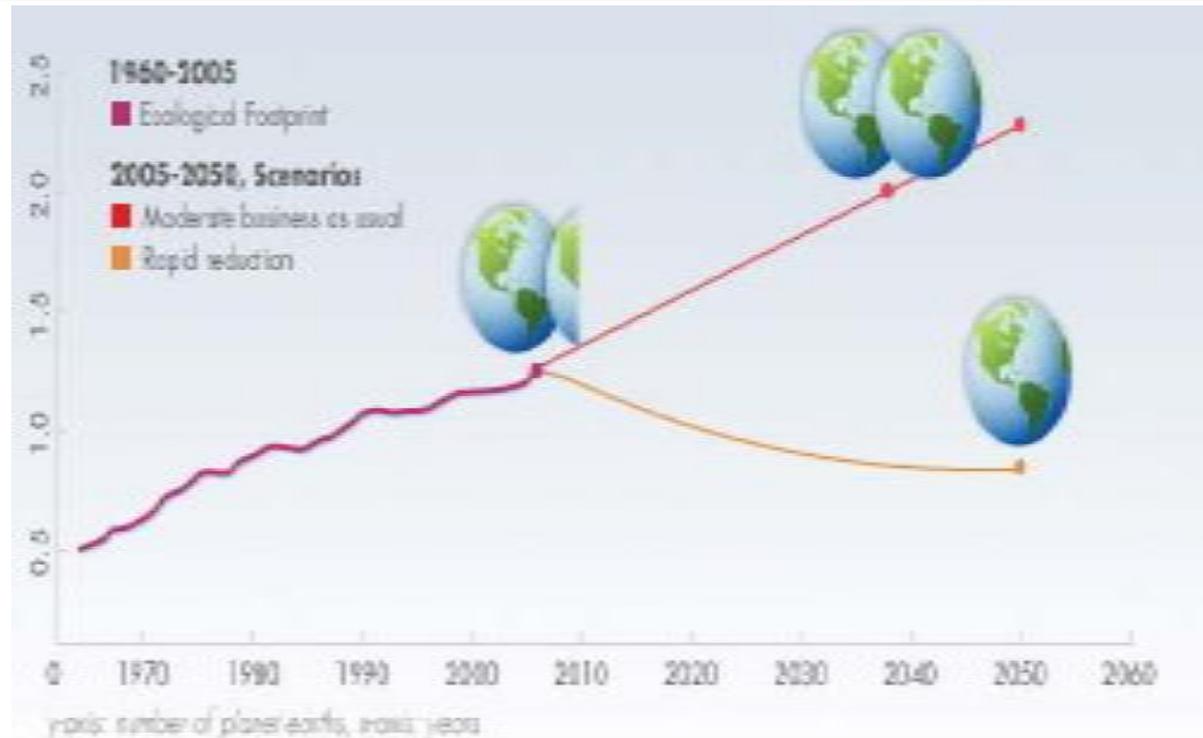
The Scream

Crying for help

Photo: Brian Slater



Man and Earth



Humans have exceeded nature's ability to regenerate itself

Ecosystem changes and land degradation is a threat to our future



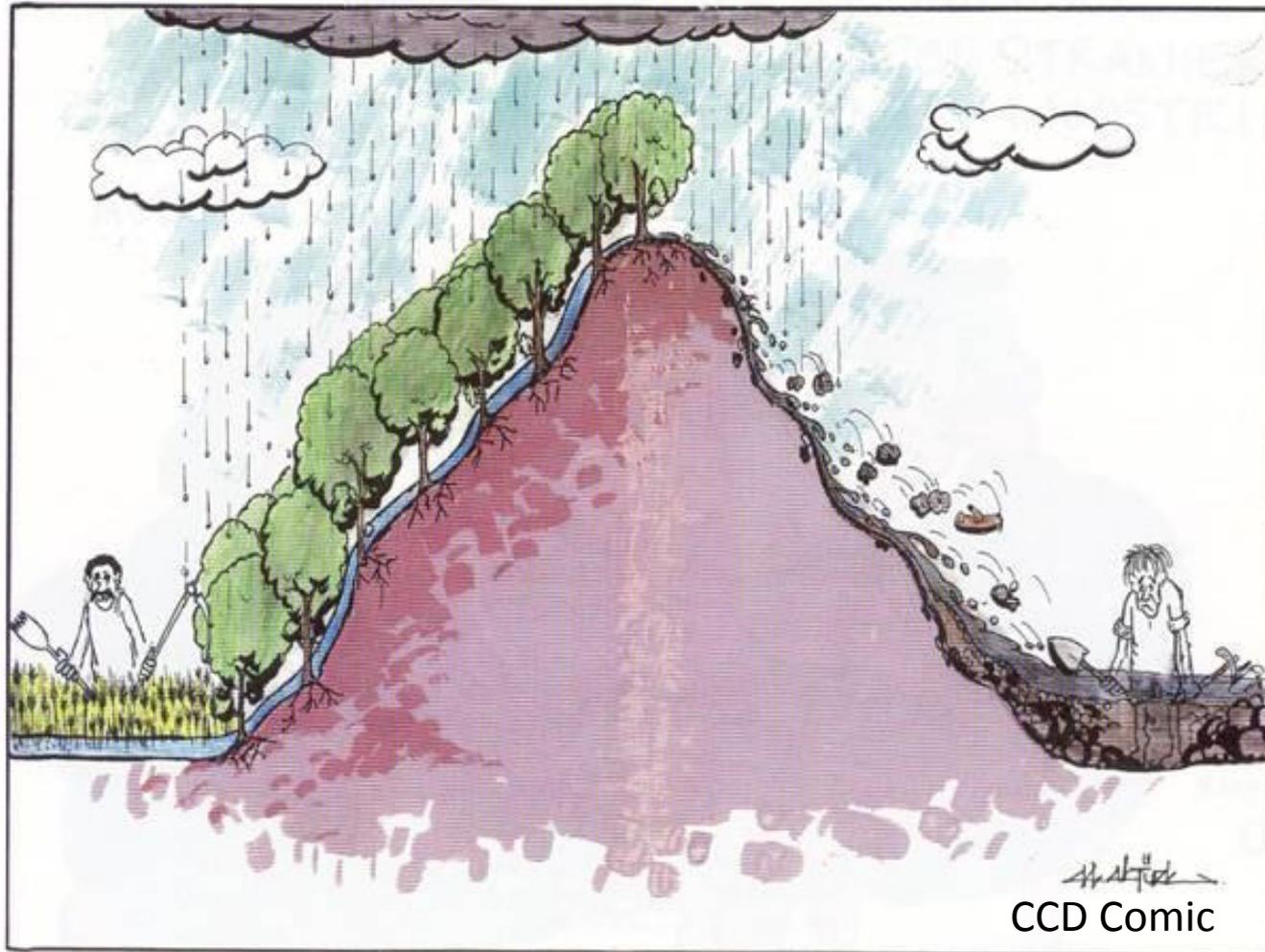
Both areas have been restored by the local communities and the Soil Conservation Service



Iceland - showcase for both destruction and restoration of natural resources
A basis for a United Nation's training program on sustainability and land restoration: UNU-LRT

CCD Comic

The consequences



CCD Comic

The health of Earth

- Can we prevent too rapid changes in global climate?
- Are we poisoning us in plastic and chemicals?
- Will there be enough to drink?

“Desperation” UN-CCD price winning photo from India

This old Thinker is becoming increasingly worried – pondering about ...



