

SECTION

11

RELIGION &  
ENVIRONMENT



# RELIGION AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

## Religion and Environment

### Introduction

This is the eleventh section of the curriculum for Religious Studies, Year One. The purpose of this section is to introduce you to religion and the environment. The section will help you to appreciate how organisms interdependent on one another as well as the consequences of human activities on the environment. You will also learn the teachings and values of AIR, Christianity and Islam on the environment. This section will develop your understanding of environmental protection and stewardship and how this is supported through the teachings of each religion.

### At the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify human activities that affect the environment.
- Identify the environmental values in the teachings of the three main religions.

### Key Ideas

- The conditions under which life on earth is possible and the interdependence of all living organisms within the environment.
- The impact of human activities, both positive and negative on the environment.
- The values and teachings of the three main religions:
  - » African Indigenous Religion teachings and values that support the sustainability of the environment are found in myths, beliefs, practices, and taboos.
  - » Christianity and Islam place emphasis on environmental stewardship, making humankind a responsible caretaker of the environment.

## INTERDEPENDENCE OF ORGANISMS WITHIN THE ENVIRONMENT

The natural world is a complex network of relationships. Every organism plays a vital role in the planets' ecosystems. This level of interdependence not only sustains life but also highlights the impact of human activities on the environment. This section will help you to appreciate that you are not separate from nature, but part of it. As such, treating the environment well is an extension of caring for yourself.

### Interdependence of Organism:

Interdependence of organisms refers to the mutual dependence of living things in the environment, including people, animals and plants. These connections create intricate webs of interactions that keep life on Earth going. In other words, interdependence refers to the reciprocal relationships and mutual reliance between humans and other living organisms, including plants, animals, microorganisms, and ecosystems, within the environment.

Below is an image of fish feeding on algae on a turtle. This is an example of a symbiotic relationship.



**Fig. 11.1:** Surgeon fish feeding on algae growth on a turtle shell

## How humans depend on the environment

Humans depend on the environment in numerous ways. The environment is our source of:

1. **Food:** The environment provides different food resources, such as fruits, vegetables, grains, beans, and legumes, which are rich in essential nutrients.
  - Meat and fish, which serve as vital sources of protein.
  - Nuts, seeds, and whole grains, which offer healthy fats and fibre
2. **Oxygen:** The environment produces oxygen through photosynthesis, which is essential for human respiration and survival.
3. **Resources:** The environment offers a wealth of natural resources, including:
  - Minerals, such as iron, copper, and gold, which are used in construction, technology, and industry
  - Oil and fossil fuels, which power transportation, heating, and electricity generation
  - Timber and wood products, which are used in construction, furniture, and paper production
4. **Medicine:** The environment is rich in medicinal resources, including:
  - Medicinal plants
  - Microorganisms, which produce antibiotics, vaccines, and other life-saving drugs
5. **Habitation:**
  - Structures and infrastructure, which depend on natural resources like wood, stone, and minerals serve as the basis for human habitation.
  - The land and soil that sustain recreation, urban growth, and agriculture
6. **Aesthetics:** The natural world provides wonder and beauty to human existence, such as:
  - Plants, grasses, flowers, and others that enhance biodiversity and have aesthetic value
  - Skyscapes, seascapes, and landscapes that provide inspiration for creative expression, leisure, and spirituality
7. **Utilisation of animals:** Animals serve a variety of functions for humans, such as:
  - Donkeys, horses and camels for transportation
  - Livestock, including pigs, hens, and cows as sources of food and wealth
  - Pets, such dogs, cats, and horses, for recreation
  - Animals kept for security purposes, like guard dogs
8. **Wealth:** A variety of financial opportunities and wealth can be found in the environment, such as:

9.
  - Livestock or animal ownership
  - Extraction of natural resources like gold timber etc.
  - Eco-tourism and recreational centres
  - Land ownership

## How the environment depends on humans

The environment depends on humans in various ways, including:

1. **Carbon dioxide:** Carbon dioxide is emitted by humans during respiration and is necessary for photosynthesis and plant growth.
2. **Nurture:** People provide plants the vital nutrients they need to grow through:
  - Fertilisers, which add more nutrients to the soil.
  - Manure, which serves as an organic fertiliser.
  - Composting (recycling organic waste into nutrient-rich soil).
3. **Reforestation:** People actively work to grow and repair forests by:
  - Planting seedlings and trees
  - Conservation initiatives, such as safeguarding old-growth forests
  - Reforestation and selective logging are examples of sustainable forestry techniques.
4. **Protection:** People keep the environment safe by:
  - Enacting rules and legislation pertaining to conservation
  - Protecting places, such as animal reserves and national parks
  - Taking initiatives to combat pollution, like waste management and emissions control
5. **Dispersal of living things:** People help plants and animals spread through:
  - Pollination, the process by which plants exchange pollen.
  - Breeding programs support the maintenance of a diversified and healthy population of species.
  - Transportation, which permits the deliberate or unintentional transfer of species between various habitats and geographical areas
  - By reducing climate change through climate regulation, etc.
6. **Soil quality management:** Through methods like crop rotation and cover cropping. Water cycle management, through activities like irrigation and dam construction. These interactions illustrate the deep relationships between humans and the environment, revealing that our actions have enormous influence on the natural world.

## Symbiotic nature of the relationship

### i. **Humans:**

- Inhale oxygen created by plants through photosynthesis
- Eat both plant and animal-based meals
- Use water for agriculture, industry, and drinking
- Depend on animals for labour, companionship, and transportation
- Derive energy and vitamin D from the sun's warmth and light.

### ii. **Animals:**

- Rely on vegetation for sustenance and housing
- Need water for hydration and habitation
- Get energy and vitamin D from the sun's warmth and light
- Interact with humans for food, company, and transportation

### iii. **Plants:** Produce oxygen and organic compounds through photosynthesis, which is facilitated by sunshine.

- Take up water and nutrients from the earth.
- Give humans and other animals food and shelter.
- Release oxygen into the atmosphere, which sustains life

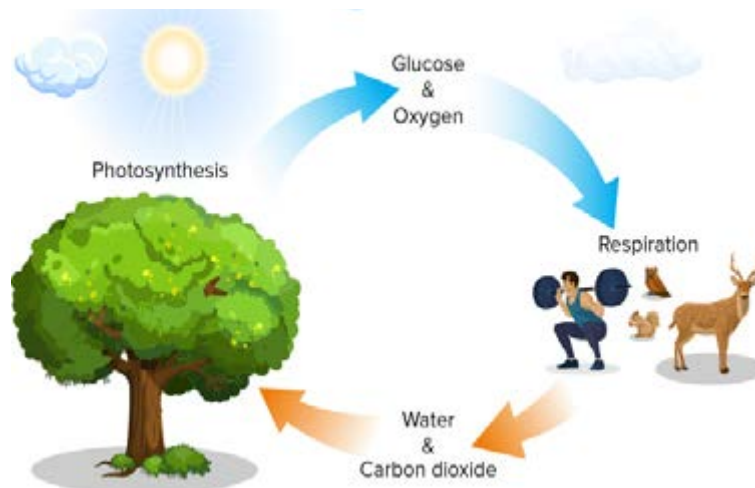
### iv. **The sun:** Gives plants light and energy for photosynthesis; -

- Supports the water cycle by evaporating and condensing water.
- Controls earth's climate and weather patterns.
- Is vital to both human and animal health by supplying warmth and vitamin D.

