

# Change Development Paradigm and Life style.

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One of the serious problems we are facing today is Climate Change due to Global warming. Global warming is already having significant and costly effects on our climate, our health, and our environment. Accelerating Sea Level Rise (SLR) and increased coastal flooding, longer and more damaging wildfire seasons, more frequent and intense heat waves, costly and growing health impacts, an increase in extreme weather events, heavier precipitation and flooding, disruptions to food supplies, changing seasons, plant and animal range shifts, melting ice, destruction of coral reefs are some of the impacts of Global warming. We are experiencing the effects of climate change around the world: water and air temperatures are rising at alarming rates adversely affecting the habitats that sustain life for fish, animals, plants and human beings.

The church has long taught that we are to be good stewards or caretakers of what God has given. But the challenge goes deeper than this. Similarly, climate change transgresses boundaries of both natural and human-defined separations, of communities, of nation-states, of lands, of waters, of near and distant neighbours, of rich and poor, of different cultures, of the past and the future. Many of its effects know no boundaries. Climate change reminds us that we are all in this together. It is the future of life on the planet that is at stake.

Yet, some bear the brunt and the consequences far more than others, and are far more vulnerable. Under climate change, nature has become “the new poor,” as vulnerable and expendable as poor human beings and communities have been. Everything we do has some effect on someone other than ourselves. We do not live our lives independently, because by natural and social institutions - like the family, neighbors, friends, community, etc - we are interrelated with others whether it is our desire to be so or not.

According to the Kerala State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC) document, the nine coastal districts in Kerala are particularly vulnerable to the impact of climate change. It estimates that sea level rise of 3.5 to 34.6 inches till year 2100 would result in salinity intrusion into groundwater resources, endangering wetlands and inundating valuable land and coastal communities. The SAPCC report also notes that climate change might accelerate the intensity of cyclones in the Arabian Sea. The probable maximum storm surge height in Kerala is estimated to be between 2.3 m to 3.5 m, going up to 4.2 m during high tide. Alappuzha, Palakkad, Wayanad and Idukki districts are climate change hotspots in Kerala, with a high degree of vulnerability to natural hazards like flood and drought and impact on biodiversity and human life.

The State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC) has classified Alappuzha and Palakkad as the most vulnerable districts. Palakkad is listed as very highly vulnerable because of the higher percentage of population relying on agriculture, a lower ranking in the human development index and higher social deprivation. Alappuzha has been included in the same category because of the network of environmentally sensitive wetlands, lagoons and sandy beaches. Idukki, Wayanad, Thiruvananthapuram and Kannur have been listed as highly vulnerable. The two hilly districts are categorized as climate change hotspots because of the large area of dense forest cover and shola forest. The degree of vulnerability of climate sensitive sectors like agriculture, fisheries and forests, tribal population and low ranking in the human development index were also considered in identifying the hotspots. Kannur has been included in the high vulnerability list because of the extensive mangrove forests while Thiruvananthapuram makes it to the list because it has registered medium values in terms of all the indicators.

The SAPCC, due to be taken up for implementation this financial year, assesses that Kerala is severely threatened by climate change. The projected climate change scenario estimates that the atmospheric temperature across Kerala will rise by 2 degrees Celsius by the year 2050. The minimum surface temperature in the Western Ghats region may rise by 2 to 4.5 degrees Celsius. The number of rainy days is likely to decrease along the entire western coast including the Western Ghats. Also, it is projected that if the sea level rises by one meter, 169 sq km of the coastal region surrounding Kochi would be inundated.

When CSI synod conducted a National consultation on Climate change in 2009, we invited Rev. TafueMoluLusama (General Secretary, Tuvalu Christian Church), as one of the speakers. He could not attend the consultation due to the lack of conveyance from the island of Tuvalu to India. But he gave me an email which described the status of Tuvalu. Tuvalu is one of the small islands in Pacific Ocean. Most of the people are Christian descendants of LMS missionary movement. The total population is just above 10,000.