In 2050 water shortage could affect half of the human population



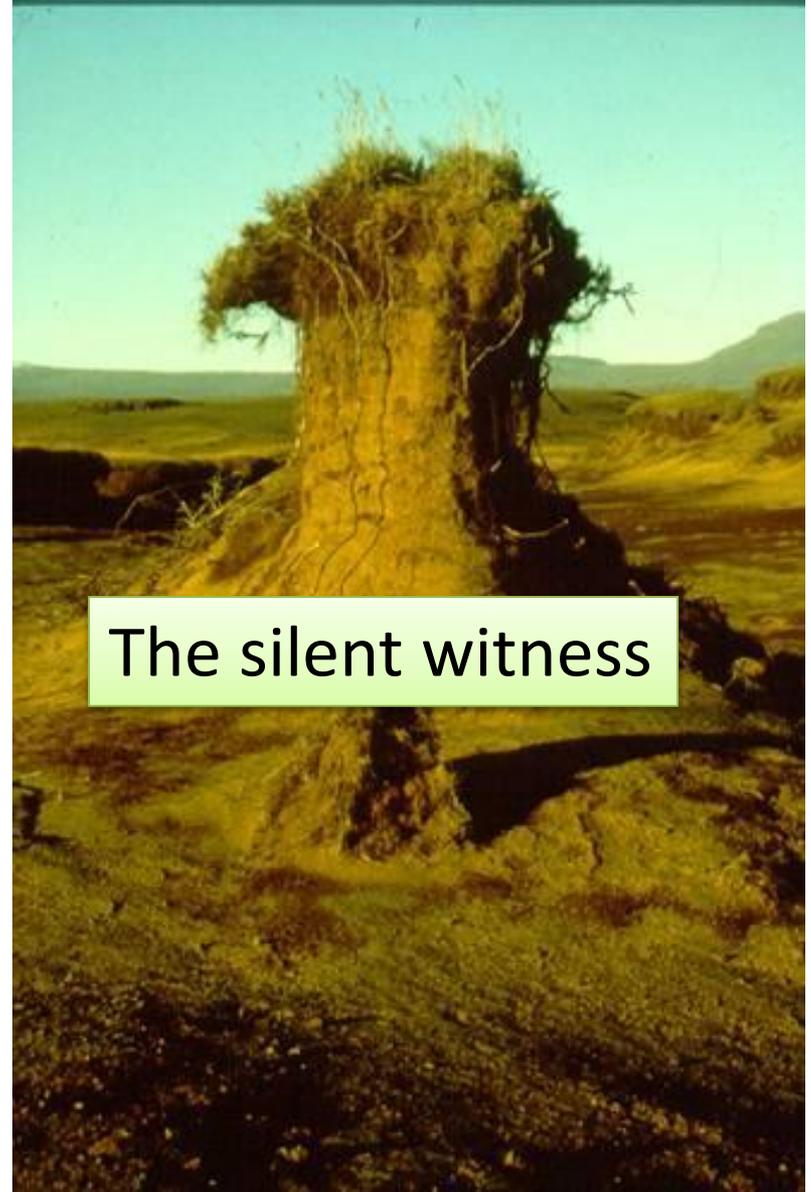
CCD Comic



Who gets the water first?
A growing root of unrest

Land degradation undermines well-being of two fifths of humanity

Can food production be sustained if land degradation continues?



The silent witness

The battle for the bread

Will there be enough to eat?

Tonight, there will be
150.000 more people for
dinner than last night!

“There are not many
troubles in the world
more alarming than those
in an empty stomach”