### v. **Water:** Provides habitats for aquatic life and supports industrial processes

- It is necessary for human and animal consumption
- It supports plant growth through irrigation and nutrient transport
- It controls earth's climate and weather patterns through the water cycle.

The link between these components in the environment is shown by the web below



**Figure 11.2:** A symbiotic relationship

### Activity 11.1

Take a trip around the school grounds and look for any instances of mutual interactions between people and other living things. Make thorough notes on your observations and support them with images or videos that provide further information.

Present your research to the class afterward to start a conversation about the importance of these symbiotic relationships and how they affect our day-to-day lives.

### Activity 11.2

Look for three or four of your classmates to form a small group – try to include classmates with different religious backgrounds and genders.

Assign each member in the group with a prompt question or brief related to the interdependence of humans and the environment: e.g.

- a. What have you observed in the environment that supports human survival?
- b. What is the evidence that shows that humans depend on the environment?
- c. If humans were not living in this environment, how different would it be?

Organise yourselves to ensure you can cover each question in the time permitted by your teacher. Your teacher may ask you to share your ideas and observations with the rest of your class.


Listen attentively and respect the views of your peers.

### Activity 11.3

Search online and read/watch videos and images that show the interdependence between humans and the environment. The links below may be helpful.

In your notebook, make notes on the videos and articles you read and summarise their main points. Write a brief conclusion on how these resources show the connectedness of the natural world.

Share your work with your teacher for feedback.

<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Qp_Um1bWsc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Qp_Um1bWsc</a>	
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoIpCJwX7-M">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoIpCJwX7-M</a>	
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NctlCOcGRM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NctlCOcGRM</a>	

## CONSEQUENCES OF HUMAN ACTIVITIES ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The environment has been adversely affected by human activity, leading to pollution, deforestation, climate change, and biodiversity loss. This has far-reaching consequences for the natural environment, human health, economics, and society.

This focal area aims to help you to understand the consequences of human activities on the environment and, by implication, understand what role you can play preserving the natural environment.

### Positive consequences of human activities on the environment

#### Plant regeneration/reforestation:

- Restoring degraded areas and encouraging sustainable land use practices.
- Planting new trees and vegetation to replace those that have been chopped down or destroyed.
- Letting forests regenerate and recover from human activities like logging or agriculture

#### Supplying resources:

Both human beings and animals breathe out carbon dioxide, which is used by plants in photosynthesis.



- Providing manure to the soil, supplies vital nutrients for the development of plants.
- Taboos and religious restrictions limit certain human behaviours linked to the consumption of particular animals or preservation of land, for example:
- preserving forests or sacred groves for their spiritual or cultural value.
- restrictions against endangering particular species or habitats.
- religious doctrine that emphasises conservation and environmental stewardship.

### **Beautification and landscaping:**

Human beings engagement with the landscape in which they live leads them to;

- Plant flowers, trees, and other plants for aesthetic purposes
- Create parks, gardens, and other green spaces for leisure and relaxation
- Create outdoor areas that encourage biodiversity

## **Negative consequences of human activities on the environment**

### **Bad agricultural practices:**

Some agricultural practices, such as those listed below have a detrimental effect on the environment:

- Monoculture farming leads to soil degradation.
- Overuse of chemical fertilizers and pesticides destroys soil microorganisms and aquatic life.
- Slash and burn methods of farming lead to the destruction of forest cover.

### **Deforestation:**

Deforestation, the process of cutting down trees has destroyed forest cover. This leads to habitat destruction and loss of biodiversity, soil erosion and increased greenhouse gas emissions, disruption of water cycles and climate dysregulation. The forest cover may be destroyed for a number of reasons such as:

- agriculture purposes
- construction
- fuelwood
- charcoal



**Fig. 11.3:** Forests trees cut down for agricultural purposes.

### **Irresponsible mining (e.g., Galamsey):**

Unregulated and illegal mining activities leads to environmental degradation and water pollution. This pollution carries health risks to miners and nearby communities as well as aquatic life. Galamsey destroys the habitats of plants and animals, destabilising ecosystems.



**Fig. 11.4:** Pollution in the Pra river as a result of galamsey

### **Improper waste disposal:**

Improper waste disposal refers to the incorrect or harmful management of waste materials, it pollutes the soil, air, and water, creating health risks for humans and animals alike.

This can take various forms, including:

- Mixing hazardous waste with regular rubbish.
- Not recycling or composting biodegradable materials
- Open burning of waste without proper controls
- Disposing of waste in waterways, oceans, or other bodies of water.
- Littering and dumping of waste on the landscape

The pictures below show open burning to reduce volume of unseparated waste at a land fill site without proper controls.



**Fig. 11.5:** Open burning to reduce volume of Biomedical solid waste at a landfill site, Tamale.

### **Irresponsible hunting and fishing practices:**

Irresponsible hunting and fishing practices refer to methods that harm the environment, deplete wildlife populations, and threaten ecosystems.

Some irresponsible hunting practices include:

- Overhunting, exceeding sustainable limits, leading to population decline.
- Poaching (illegal hunting), often targeting protected or endangered species.
- Unselective hunting (killing non-target species or juveniles).
- The following activity by human beings undermines conservation efforts in fisheries.
- Overfishing (exceeding sustainable catch limits, depleting fish populations).
- Bycatch (catching non-target species often discarding them dead).
- Bottom trawling (damaging seafloor habitats and ecosystems).
- Ignoring catch limits and closed seasons.
- Chemical fishing

Population decline or extinction of animals and fishes and habitat damage has economic impacts on communities and, raises food security threats.

### **Modernisation (buildings, roads and other infrastructure):**

The process of implementing new techniques, ideas, and technology to raise productivity, efficiency, and standard of living is known as modernisation. This can be at the expense of the natural environment, for example:

- Urban sprawl (the uncontrolled growth and expansion of urban areas) and habitat destruction.

- Human beings extract resources from the environment leading to environmental degradation.
- Modernisation obviously increases energy consumption leading to greenhouse gas emissions. It displaces communities and eventually destroys indigenous cultural heritage.

### Poor sanitation practices:

When garbage, wastewater, and human waste are not properly managed, it can have negative effects on the environment and public health. This is known as poor sanitation practices. As examples, consider:

- Defecating in the open
- Improper disposal of human waste
- Garbage dumping and littering

Below is photo of dumped garbage at an unauthorised place near a health facility



**Fig. 11.6:** A substandard offsite storage facility showing easy access to vectors, rain and unauthorised persons.

### Consequences of unhygienic practices

- Pollution of water
- Pollution of the soil
- Air contamination
- Disease transmission, such as cholera, diarrhoea, and typhoid.

### Environmental degradation and unpleasant living condition

Wildfires caused by the slash and burn method of farming, smokers, irresponsible hunters, and fuel explosions among others cause discomfort both to human and animals as well as plants. Wildfire destroys lives, property and habitats for plants and animals. The smoke contributes to climate change.



**Fig. 11.7:** Wildfire causing destruction to a forest cover

Galamsey (Gather and sell) has done serious damage to our forest cover, land and water bodies as well as human and animal health. Below are some images of destructions caused to the environment as a result of galamsey activities.



**Fig. 11.8:** Galamsey activities on the environment

#### Activity 11.4

Embark on a field trip to a site of interest (for example mining site/ refuse dump site/sand winning) to learn first-hand the effect of human activities on the environment. You may take photos, write notes and record your observations. Interview community members if you have the opportunity.

Discuss your findings with your class.