“We remain praiseful to God in whatever situation and circumstance we find ourselves in for we believe that our God is above all difficulties. I thank you on behalf of the Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu (Tuvalu Christian Church) for the assurance of your prayers for us; we are always encouraged by the knowledge that we are not alone in this world because the family of God is worldwide, thank you sincerely. On the 23rd of September, the government of Tuvalu issued a degree of a state of emergency due to the shortage of water in the country, especially on the southern islands of the country. This is a result of a drought that started from last year but worsened in the past five months. The ground is so dry that our traditional crops cannot withstand, the underground water is salinated, breadfruit, coconut trees, and banana plantations are all dead. The government has

started rationing the only little water that is left with 20 liters per household per day. The heat is unbearable and life is becoming very uncomfortable. Although we do not doubt God's love and providence as for divine intervention, we have to ask ourselves why these things happen, and we believe that these are only the tip of the iceberg that we will encounter as the negative impacts of Climate Change unfolds before us."

The UN General Assembly declared 2014 as the International Year of Small Island Developing States to celebrate the contributions that this group of countries and territories has made to the world. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are low-lying coastal countries that tend to share similar sustainable development challenges, including small but growing populations, limited resources, remoteness, susceptibility to natural disasters, vulnerability to external shocks, excessive dependence on international trade, and fragile environments. Their growth and development is also held back by high communication, energy and transportation costs, irregular international transport volumes, disproportionately expensive public administration and infrastructure due to their small size, and little to no opportunity to create economies of scale. Currently, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs lists 52 small island developing states. These are broken down into three geographic regions: the Caribbean; the Pacific; and Africa, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea (AIMS). Each of these regions has a regional cooperation body: the Caribbean Community, the Pacific Islands Forum and the Indian Ocean Commission respectively, which many SIDS are members or associate members of. Small island developing States are particularly vulnerable to climate change, climate variability and sea-level rise. Because of their small size and particular geological, topographical and climatic conditions, many small island developing States face severe constraints in terms of both the quality and quantity of freshwater. Land degradation can result in accelerated erosion and a resultant decline in fertility and productivity, as well as deterioration in water quality and the siltation of rivers, lagoons and reefs.

Climate change is foremost among these challenges, as global warming is causing ocean levels to rise. According to the International Panel of Climate Change (IPCC), global sea levels are rising at an increased rate which is projected to be even greater this century. When global temperature warms, seawater expands and occupies more space. Sea levels rise when ice melts as well. Coastal communities in every country are then threatened with floods and storm surges, to which these small islands are the most exposed.

However, these islands have also been successful in overcoming their environmental problems. From Palau to Puerto Rico, the stories of resiliency and innovation abound. For instance, Tokelau recently began producing 100% of its energy from solar sources. In Fiji, lacking the resources to make new

drainage systems and seawalls, local residents are restoring mangroves and coral reefs to help prevent flooding and erosion. These stories and solutions can be applied to environmental concerns all over the world.

### **Climate Change is a justice issue**

There are two key reasons why the crisis of global warming is first and foremost a justice issue. The first is that the people who are most vulnerable to its effects are those who have done the least to cause it. Today, these are overwhelmingly the poorest people in the poorest countries. We should not imagine that this injustice affects only poor people in poor countries. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005, it was the poorest people who suffered the most.

The second major reason for regarding climate change as a justice issue is that it comes at a time when the world's richest nations have reached a peak of development, while the poorest are still struggling to get on to the development ladder. While it is well within the means of rich countries to maintain their current levels of economic activity adapting to climate change, the picture is very different as far as the poor countries are concerned.

Climate change impacts development programmes across the board, from disaster risk-reduction to food security and health. The injustice that has brought this about suggests that a theological approach to climate change must be rooted in the wider theology and ethics of development, rather than treated as an extension of Christian environmentalism.

### **Climate change should not be treated as an extension of Christian environmentalism**

Over the last 20 years, poor countries have been adversely affected by major world issues, in particular the international debt crisis, unfair trade rules and the AIDS epidemic. In all these, the biblical basis for action is clear and its details will be familiar. The point of departure is the statement by Jesus in Luke 4 quoting Isaiah 61:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives. And recovery of sight to the blind, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.”* (Luke 4:18-19)

This preferential option, or bias, to the poor is also the starting point for much of the thinking of liberation theologians. And the imperative for Christians to translate this bias into practical care for the vulnerable, in particular those who have suffered injustice, is set out in the parable of the sheep and the goats in *Matthew 25:31-46*.

