

# RECONCILING WITH CREATION

## Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific Task Force on Ecology

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# INTRODUCTION

For more than 20 years, people in Asia have been involved from the local to the global level, in the concern and action for the environment. In the last three years, Jesuit people have been involved in a serious discourse and commitment to strengthen the relationship of faith and gratitude for creation. This is resulting in a new commitment to reconcile the way we live with the way we must care for our environment.

The Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific very quickly committed to Reconciliation with Creation as its response to ecology and natural resources in the region. Mark Raper, though his work in the Conference, has seen the environmental context of our communities and many works and sees the need for responding to the concerns and initiatives. The Social Secretariat with Denis Kim has created the occasion and opportunity to explore how Jesuit people want to respond in the region and has also fostered many meetings and learning exchanges to come up with a clear agenda. A task force for JCAP Ecology has been operative for the past two years and includes partners and friends from the region, while Mariel de Jesus and Iris Legal from Environmental Science for Social Change have very generously given of their time to sustain communications, support meetings, research and visit areas of concern and opportunity.

Ecology issues are also informing other areas of work. For instance, the global advocacy on migration is recognizing the environmental causes that are driving migration patterns around the world, as does the work of the Jesuit Refugee Services. The advocacy on basic education will also no doubt show an appreciation of the environment and what needs to be communicated through our schools. Continuing programs for scholastic formation are expected to develop as a further commitment to the universal mission laid out in GC35.

All these initiatives are projected to mature over a period of two-three years. This will be an ongoing process of networking and collaboration, as we respond to global situations that are calling for greater focus and advocacy.

There are three global agendas relating to ecology in which Jesuit people are actively engaged. The first is the Global Ignatian Advocacy Network Ecology Group. This has sustained the work of the online initiative Ecology and Jesuits in Communication (Ecojesuit) for the past two years. The group is now moving forward with a focus on “water for all”. This initiative is inviting the participation of the six Jesuit Conferences to support global action. The second global agenda is that of GIAN Governance of Natural and Mineral Resources Group. Here the impact of resource exploitation in India and Africa need international support. The third agenda is the work that the Higher Education Apostolate is pursuing. At present, the Higher Education Secretariat is focused on developing a “living text” that will potentially be called “Healing Earth”. This text, for high school and college, is focused on the science behind many of our environmental concerns, while integrating an understanding of the spirituality that forms commitment, and the ethics that informs the approaches in our business schools.

This book is an attempt to compile various documents relating to the work on ecology. It contains six main sections, which, although not equal in weight or length, contain information that is useful for people reflecting on and engaging in reconciliation with Creation. Future reflections, analysis and strategy will very quickly date this document. Yet, such a compilation is valuable for people to connect with different aspects of a movement that is now coming together. It is hoped that this will lay a foundation with which people can engage, first of all in spirit and then in behavioral change, followed by certain shifts in society, and later, simple but meaningful accomplishments.

First is the core document of Healing a Broken World. It is still recent enough that the people who engaged in its formulation are still active in the mission, therefore the document has a certain immediacy. The interest it has generated and the momentum in terms of activities focused on this document are most encouraging.

The second section is a reflection and a history of the process of developing Healing a Broken World. It speaks for itself and seeks to provide an entry into the process by which others can creatively engage.

Third is the emerging strategy for global advocacy in an Ignatian context. This is an initiative that is still underway, tenaciously holding on to the

importance of witnessing to the truth and sharing in society's struggle to face the sometimes-uncomfortable facts about how globalization can mask reality.

As part of the effort to build a network and build advocacy, Jesuit people are trying to promote a greater understanding of the breadth and depth of ecological issues and to share in the new environmental dimension of our mission. The Jesuit European Social Centre (<http://www.jesc.net>) and the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific (<http://jceao.net>) initiated an online communication platform, Ecology and Jesuits in Communication ([www.ecojesuit.com](http://www.ecojesuit.com)). Ecojesuit is currently available in Spanish and English, and is open to all who share in the vision and action towards reconciliation with creation.

Next is Our Environmental Way of Proceeding. This is the overarching approach to ecological engagement in the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific. It was born out of a participation in the Task Force, where there was a need to focus particularly on the Asian context, and give greater follow through in terms of getting more people actively engaged. We include here institutional applications developed in using the text made by Jesuit Social Services, Australia.

The strategy of the conference—the sixth section—is obviously open-ended, but has a definite focus and is moving. The scholastic conversations emerging in relation to this strategy are most uplifting. The spirit of St. Ignatius that encourages humble collaboration in renewing the face of the earth is brought to life when people desire, think, and act in pursuit of a new paradigm of what a “good life” is and what “genuine development” can be.

There are multiple other texts, which are a challenge to creatively own and share with others. One of these is a series of fact sheets developed by The Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat (SJES) for the Thirty-Fifth General Congregation (GC35) in 2008. They are still applicable today.

This volume also benefits from the review of the work on reconciliation with creation requested by Father General Adolfo Nicolas. The report, *Promotio Iustitiae* n° 110, 2012/3, “With Passion for Environmental Justice” is also in this compilation.