O. Henry

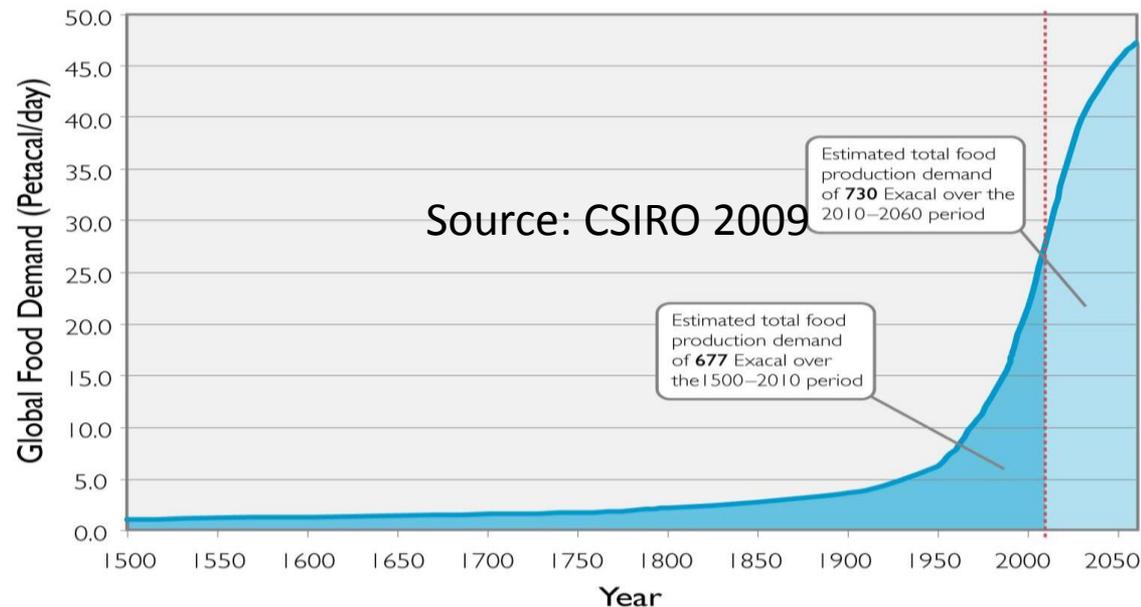
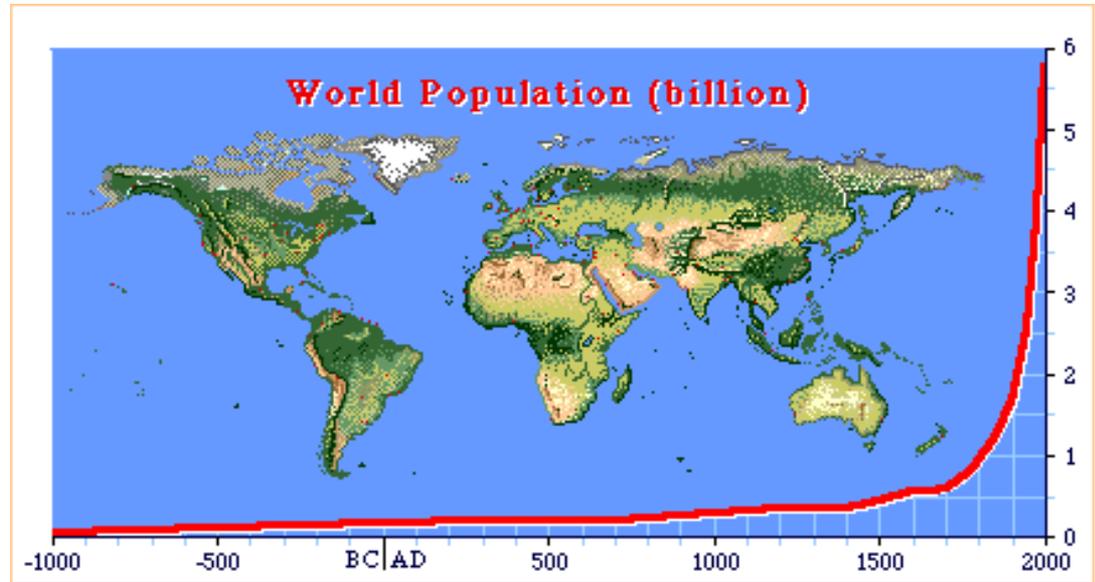


The greatest challenge of all times

- Increase food production 70% before 2060
- More food is needed before end of century than in all human history!

Favorable climate and fertile land is the foundation

We will succeed – but it takes a concerted effort



Land ethic - A personal development

From respect



To dedication



A big step during highschool, long time ago, when I went on a long tour with too many horses and too few people. Lost some horses, spent days searching for them.

Taking a rest – alone during the
the magic moments of the wilderness ...



... I started reflecting upon the condition of the land around me and what I had been observing previously