While the obligation to care for the weakest members of society – the ‘alien, the orphan and the widow’ (*Deuteronomy 24:21*) – is firmly established in Old Testament law, the ministry of Jesus establishes the restoration of justice as a key element of life in his kingdom. This hope for the future is foreshadowed in the Old Testament, not so much in its legal tenets as in the figure of the suffering servant in the second part of Isaiah, where we read of the servant who was ‘despised and rejected’ (Isaiah 53:3), ‘oppressed and afflicted’ (53:7), in short the servant who was in solidarity with the vulnerable, whose calling was to ‘faithfully bring forth justice’ (*42:3*). This is the same solidarity with the poor that is revealed in the ministry of Jesus, from his baptism, through his teaching and healing miracles, to his death on the cross.

However, the problem with this approach – which is thrown into sharp relief by the crisis of climate change – is that it assumes that the perpetrators of injustice will be led to change their ways. It should be emphasized that with climate change, it is not simply a question of acknowledging and addressing injustice – which is arguably the case with debt relief, where the crucial first step (though probably not the final one) is for rich countries to write off poor countries’ debts and therefore stop their demands for payment. Climate change makes a double demand on us: first to recognize the link between human-induced global warming and poverty; and secondly to formulate a just response. The first has been hindered for years by a reluctance to view climate change as a ‘people’ issue rather than a purely environmental one, while the second raises ethical issues that have barely begun to be considered.

### **Mission and environment**

Christianity is a missionary faith. At the end of the gospel of Matthew, it records the great commission given by Jesus to his disciples to go around the world making new disciples, to baptize people in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and to teach people to follow his commandments. The first apostles lived this commandment by taking the good news of Jesus around the Mediterranean and further afield and establishing the fledgling church with mission as a prime part of its purpose. Over the years, Christians have continued to undertake mission in various ways. Whilst the 19th century western mission may be characterized as taking God’s message around the world, in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, an increasing emphasis has been placed on mission as the purpose of every place where the body of Christ meets in fellowship. Within this context, in 1988 the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Church developed a model of mission work for local churches. It has become known as the Five Marks of Mission. These five marks have been accepted and developed in other denominations and around the world including, in 1997, the Forum of Churches Together in England (CTE). There are a number of versions of the Five Marks of Mission. The following version was adopted by CTE:

1. To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need in loving service
4. To seek to transform the unjust structures of society
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of earth

The constitution of CSI clearly specifies the mission of the Church 1) Proclamation of Gospel 2) Nurturing the people of God, 3) service 4) establish justice in society 5) Stewardship of creation. Perhaps, this is the only Church in India that has specifically mentioned the ecological concerns in the constitution itself.

The ecological conservation should also become of the thrust of missionary movements. There are different ecological models. A model which better reflects current scientific understanding of the interconnectedness of the web of life is the view that human beings are fellow-members of the community of creation. It reminds us that we share a common earth with, and are not separate from, the rest of creation. It places us not as masters of creation with permission to exploit the earth's natural resources, but rather as participants in the whole community of creation called upon to "Praise the Lord" (as in the joyful Psalm 104). And when we join with the rest of creation in giving glory to God we abandon hierarchy and escape from privileging humanity over the rest of the created order.

It is our mission backed by divine vision to be sensitive to the happenings around. UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in its report, assessing impacts of climate change on human health, settlements and natural resources, released on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014, carried a dire warning: "The worst is yet to come," it said, if no measures are taken to curb the ill-effects of global warming. The report also predicts an increase in extreme weather events such as last year's flash floods in Uttarakhand and cyclone Phailin in Odisha, if steps are not taken to control the rise in temperature. "Nobody on this planet is going to be untouched by the impacts of climate change," R K Pachauri, IPCC chairman said while making the report public in Yokohama, Japan. Climate change is not just about the future. The report indicates that people around the world were already getting hit as it directly affects livelihoods, reduces food-grain production, destroys homes and raises food prices. These trends will accelerate if climate change is left unchecked. Among other things, the report warns that climate change increases the risk of armed conflict around the world because it worsens poverty and economic shocks.