### Activity 11.5

Search online and watch documentaries on human activities that destroy the environment. Education | National Geographic Society is a good place to start

Take notes as you watch the videos and consider the types of activities and their impact on:

- The environment
- Plant and animal life
- Human habitation

Discuss what you have learnt with your class.

### Activity 11.6

Engage with an expert to discuss the consequences of human activities on the environment. This could be a person from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or any other person with knowledge of the subject matter.

Alternatively, your teacher may arrange for a suitable person to visit and present to your class.

Ahead of the visit, using the table below, prepare a set of questions that you could ask as part of the discussion.

**Table 11.1:** Questionnaire

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

### Activity 11.7

Search online to find newspaper article documenting the impact of human activity on the environment.

Write a synopsis that captures the main points of the article. Your teacher may provide you with a series of questions to address in your summary.

### Activity 11.8

Your teacher will lead a discussion on the positive and negative impacts of human behaviour on the natural world.

Working in groups, your teacher will allocate you a theme from this discussion to explore further. For example:

- Agricultural practices
- Galamsey
- Deforestation

Continue the discussion in your groups and present your conclusions on your allocated theme to the rest of the class.

## TEACHINGS AND VALUES OF AIR ON THE ENVIRONMENT

This focal area aims to guide you to understand and appreciate the teachings and values of AIR on the environment.

### Teachings of AIR on the environment: The Earth and Forest

#### 1. Environmental practices and traditions:

True practitioners of AIR respect nature for they perceived it as their ancestral heritage. For this reason, they engage in sustainable farming practices. Some trees in their farmlands are not cut down or destroyed because they are considered the abode of the spirits or thought of as economic trees. They also practice sustainable hunting practices. Some animal species are not killed for spiritual reasons. There are times in the year when hunting or fishing was banned.

A lot of African civilisations have made some trees or groves sacred, forbidding people from doing things like farming, hunting, or logging there. Because of their designation as protected zones, these sites continue to support ecological services and biodiversity.

Conventional African religions have instituted prohibitions and guidelines for the utilisation of particular resources, such hunting, fishing, or felling particular species of trees in holy regions. These taboos have prevented over-exploitation of resources and assisted in maintaining healthy wildlife populations.

African religious customs frequently incorporate rites and rituals that encourage environmental stewardship. Examples of these include harvest celebrations, rainmaking ceremonies, and ceremonies to appease ancestor spirits. The value of coexisting with nature is emphasised by these customs.

## 2. **Oral narratives and teachings:**

There are many stories and sayings that are carefully handed down through generations by practitioners of AIR as a way of teaching people that land and its resources belong to both the ancestors and future generations. These oral narratives, teach practitioners of the religion that the living are mere custodians or trustees of the environment. Oral sources also show the interconnectedness of human and natural environment. As such, destruction of the natural environment is destruction of their very selves.

## 3. **Spirituality and reverence for the Earth:**

The Earth is considered a living being with a spirit or deity. The adherents of AIR worship a mother goddess associated with fertility and abundance. They recognise the Earth's sacredness and its interconnectedness with human life. The implication of this recognition is that the practitioners of the religion should not do anything that will harm the goddess of the earth.

## 4. **Environmental taboos and restrictions:**

The following environmental restrictions or taboos help in effective environmental management by the practitioners of AIR:

- Ancestors are owners of the land; therefore, it is prohibited to sell land or selfishly exploit it.
- Prohibition on tilling the land on specific days or during certain seasons allows regeneration of the land.
- Institution of the Tendana (earth priest) to enforce taboos and ensure sustainability of the earth.
- Restrictions on hunting and resource extraction in sacred or ancestral areas.
- Sacred forests and groves protected for their cultural, spiritual, and ecological significance.

Sacred forests and groves are sites that are:

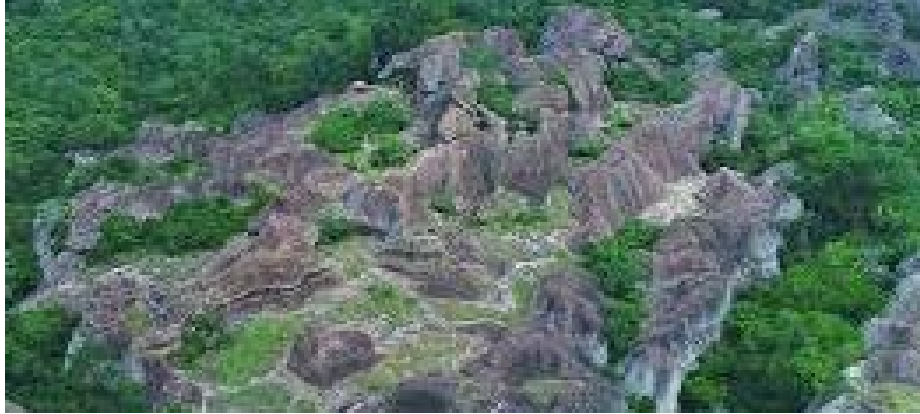
- regarded as dwelling places of deities and ancestral spirits.
- regarded as burial and resting places for ancestors.
- linked to community history and cultural heritage.
- here totemic plants and animals are protected and revered.

Some sanctuaries used as habitat for plants and animals are with associated taboos a measure used to preserve and conserve the environment. Some of the prohibitions and restrictions are:

- not hunting or harming specific animals
- no defecation, tree felling, and weeding in and around sacred places.

These practices are all meant to protect biodiversity. The picture below is a traditional protected area.





**Figure 11.9:** Tanoboase Sacred Grove at Bono East Region

## Teachings of African Indigenous Religion (AIR) on the environment: Water Bodies and Animals

### 1. Reverence for water bodies:

Water bodies are believed by practitioners of the religion as places the spirits and deities live. As such, there are taboos that adherents of the religion must take seriously to preserve the health of water bodies.

Some of the taboos associated with water bodies are outlined below:

- Prohibition against defecating around water bodies to maintain purity
- Prohibition against weeding along riverbanks to preserve ecosystem balance
- Prohibition against stepping into rivers with footwear as a mark of respect
- Prohibition against fishing in certain water bodies to conserve resources

### 2. Sacred animals:

In AIR, some animals are regarded as deities and others seen as totems. For these reasons AIR teachings about the preservation and conservation of these sacred animals are expressed in the following taboos or practices:

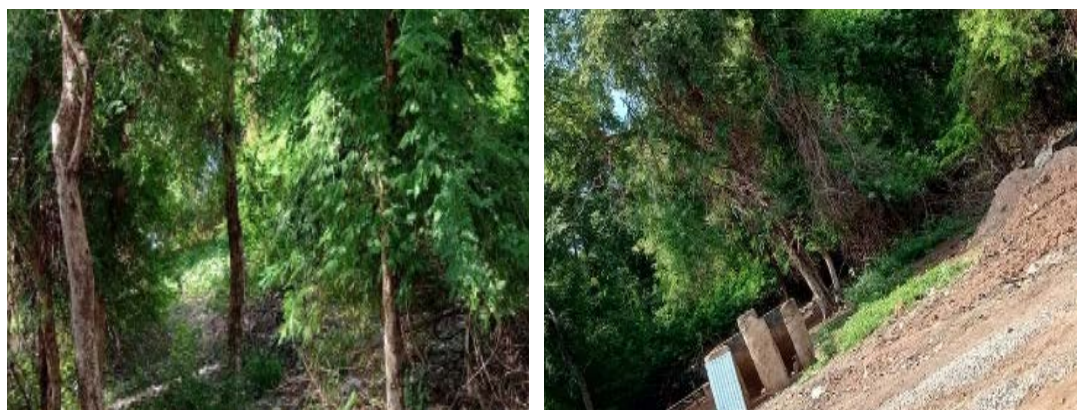
- Prohibition against killing or harming sacred animals
- Ritual burial of dead sacred animals to show respect
- Prohibition against hunting sacred animals to preserve populations

## Values of AIR on the environment

There are several values of AIR that highlight the importance of caring for the environment. Some of them are;

1. **Respect:** The practitioners of the religion demonstrate respect for the environment through:
  - Recognition of nature's sacredness and interconnectedness with human life
  - Reverence for nature through taboos and ritual practices.