My destiny was set



Photo: Brian Slater



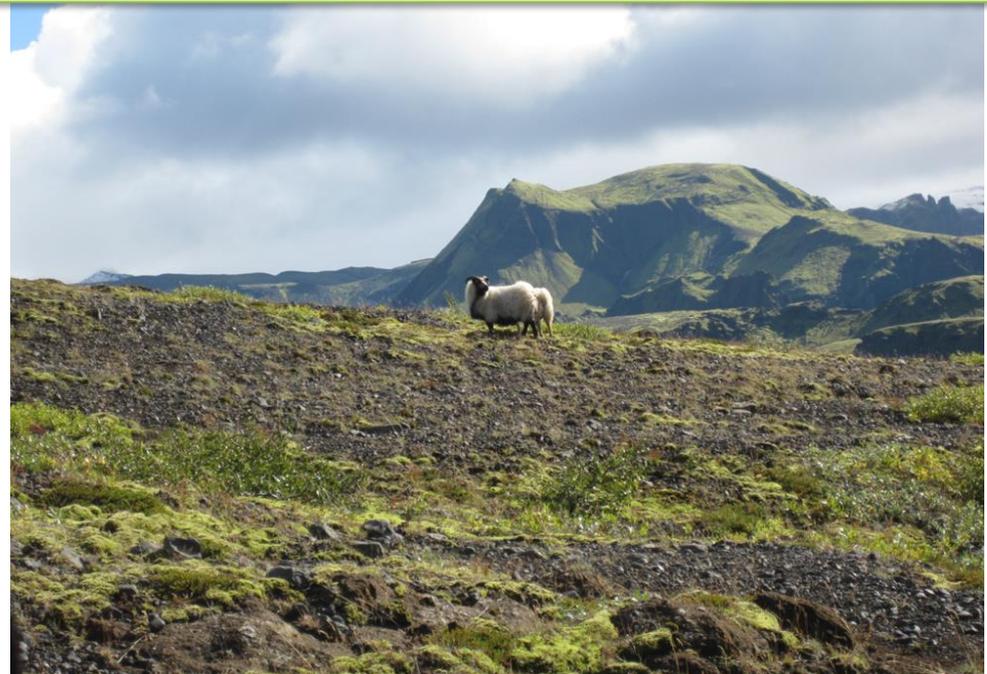
To protect the land

Training and production of scientific findings

- Rangeland ecology, grazing management and restoration of damaged ecosystems

To conservation in 1981 – on a loan to SCS

- Responsible for protection of vegetation Iceland – at that time severely overgrazed



Soil Conservation from 1907
Numerous success stories
“An inspiration of hope”

But

Severe overgrazing , land
degradation and desertification



Iceland's largest
environmental problem

Why?

The realization

- No amount of science, no amount of legislation, no amount of subsidy
- will produce lasting change unless it is owned and adaptively managed by those closest to THEIR environment.

Barriers to better environment

- Top down approaches
 - A main character of environmental conservation
- Limited community involvement
- Slow development of awareness and engagement
- A conceptual problem of "problem ownership"
 - Not my problem!



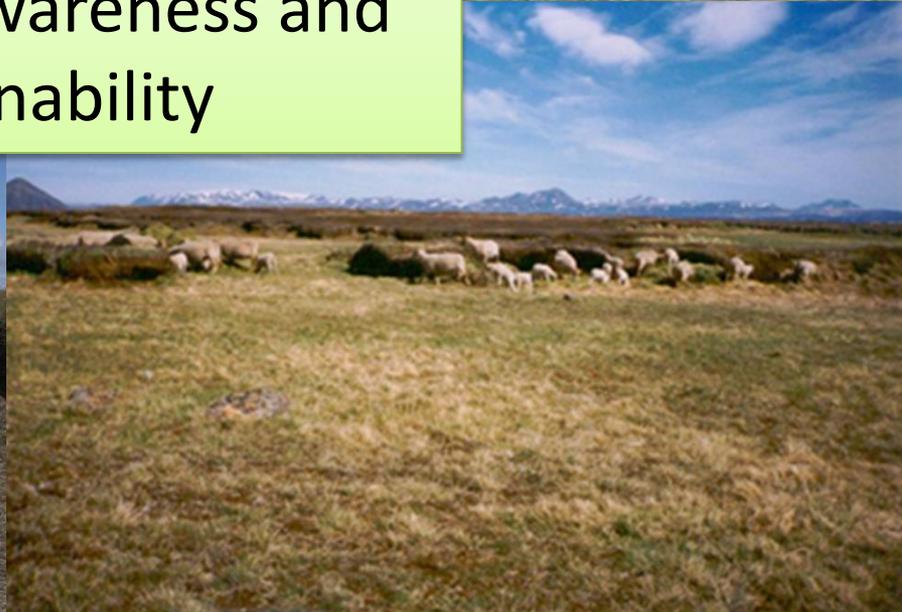


A turnaround - To “bottoms-up” approaches

Participation in stewardship



Reach, involve, educate
Foster responsible behavior
founded on awareness and
ethic of sustainability



“Farmers heal the land”