Though the report doesn't have country-specific predictions, its region-wise findings brought out many eye-opening conclusions for India. AromarRevi, lead author of one of the chapters of this

report, said the impacts of climate change would be felt severely in Indo-Gangetic plains, affecting poor people in the entire region. “The areas which are facing frequent floods these days may face drought like situation in the distant or near future. We cannot ignore the changes which are taking place either in the Indus river basin or in Brahmaputra river system over the longer period,” said Revi, explaining the implications of the report in Delhi. Another lead author, Surender Kumar, explained how climate change would affect the poorer nations. He said if mean temperatures increased beyond 1 degree C, it would knock 3% off the GDP of developing economies.

**Key messages from IPCC report are as follows:**

- \* Coming years will see more extreme weather events (floods, cyclones, cloud bursts, unseasonal excessive rains and drought etc) in most parts of the globe.
- \* Maldives, China, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka will be among the most affected countries in Asia.
- \* Severe stress on fresh water resources in South Asia and China (Himalayan river basins) may become a reason for armed conflict in the region by middle of the 21st century.
- \* Climate change may be a determining factor in national security policies.
- \* Coastal flooding will not only kill people and cause destruction; it will also affect tourism in India (like in Goa and Kerala).
- \* Decline in food grain production (wheat in India/Pakistan and wheat and maize in China).
- \* Big coastal cities like Mumbai and Kolkata will be affected by sea-level rise in 21st century.
- \* Some fish and other marine animals will face extinction by 2050, affecting fishing community.
- \* In many regions, changing precipitation or melting snow and ice are altering hydrological systems, affecting water resources in terms of quantity and quality.
- \* Glaciers (including Himalayan) continue to shrink almost worldwide due to climate change, affecting run-off and water resources downstream.
- \* Climate change will impact human health mainly by exacerbating health problems that already exist.

**Our Global vision**

Under climate change, nature has become “the new poor,” as vulnerable and expendable as poor human beings and communities have been. We do not live our lives independently, i.e. ***No one is an island***. Climate Change is a social justice issue. CSI Church considers Climate change as a Justice issue, rather than an extension of Christian environmentalism.

***Hence four million people of Church of South India demand that:***

- 1) Those who are responsible for climate change should change their development paradigm and life style.

- 2) Rich countries have to compensate the damage caused to poor countries. As developing nations are struggling on to the development ladder, rich countries should write off poor countries debts. The developed countries should transfer their technological knowledge to the poor countries.

**Our local vision** - Role of CSI Church

There is a common proverb: 'Think Globally and act locally.' Hence CSI requests all its members to do whatever things possible to mitigate global warming. We request each member to plant one sapling. As a result, we are anticipating to plant 4 million saplings before December 2015. Also we request all the parishes to take rain water harvesting pits in the Church compound to harvest rain water. Anticipate 25000 rain water harvesting. We request all the parishes not to entertain disposable plastic cups and plates in their functions. CSI Synod is planning to install solar panels in 21000 villages during this biennium. Solar panels will be installed in 50 villages of each diocese. The CSI Synod has already published guidelines for Green diocese, Green Parish and Green Institution. Expert team will be visiting all the Dioceses during this biennium for green rating.

**Conclusion**

The Mission of the Church is about the proclamation of the kingdom of God, which has a social, political, ecological and economic dimension. A high responsibility rests on the Church to deepen the awareness of church goes to what the Bible says about social injustice. With all the issues raised by Amos regarding the need for social action, it is important for believers to remember that prayer combined with the proper exegesis of scripture will help them to gain a comprehensive knowledge of God's will for personal, social ,and governmental reform. The Church has also been called to faithfully speak truth to power and to "Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute; Defend the rights of the poor and needy." (Proverbs 31:8) We are deeply concerned that the poor and vulnerable in our country and around the world will have little or no voice in this vital discussion.