Example of this reverence and interconnectedness to nature is found among the Dagombas of the Katariga. Local people visit the shrine to perform rituals and feel a connection with the deity and ask that their needs be met. Through their respect for the site as a place of worship or power, practitioners of AIR have looked after and preserved the environment around it, despite the efforts of modern developers. The shrine is pictured below.



**Fig. 11.10:** Kplavou shrine at Katariga in the Sagnarigu Metropolitan Assembly.

2. **Communalism:** The spirit of togetherness expressed by the believers of AIR inspires proper care of the environment. Practitioners recognise that human beings have relationships with plants, animals, land and water bodies and their understanding of community extends to include the natural world. As such, existing peacefully in their communities means treating the natural environment with respect.
3. **Co-operation:** The value of cooperation in the day-to-day life of the practitioners of AIR supports a collective responsibility towards the preservation of nature and addressing risks to the environment.
4. **Care:** According to AIR practitioners, caring for humanity includes the belief that the environment must also be cared for. They are not to harm or injure the environment because of their actions and inactions. Duty of care therefore entails taking appropriate action to safeguard another person, or their property and the environment, or at the very least to prevent foreseeable harm from occurring. This is seen in the responsible use of natural resources and the conscious ways of avoidance of harm to the environment.
5. **Reciprocity:** Reciprocity in African Indigenous Religious environmental management means understanding that humans and nature are connected and need each other. We must take care of nature so it can take care of us. This means AIR practitioners must
  - Recognise how their well-being is linked to the health of the environment.
  - Acknowledge their dependence on nature.
  - Take actions to protect and restore the environment, like preserving natural resources and regenerating damaged ecosystems.

By doing so, practitioners believe we can maintain a healthy and sustainable environment for ourselves and future generations.

6. **Equity:** When it comes to environmental management and conservation, equity in African Indigenous Religious environmental management refers to the equitable and just distribution of benefits, resources, and decision-making authority among all members of a community. AIR inspires the following in its adherents:
- *Recognition of indigenous rights:* Giving indigenous peoples credit for their legal claim to their ancestral lands, resources, and customs.
  - *Community involvement:* Making sure that everyone in the community is involved in the procedures that lead to decisions on the environment.
  - *Benefit sharing:* Equitably allocating gains from conservation and natural resource management.
  - *Resource access:* Guaranteeing equitable access to natural resources and chances for long-term, sustainable employment.
  - *Cultural sensitivity:* Environmental management that respects and uses indigenous cultural traditions and knowledge.
  - *Justice and Fairness:* Correcting historical wrongs and advancing equity in the management of the environment.
7. **Trusteeship:** In African Indigenous Religious Environmental Management, the term “trusteeship” refers to the duty and obligation placed on individuals, groups, or leaders to safeguard the environment and natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations. This idea has its roots in indigenous African faiths and worldviews, which place special emphasis on:
- *Stewardship:* Humans have a responsibility to protect the environment.
  - *Interconnectedness:* People, the natural world, and the supernatural are all interconnected and dependent on one another.
  - *Reciprocity:* Humans owe society and the environment something in return for the benefits and resources they have received.
  - *Accountability:* Individuals and communities alike are accountable for decisions and actions involving the environment

Trusteeship entails preserving ecosystems and hallowed places, maintaining customary wisdom and methods, sustainable management of natural resources and ensuring fair distribution of resources.

### Activity 11.9

Take a trip to sacred places to explore the values of AIR in environmental conservation. During the visit ask for permission and take pictures/videos while interacting with the local people. If possible, try to interview local people on how the significance of the site and how they see their role as custodians of its environment.

Take notes where appropriate and share your findings with your colleagues in class.

### Activity 11.10

Engage with an expert to discuss the teachings and values of AIR on the environment. Such a person could be a traditional leader or any person knowledgeable on the subject matter. Alternatively, your teacher may invite a person with relevant expertise to present to the class on this subject.

Prior to the visit, prepare questions to ask as part of the discussion.

For example:

- Could you briefly summarise AIR's main takeaways on how people should interact with the environment?
- How is the interdependence of the environment and all living things emphasised in AIR teachings?
- What principles of conservation and environmental care does AIR support?
- How do AIR practices and beliefs affect people's perceptions of managing natural resources?

### Activity 11.11

Watch the following videos online to learn more about environmental teachings and values within AIR. You may wish to extend your research through other online sources.

<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5s7wPP0M6Ag">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5s7wPP0M6Ag</a>	
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjLXmlw_Tv0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjLXmlw_Tv0</a>	
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sus_KS5mWuA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sus_KS5mWuA</a>	
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkxMrXg6PtU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkxMrXg6PtU</a>	

### Activity 11. 12

Working in small groups of five or six, discuss the main values of AIR that promote environmental conservation.

Once you are agreed, join with another group and continue the discussion. Can you still agree on a consensus as to the main values? If so, join with another group and repeat the exercise. Can the whole class agree on how the values of AIR support environmentalism?

## TEACHINGS AND VALUES OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Having looked at the teachings and values of AIR on the environment, we will now move on to consider the teachings of the Christian religion support environmental conservation.

### Specific teachings and values on the environment in the Bible

1. **Genesis 1:27–29:** The text emphasises humanity’s responsibility to care for the universe in a sustainable manner. The scripture says that God made people “in his own image”. This implies that humankind have a moral duty to take care of the earth and all its inhabitants as bearers of God’s image. If human beings fail their call to stewardship when we destroy the environment. As God’s stewards, humankind must care for the environment.
2. **Numbers 35:33–34 “You shall not pollute the land in which you live.”:** The verse stresses humanity’s moral responsibility to the land and to do everything to prevent its pollution. Bloodshed contaminates the ground, and the only thing that can make up for bloodshed on a piece of land is the blood of the one who committed it because the Lord resides in the land. Murder in all its forms is the greatest pollution to the environment should not be tolerated. The idea of maintaining the land’s purity is emphasised below;
  - God prohibits degradation and pollution of the land.
  - God is present and deeply connected to the land making its care a sacred responsibility.
3. **Genesis 2:15 “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work on it and keep it”:**

This text places emphasis on the original role of human beings as caretakers of the environment. It highlights:

- Stewardship: The responsibility assigned to humanity is “working” in the garden, which implies tending to, managing, and caring for it.
  - Responsibility: To guard, keep, and see to its continuous sustenance. That is meant by the expression “take care of it” (Hebrew: שָׁמַר, shamar).
  - Collaboration: God gives humanity the responsibility of looking after the garden, signifying a cooperative relationship between the divine and humans.
4. **Psalm 24:1. “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein”:**

The literal meaning of this biblical quote is that the earth and everything in it, is a property of the Lord. This verse teaches several important principles about the environment and humanity’s relationship to it namely;

- God is the creator and owner of all creation.
- The earth and everything in it ultimately belong to God, not to humanity,
- Humans are caretakers of God’s creation but not the owners.