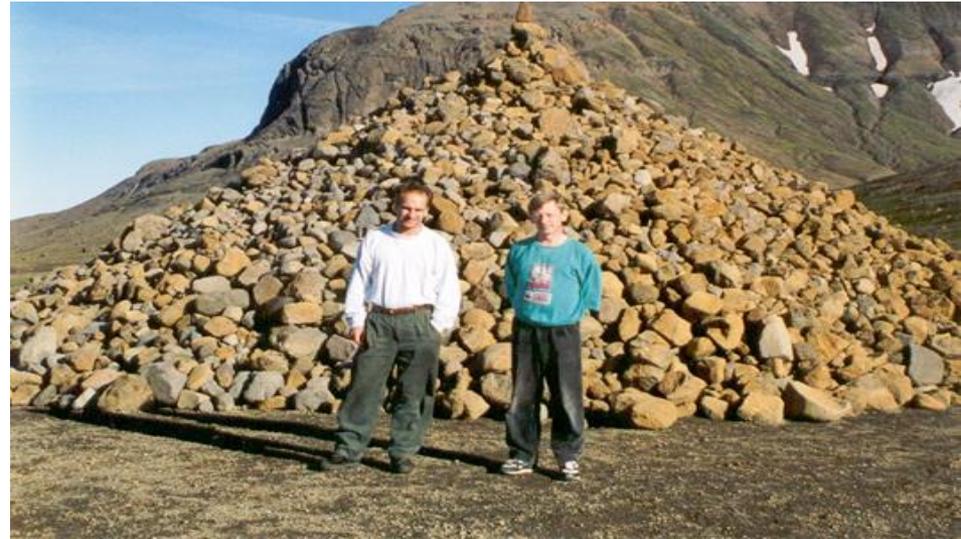
- Co-operative program
 - Established in 1990
 - Facilitate and assist
- A trigger for change
- Flagship of soil conservation and ecosystem restoration

Inspired by Australian Landcare experiences



Landcare

- Formalized 1989 in Australia with announcement of the Decade of Landcare
- Instigated jointly by two former enemies
 - Nature conservation and farmers
- Turning into an international movement



With the first national
Landcare facilitator
Andrew Campbell in 1993

Defining Landcare

Key principle - community ownership of problems and solutions at local levels, direct engagement

- Movement and a model
 - Founded on stewardship and volunteers
 - Local community action
 - Knowledge generation, sharing, support mechanisms,
 - Networks, programs and partnerships
- Ethic - a philosophy
 - With social, political and economic dimensions
 - Influencing behaviour towards more sustainable practices

- Spiritual values drive individual behavior for more than 80% of people.
- Main driver for cultural values, social inclusion, political engagement and economic prosperity.

– *United Nations – Environment*

Faith and environment

- Important role in nature conservation - in past and present
 - Sacred groves, enchanted spots, holy mountains
- Dynamics of faith
 - A powerful way to stimulate the change needed for sustainability.
- Increasing attention
 - More than 190 environmental faith based organization working on diverse issues.

The Global Community

- 2008 - UN resolution to promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue,
- 2010 - UN Inter-agency Task Force on Religion and Development
- 2015 - Pope Francis's environmental encyclical of Laudato Si
- 2016 – Seminar promoting intercultural dialogue
- 2017 - UN Environment – **Faith for Earth Initiative**



Faith for Earth - Main mission

Work with, inspire and empower faith organizations and their leaders to:

1. Actively promote the relationship between environment and faith
2. Integrate environmental sustainability into investment criteria
 - Third largest group of global investors in the world
 - „Greening them" is literally God's work
 - Calling for a paradigm shift in economic development.
3. Be a resource base
 - Knowledge, networking, scientific evidence
 - Help connect issues of faith and the environment.
 - The full range from sacred scripts to current scientific research



With Andrew Campbell, the primary keynote speaker



The "Icelandic delegation". Andrés Arnalds, Jónína Þorlákssdóttir, Brian Slater (USA, Iceland fan), Beatrice Dossah (Ghana, fellow of the UNU-Land Restoration Training Program hosted in Iceland)

http://alci.com.au/international-conference-of-landcare-studies_nov-2017_japan/

During the conference discussion started on a **Conference Proposal** **Faith and Community Engagement**

Recognizing that fostering responsible behaviour is a main key to achieving goals of sustainability - the aim is to:

- Connect faith and community based organizations in caring for the environment
- Share knowledge experiences and wisdom
- Foster networks and partnerships
- Expand potentials of the Landcare philosophy in changing social norms towards more ethical and faith-based behaviour for sustainability

In nutshell to

- Foster
 - Ethics and stewardship
 - Drivers of values and responsible behavior
- Build trust and confidence in caring for the Earth
 - That lasts from young age until we get old and gray



Exploring options for an event

- Currently an informal group, including
 - Soil Conservation Service of Iceland
 - National Church of Iceland
 - Ohio State University, USA - School of Environment and Natural Resources, Professional Practice on Religion and Ecology
 - Michael Siegel (strong ties with Nanzdan University Institute for Social Ethics, Japan)
 - National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE) in the USA
 - Contacts with UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative and the Landcare movement
- Many interested in partnership – both
 - local (incl. Landvernd Environment Association, United Nations Association and Forum for Interfaith Dialogue) and
 - international
- Need support and commitment

Grant proposal - Nordic Council of Ministers

- Pending – Recently Submitted
- Along same lines to
- Create interactive Nordic platform
 - Facilitate integration of faith – ethics – landcare
- Current partners
 - Iceland – Norway – Sweden
- Space for more!
 - *Project leader: Þórunn Pétursdóttir, Soil Conservation Service of Iceland*

Environment everywhere

Environmental Sunday school in Ghana



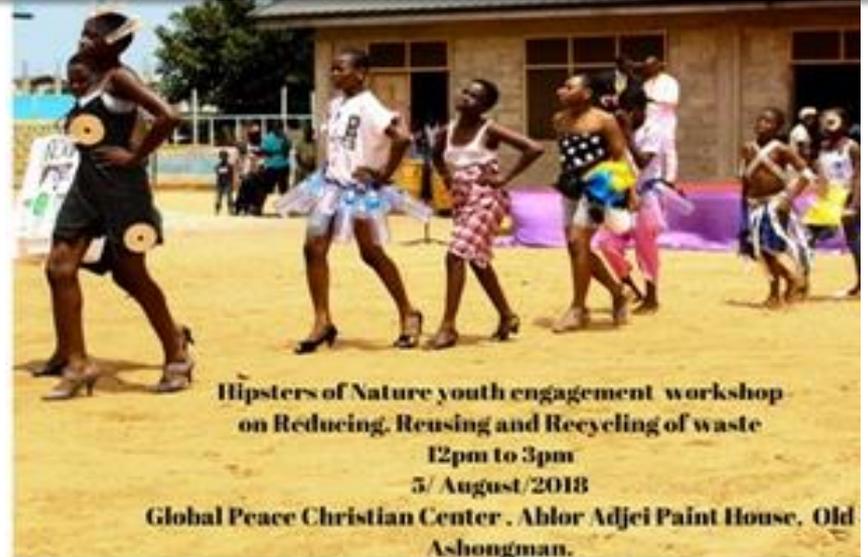
Photo: Esther Ekoa Amoako

Protection of environment must be a holistic part of our life but not a distant phenomenon

Río tríó performing „The land is blowing away“ at headquarters of Icelandic Soil Conservation Service



Linking with arts and culture in Ghana – Facilitated by Beatrice Dossah



The 50th Anniversary of Earth Day

- Collaboration
 - Multilaterals, faith groups,
 - teachers, universities,
 - museums, science
 - organizations,
 - state governments, mayors,
 - artists, athletes,
- Unite in caring for the earth
 - Diverse and passionate environmental movement



Links well with grassroots approaches and faith for the environment

Reach more than one billion people

- Citizen Science
 - Engage million global citizens
- Advocacy
 - Mobilize civic engagement
- Volunteering
 - The great Global Cleanup
 - Plant 7.8 billion trees
- Education
 - Environmental and climate literacy
- Events
 - Civic engagement



Summing up



Our behaviour determines the fate of Mother Earth

Need to rethink the way we live on the planet

And realize that

Global sustainability can not occur without community engagement

Let's keep in mind

... that one should

- "never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world;
- Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

» *Anthropologist Margaret Mead*

In conclusion

Who is to Speak for Mother Earth?

All of us!

Leadership at community level important

Thank you!