The implication of the above is that human beings are responsible for caring and managing the environment on God’s behalf. Therefore, environmental preservation is a spiritual issue rooted in humankind’s relationship with God as a Creator.

5. **Revelation 11:18. “The nations rage but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth”:** Its emphasis is that God will ultimately judge those who destroy the earth. The phrase “destroying the destroyers of the earth”, means that God will hold accountable those who harm the environment. Destruction to the environment is a serious offense against God. The text connects human actions towards the earth to their relationship with God. It also provides a sense of accountability and judgment, emphasising the importance of responsible care for the earth. Thus, environmental care is a spiritual and a moral responsibility.
6. **Deuteronomy 23:12-14. “As part of your equipment, have something to dig with, and when you relieve yourself, dig a hole and cover up your excrement. For the Lord your God moves about in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you. Your camp must be holy so that he will not see among you anything indecent and turn away from you”:** These verses provide instructions for the Israelites regarding cleanliness and sanitation in their camp, stressing on the importance of maintaining a clean environment. Again, the verses underline the value of cleanliness, health, and communal responsibility in maintaining an environment that respect God’s presence. In summary, God frowns upon a filthy environment.

## Christian values on the environment

1. **Responsibility** – Christians are duty-bound to take care of the environment, a duty given to them by God. Christians have a responsibility to take care of the environment because God assigned them to be caretakers of the earth. This is based on the Bible, specifically in Genesis, where God tells humans to “work” and “take care” of the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15). This means humans don’t own the earth but are instead responsible for protecting and improving it for future generations. Since everything belongs to God, humans must answer to Him for how they treat the earth. By taking care of the environment, Christians show their love for God and commitment to doing His will.
2. **Care** – Christians need to do or provide what is needed to protect the environment. The fifth mark of mission states that Christians should “strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth”. The Five Marks of Mission are a framework used by the Anglican Communion and other Christian denominations to describe the mission of the Church. This fifth mark of mission emphasises the importance of caring for the environment and promoting sustainability. It recognises that humans have a responsibility to protect and preserve the natural world, and to ensure that their actions do not harm the planet or its resources. Thus, it is a call to “care for creation”. It encourages Christians to live in a way that is sustainable, responsible, and respectful of the natural world, and to advocate for policies and practices that promote environmental justice and sustainability.

Christians have a responsibility to make choices that meet our needs today without hurting the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. They must not be wasteful in using resources from nature (reduce), recycle, and reuse things. By taking care of the environment, Christians show their love for God, who created the world, and their care for all living things. By living in this way, Christians can help protect the planet and ensure it continues to thrive.

3. **Partnership/cooperation** – Christians must come together with others to ensure proper use of the environment. Christians often work with other faith groups, environmental organisations, and government agencies to protect the planet. By working together, they can have a bigger impact on important environmental issues. For example, the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE) brings together different Christian groups to care for the earth. They encourage churches to use less energy, support local farming, and reduce waste. Christians believe it’s their duty to protect the earth for future generations. By working together with others who share this goal, Christians can make a real difference in keeping the planet safe.
4. **Discipleship** – Christians should become environmental ambassadors. Being a Christian means following Jesus’ teachings and living like He did. This includes taking care of the earth. Christians should show their love for God’s creation by being kind to the environment. They can do this by:

- Not wasting things such as water
- Choosing ways to live that don't hurt the earth e.g., avoiding galamsey, sand and gravel winning, etc.

By doing these things, Christians show that they care about what God made and want to protect it. This is part of being a good follower of Jesus.

5. **Love** – Deep affection for the well-being of the environment. The idea that God's goodness and love are reflected in creation is the foundation of Christian teachings on the environment. This viewpoint emphasises the significance of nature's inherent worth as God's creation, in addition to its practical value. It is the responsibility of Christians to their love for God by taking care of what He has created. Biblical teachings, such as God's admonition to care for the Earth and its species, serve as the foundation for this preservation.

Furthermore, according to Christian belief, all life is interconnected and therefore disregarding the environment can impede the flourishing of both non-human and human life. Therefore, a sincere concern for the environment is regarded as a manifestation of love for God and people, supporting the notion that.

6. **Interconnectedness** – Humans and nature were created by God and this link among all creation must be maintained. This interconnectedness came about because of the idea of preserving the environment. Christians are obligated to treat the Earth with care as an expression of their love for God and their source of origin. The Christian belief that humankind was created from the earth implies that human beings are directly connected to the earth. Preservation of the earth is therefore preserving one's origin from being destroyed. Secondly, the conviction that everything is created by God has intrinsic worth, not just because it benefits humans but because creation and humans are directly connected to each other. Christians are urged to develop a feeling of responsibility and compassion towards the environment.
7. **Justice** – There must be fairness in our attitude towards the environment, exemplified in fairness in its use and considering the interest of others. Since Christians are required to treat the Earth with care as a sign of their love for God, the idea of preservation is central to this link. This preservation recognises that environmental conditions have a direct influence on human existence, particularly that of the most vulnerable individuals. Furthermore, the belief that everything created has intrinsic value—not just because it helps people—as well as being a part of God's purpose is the root of this interdependence. Christians are advised to cultivate a sense of responsibility and compassion towards the environment, given their role in preserving the balance of creation for future generations.
8. **Equity** – Christians must factor the interest of future generations when using resource from nature. Christians believe that everyone should be treated fairly when it comes to the use of environmental resources. This means that everyone, including people not yet born, should have access to clean air, water, and land. It's not just about us, but about being fair to future generations too. It is therefore the



duty of Christians to protect the earth's resources for those who will come after them. By caring for the environment, Christians show that they care about what's right, are kind, and want to preserve God's creation for all human beings born and unborn.

## Christian activities that promote and protect the environment

### 1. Environmental education and awareness.

Christian-led initiatives that raise environmental awareness and provide education about environmental issues. Programmes for religious education are increasingly incorporating environmental education. Children are taught about environmental preservation through Sunday schools, vacation Bible schools, and summer residential camps, for instance. The purpose of these programmes is to increase public understanding of the importance of protecting God's creation and to offer practical solutions through community engagement, curriculum development, and preservation.

### 2. Tree planting.

Examples of Christian initiated tree planting programmes are highlighted below:

- *Arbor Day of Protestants:*

This is an annual event celebrated by Protestant churches to promote tree planting and environmental stewardship. It encourages church members to plant trees in their communities, schools, and homes. It raises awareness about the importance of trees in fighting climate change, providing shade, and supporting wildlife.

- *Church of Pentecost Tree Planting Initiative:*

This a programme launched by the Church of Pentecost to promote environmental conservation. The aim of the project was to encourage church members to plant trees, reduce waste, and conserve water. It was also meant to create a culture of environmental stewardship within the church community. The church commissioned a One Million Tree Planting Project as shown in the photos below.



**Fig. 11.11:** Church of Pentecost starts a 1 million tree planting project

- *Laudato Si Action (Catholic Church):*

This programme was inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical (letter) on caring for the environment. Laudato Si' encourages Catholic communities to act on environmental issues, including tree planting, reducing waste, and promoting environmental sustainability. The Laudato Si' Action Program aims at spearheading the transformation of society through environmental conservation initiatives. It was meant to save the ecology thereby saving humanity. As such,

It was an opportunity for the church to educate its members and inspire them to care for the environment as an act of faith and service to others.



**Fig. 11.12:** Catholic Bishops in Ghana launching a five-year Laudato Si' Action Program (LSAP)

### 3. Clean up campaigns

Churches sometimes organise clean-up events to help keep the environment clean and healthy. Church members work together to clean public areas, teach people about keeping their community clean, and encourage everyone to take care of the earth. An example is the Church of Pentecost in Ghana. They have a campaign called “Environmental Care, My Responsibility” where they regularly clean up public spaces with the help of waste management companies.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Accra’s “Clean Accra Project” organizes regular clean-up events in the city. Similarly, the Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi “Keep Kumasi Clean” campaign: which collaborates with local authorities to clean up public spaces. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Ghana’s “Environmental Conservation” project support community-led clean-up initiatives and environmental conservation efforts.

The image below are young Catholics in clean-up activities and environmental education.



**Fig. 11.13:** Catholic youth in Ghana embarks on a cleanup campaign

- *ADRA Tree Planting Programme:*  
This is a global initiative by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) to promote reforestation and environmental conservation. Members of the Church plant millions of trees worldwide each year.

The initiative also supports communities affected by deforestation, climate change, and environmental degradation. Below is a picture of Adventists planting trees.



**Fig. 11.14:** SDA Church involved in tree-planting

Other churches in Ghana also embark on a similar mission to make their localities clean. All the above initiatives show that Christians are committed to environmental preservation and conservation.

### Activity 11.13

Take a trip to observe Christian environmental protection activities such as clean up campaigns, tree planting exercise, etc. If you are not able to arrange a visit independently then speak with your teacher who may be able to help you.

During the visit, take pictures/videos, notes and record your observations as you interact with people. If you can, try to interview members of the local community on their motivations and how their faith influences their views on the environment.

Share your findings with your class after the trip.

### Activity 11.14

Seek out an expert such as a priest, an elder or a leader of a Christian NGO involved in environmental protection to discuss the teachings and values of Christianity on the environment.

Alternatively, your teacher may invite somebody with the relevant expertise to present to the class. Before the meeting, prepare thoughtful questions to ask as part of a discussion.




For example:

**Table 11.2:** Questionnaire

1.	What are the Christian activities that promote and protect the values of the environment?
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

### Activity 11.15

Use your digital device and log onto any of the sites below to search for information and watch videos that show Christian teachings and values on the environment.

<p>Church of Pentecost tree planting programme  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KgXbKzjieZQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KgXbKzjieZQ</a></p>	
<p>ADRA tree planting programme  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3eeFGtsscc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3eeFGtsscc</a></p>	
<p>Presby Church Clean-up campaign in Techiman  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kjg-DWNq-1k">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kjg-DWNq-1k</a></p>	

Form a small group with classmates to discuss your research and what you have learned about Christian teachings on the environment and how practitioners of this religion implement these. Have you taken part in any such activities? If you have, share them with your group as part of the discussion.

### Activity 11.16

Read the passages in the Bible referenced in this section that support the ideas of stewardship and protection of the natural environment. How would you summarise these in modern language for someone of another religion to understand?

## TEACHINGS AND VALUES OF ISLAM ON THE ENVIRONMENT

You now know about AIR's and Christianity's environmental beliefs and principles. This section aims to help you understand Islam's environmental teachings and values.

### Islamic scriptural teachings on the environment – Qur'an and Hadith

1. **Qur'an 1:165:** “For He it is Who has appointed you vicegerent over the earth and has exalted some of you over others in rank that He may try you in what He has bestowed upon you”. This verse highlights that humans are appointed as managers (khalifah) of the earth. This role entails a responsibility to care for and protect the environment, ensuring its sustainability for the future generations.
2. **Qur'an 7:31:** “Children of Adam! Take your adornment at every time of Prayer and eat and drink without going to excesses. For Allah does not like those who go to excess.” This verse teaches that extravagance and wastefulness are discouraged, promoting sustainable practices that minimise environmental harm. It highlights the importance of mindful consumption, urging individuals to respect natural resources and maintain balance in their use, thereby fostering a healthier environment for all beings.
3. **Qur'an 30:41:** “Corruption has spread on land and sea as a result of what people's hands have done so that Allah may cause them to taste the consequences of some of their deeds and perhaps, they might return to the Right Path”.

Corruption of the land and sea are literally destructive activities human beings carry out on the land and sea. According to the Qur'an, human wrongdoing has led to environmental challenges both on land and in the seas. The text teaches individuals the consequences of the sin against the environment and the need to repent and heal the land and water bodies. Failure to do this will invite God's anger upon those who hurt the environment.

4. **Hadith Sahih al-Bukhari 3321:** “A prostitute was forgiven by Allah, because passing by a panting dog near a well and seeing that the dog was about to die of thirst, she took off her shoe and tying it with her head-cover she drew out some water for it. So, Allah forgave her because of that.”

This story shows us that we may receive mercy from God by carrying out even the smallest deeds of kindness and compassion towards all God's creatures, including animals and the environment. Within the context of environmental management, this narrative emphasises the significance of;

- *Empathy:* By realising the suffering animal's need for water, the prostitute showed empathy.
- *Action:* She used her resources - a shoe and a head covering to help the dog right away, easing its misery.
- *Responsibility:* She showed a sense of duty to another living being by lending a hand to the dog.

The inspiration from the story is to;

- Take care of all living things, such as plants and animals.
- Take steps to lessen pain and damage to the environment.

5. **Hadith Imam Ahmad (6768) and Ibn Maajah (419):** “What is this extravagance, O Sad?” He said: Can there be any extravagance in wudoo’? The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said that even if you’re near a river with plenty of water, you shouldn’t waste water when cleaning yourself for prayer. Two Islamic scholars, Ahmad and Ibn Majah, agree that using too much water is wrong, even if it’s available. They teach that being moderate and not wasting resources is important in all aspects of religious practice, which is a key principle in Islam.
6. **Musnad Ahmad 12902:** “Even if the Resurrection were established upon one of you while he has in his hand a sapling, let him plant it.” This hadith teaches the significance of continuing good deeds, even in dire circumstances. The emphasis is on;
  - *Urgent action:* Planting a sapling, even in the face of imminent doom (Resurrection), highlights the urgency of environmental action.
  - *Individual responsibility:* The teaching empowers individuals to take action, regardless of circumstances, to protect the environment.
  - *Long-term thinking:* Planting a sapling, which takes time to grow, encourages considering the future and long-term consequences of our actions and inactions towards the environment.
7. **Sahih Muslim 2742, Book 49 Hadith 12:** “The world is sweet and green, and Allah has made you stewards over it. So, whoever is a steward, let him fulfil his stewardship”. This hadith emphasises the sacred trust and responsibility (stewardship) humans have been given to protect and care for the natural world. The phrase ‘sweet and green’ describes the beauty of the Earth, highlighting the importance of preserving it. The implication of this is that God recognises humans as caretakers, not owners, of the Earth, emphasising responsible management and protection of the environment.

This hadith inspires environmental ethics and encourages sustainable practices, such as:

- Conserving natural resources
  - Protecting biodiversity
  - Reducing waste and pollution
  - Promoting eco-friendly practices
  - Recognising the intrinsic value of nature
8. **Imam Ali (Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon 174):** “Do not pollute the water, for it is the source of life for all the living creatures”. This hadith emphasises the importance of protecting water resources from pollution, recognizing its essential role in sustaining life. This hadith promotes environmental ethics and encourages sustainable, such as:

- Conserving water
  - Reducing pollution
  - Protecting aquatic ecosystems
  - Promoting eco-friendly practices
  - Recognising the intrinsic value of water
9. **Abdullah ibn Habashi Sunan Abi Dawud 5239, Book 43, Hadith 467:** “If anyone cuts the lote tree, Allah brings him headlong into Hell”. This hadith teaches the importance of respecting nature and the divine laws governing it, highlighting the broader principle of safeguarding what is sacred. The teaching serves as a reminder of the consequences of actions that disrespect God’s creation and the moral obligation to preserve the environment.
10. **Ibn Umar (Sahih al-Buhari 3295, Sahih Muslim 2242):** “A woman was punished due to a cat she had imprisoned until it died, so she entered the Hellfire. She did not give the cat food or water while it was imprisoned, neither did she set it free to eat from the vermin of the earth”. This hadith highlights the importance of treating all living beings with kindness and compassion. It promotes:
- Animal welfare
  - Compassion and empathy towards all living beings
  - Responsible pet ownership
  - Prevention of animal cruelty
  - Recognition of the intrinsic value of all lives

### Islamic values on the environment

1. **Prudence:** Natural resources can be used for the welfare of humankind, but they must be used with prudence. In Islam, natural resources are considered gifts from God, that are intended for the welfare of humanity. The Qur’an and Hadith emphasise responsible stewardship (khilafah) over these resources, promoting sustainable use to ensure their availability for future generations. Islam encourages conservation and ethical management, aligning with the principles of Maqasid al-Shari’ah, which focus on promoting public welfare and preventing harm. Thus, while humans are permitted to utilise these resources, they must do so prudently, balancing their needs with the obligation to protect the environment and uphold moral responsibilities.
2. **Stewardship:** God has appointed human beings as stewards of the environment. In Islam, God has appointed humans as stewards (khulafa) over the Earth and its resources. The Quran states, “It is He who has appointed you vicegerent (deputy) on the earth...” (6:165). This role comes with a responsibility to manage the Earth’s affairs according to God’s instructions. This means using resources consciously without waste or abuse. Humans will be held accountable before God for how they fulfil their role as stewards. The Earth is a “bestowed trust” that must be returned undamaged. Damaging the environment irreversibly is considered a betrayal of this trust.



In summary, God has made humans stewards over the Earth, entrusting them to manage its affairs responsibly and sustainably. This role comes with accountability to God and a duty to preserve the environment for current and future generations.

3. **Responsibility:** It is human responsibility to preserve the world. In Islam, humans are considered managers of environmental resources. God has appointed humans as deputy (khalifah) on Earth, granting them the privilege to use resources while also charging them with the duty to protect the environment.

Islam also teaches that all of God’s creation, including the natural world, has basic value and a right to exist independently of human needs. Damaging the environment is seen as a betrayal of the trust placed in humans.

4. **Care and Compassion:** Humans must have compassion towards animals and plants. Islam teaches compassion towards all living beings, including animals and plants, highlighting that they are part of God’s creation and deserve respect and kindness. All creatures are considered as part of Allah’s family, and kindness towards them reflects one’s faith. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasised that acts of kindness to animals are rewarded similarly to those towards humans, highlighting their moral equivalence.

The above teaching encourages Muslims to cultivate a compassionate relationship with all of creation, fostering a sense of responsibility and preservation towards animals and the environment.

5. **Preservation:** Humans must protect the earth because we depend on it for our well-being. Islamic teachings highlighted the importance of environmental preservation of the Earth, viewing it as a divine trust (Amanah) bestowed upon humanity. This preservation entails a commitment to protect natural resources for future generations and to avoid wastefulness.

This teaching also promotes sustainable practices, such as planting trees and conserving water, reflecting the belief that caring for the environment is a form of worship and charity. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) encouraged actions like planting a sapling even at the end of the world, underscoring the importance of environmental care.

6. **Trustees:** The environment is entrusted into the care of humankind. Allah entrusted the environment to humankind as manager, or “khalifahs,” highlighting a profound responsibility to care for and protect His creation and justice in resource distribution. In Islam, the role of trusteeship (amanah) extends beyond mere management; it is a moral obligation to maintain the balance of nature and to act with respect towards all living beings. The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) further reinforce this duty, promoting actions such as planting trees and sharing resources, as seen in various hadiths.

Overall, Islamic environmental preservation calls for a harmonious relationship with nature, urging followers to live within their means and to protect the environment as an act of worship.

## Islamic activities that promote the environment

1. **Environmental education and awareness in mosques and schools (Madrasa).** Islam places a strong emphasis on environmental stewardship and encourages Muslims to actively participate in preserving and protecting the natural world. Mosques and schools play a crucial role in fostering environmental awareness and promoting eco-friendly practices among the community.

For example, the Green Mosque Campaigns Organisations like the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) have launched national campaigns to raise awareness about making mosques more environmentally friendly. These campaigns aim to educate mosque leaders and communities about adopting sustainable practices, such as: Using LED lights, energy-efficient air conditioning, and solar power to reduce electricity consumption etc.

2. **Tree planting campaigns by Muslim groups and NGOs.** Various Muslim groups and NGOs are actively promoting environmental awareness through tree planting campaigns and other initiatives.

Some of them include:

- Islamic Relief Organisation empower communities to plant trees. They also provide tools, equipment, and seeds to help individuals grow trees and fruits, fostering sustainability and leaving a legacy for future generations.
- Trees4Life Campaign, Green Future for Iraq and Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) are all non-profit Islamic organisations that support tree planting.

3. **Waste management and clean-up campaigns by Muslim groups.** Muslim groups and NGOs are actively promoting environmental sustainability through waste management and clean campaigns for example, Waste Sadaqah Movement. This community-based initiative, originating in mosques, encourages Muslims to view waste management as a charitable act. It mobilises community members to sort and manage household waste, emphasising the religious significance of caring for the environment. The movement promotes the principles of ta'awun (cooperation) and takaful (mutual assistance), fostering a sense of community responsibility towards waste reduction and environmental care, and Clean-Up Campaigns, Educational Workshops etc.

4. **Advocacy and policy engagements with governmental agencies.** Muslim organisations and individuals have been actively engaging with government agencies to promote environmental advocacy and policy changes such as collaboration with Government Agencies. Some Muslim groups have directly collaborated with government agencies on environmental initiatives. For example, ISNA partnered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to launch the ENERGY STAR Action Workbook for Congregations. This program aims to help mosques and Islamic schools across the United States reduce energy consumption, water usage, and operating expenses in their facilities. Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change, Interfaith Climate Change Advocacy etc.

- 5. Water conservation initiatives.** Islamic teachings emphasise the importance of water conservation as a fundamental aspect of environmental preservation. Water is a divine gift. Water is viewed as a blessing from Allah, essential for life, as highlighted in the Quran. This instils a sense of responsibility among Muslims to manage water wisely and sustainably, avoiding waste. The above teaching guides individual behaviour but also encourages community-wide initiatives to address water scarcity and promote sustainable practices.

### Activity 11.17

Using the internet, search for Qur'anic and Hadith quotations on the Islamic teachings and values on the environment. Interpret the texts or quotations and summarise how they support the position of the Muslim community as environmental stewards.

*Some qur'anic and hadith texts you may consider are:*

Qur'an 54:49, Quran 2:30, Qur'an 2:60, Qur'an 6:99, Qur'an 6:38,

Musnad Ahmad, Hadith 12902, Sahih al-Bukhari, 2320, Ahmad Hadith 6768

### Activity 11.18

Look for an expert on the teachings and values of Islam and the environment. Alternatively, your teacher may invite a lecturer of Islamic Religious Studies, an Imam or leaders of Islamic NGOs involved in environmental protection, to give a talk on the value on the environment.

Ahead of the discussion, prepare a set of questions you could ask to improve your understanding.

For example.

**Table 11.3:** Questionnaire

1.	What are the three Islamic teachings and values on the environment and its effects in your community.
2.	Why should Islam emphasis on the teaching and value on the environment?
3.	
4.	
5.	

### Activity 11.19

Use your digital device and log into any of the sites below to search for information and watch videos that show Islamic environmental teachings and values on the environment.



Form a small group with classmates to discuss your research and what you have learned about Islamic teachings on the environment and how practitioners of this religion implement these. Have you ever taken part in any such activities? If you have, share them with your group as part of the discussion.

### Activity 11.20

Take a trip to observe environmental protection activities led by Islamic groups such as clean up campaigns, tree planting exercise, etc. If you are not able to arrange a visit independently then speak with your teacher who may be able to help you.

During the visit, take pictures/videos, notes and record your observations as you interact with people. If you can, try to interview members of the local community on their motivations and how their faith influences their views on the environment.

Share your findings with your class after the trip.

### Self-Assessment Questions 11.1

Answer at least one of the following questions to review your learning in this section.

1. Highlight three ways that humans rely on the environment for survival and well-being.
2. Describe three essential ways the environment supports human life and activities.
3. Examine the interdependent relationships between humans and the environment, focusing on three critical mutual dependencies.

### Self-Assessment Questions 11.2

Answer at least one of the following questions to review your learning from this section.

1. Identify three consequences of human activities that affect the environment.
2. Explain three consequences of human activities that affect the environment.
3. Analyse three human activities that affect the environment and justify your conclusions on their impact.

### Self-Assessment Questions 11.3

Answer at least one of the following questions to support the review of your learning in this section

1. Identify three environmental teachings of AIR on the environment
2. Explain three environmental teachings and values of AIR on the environment
3. Analyse the relationship between the teachings and values of AIR on the environment.

### Self-Assessment Questions 11.4

Answer at least one of the following questions to support the review of your learning from this section.

1. Discuss the relationship between the teaching and values of Christianity and environmentalism.
2. Explain the different interpretations of Genesis 1:27 and 28 and justify, by linking it to Christian teachings, how this quotation supports environmental stewardship.

### Self-Assessment Questions 11.5

Answer at least one of the following questions to support the review of your learning from this section.

1. Identify three key environmental teachings of Islam on the environment.
2. Highlight three environmental teachings and values of Islam on the environment.
3. Examine three reason you should encourage the Islamic teachings and value on the environment.

# Review Questions

1. Explain how humans and the environment depend on each other.
2. Prepare a talk on the symbiotic relationship among various components of the environment. Why should human beings care for the environment?
3. Design a community project that demonstrates a positive consequence of human activity on the environment.

Consider the following:

- a. What environmental issue will your project address?
  - b. What human activities will be involved?
  - c. How will these activities positively impact the environment?
  - d. What are the potential long-term benefits of your project?
  - e. Present your project idea in a clear and concise proposal, including any relevant diagrams, maps, or visual aids.
4. Choose any three environmental teachings of African Indigenous Religions (AIR) and explain how you can apply them in your daily life to promote environmental sustainability.
  5. Highlight three aspects of the teaching and the values of the Christianity on the environment and how they can be applied in solving environmental problems.
  6. Discuss three environmental teachings and values of Christianity on the environment. Justify each with a Biblical quotation and present your response to your teacher.
  7. Analyse two aspects of the relationship between the teachings and values of Islam and environmentalism.
  8. Identify five environmental teachings of Islam on the environment.

# Answers to Review Questions

1. Refer to the learning area above
2. Model your talk in line with this.

Greetings, ladies and gentlemen.

I want to talk about the complex web of relationships that exists in our surroundings nowadays. There are connections between the earth we walk on, the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the living things that call our world home. Because of this symbiotic link, which is vital to our survival, we must recognise and appreciate it.

The environment is a complex system in which every element influences and is dependent upon every other element, rather than being merely a collection of discrete parts. Plants give people and other creatures oxygen while also cleaning the air we breathe. In addition to sustaining aquatic life and human settlements, rivers and oceans influence the climate. In addition to storing carbon and filtering water, soil promotes plant development.

People are a component of this fragile equilibrium. But what we've done has upset the balance of the surroundings. The basic support of our life is in danger due to pollution, deforestation, climate change, and species extinction. Why should people be concerned about the environment? The basic answer is that it's essential to our survival. By keeping the environment safe, we guarantee:

- Mitigation of natural disasters and climate regulation
- Rich soil for growing food
- Pure water and air for coming generations
- Preserving ecological services and biodiversity
- Assistance with human health and welfare

However, protecting the environment is not just a moral duty but also a social and economic necessity. Each year, environmental degradation costs trillions of dollars, but adopting sustainable practices can boost innovation and create jobs.

3. An example project could be structured as follows:

**Project Title:** Community Garden Revitalization

**Environmental Issue:** Urbanisation and lack of green spaces in our community

Human Activities:

- Community engagement and education on sustainable gardening practices
- Collaborative garden design and planning
- Volunteer-led-garden restoration and maintenance

#### Positive Impact on the Environment:

- Increased green space for biodiversity and habitat creation
- Improved air quality through plant absorption of pollutants
- Enhanced soil health through organic gardening practices
- Reduced urban heat island effect through shading and evapotranspiration

#### Long-term benefits:

- Community building and social cohesion through shared garden space
- Education and skill-building for sustainable living practices
- Increased access to fresh, locally grown produce for community members
- Potential for expansion to other urban areas, promoting city-wide environmental benefits

#### Visual Aids:

- A diagram of the proposed garden design, including plant species and features
- A map of the community garden location and surrounding area
- A photo of a similar successful community garden project

#### 4. Answers should address the any three of the following values of AIR in relation to the environment but be contextualised with examples.

- *Interconnectedness*: All living things, and the environment are interconnected, and humans are a part of this web.
- *Reciprocity*: In exchange for the resources and advantages obtained, humans owe the environment and society something in return.
- *Stewardship*: It is our duty as humans to take care of and safeguard the natural world.
- *Respect for holy locations and environments*: Some locations and environments have spiritual value and need to be safeguarded.

Long-term perspective: Actions and decisions should take the environment and future generations into account.

#### 5. The relationship between the teaching and values of the Christianity on the environment are:

##### i. *Preservation*:

God has entrusted humanity with the responsibility to care for His creation.

##### ii. *Respect for Creation*:

Christian teachings advocate for a deep respect for all forms of life, viewing creation as a reflection of God's glory. This respect translates into ethical behaviour towards the environment, promoting actions that protect the Earth and honour it as sacred.



iii. *Love and Compassion:*

Love is a fundamental Christian value that extends to the environment. This encompasses love for God, fellow humans, and the Earth itself. This love motivates believers to engage in actions that benefit not only themselves but also the broader community and the planet.

6. Refer to the lesson on environmental teachings and values of Christianity on the environment

7. The relationships between Islamic teachings and the value on the environment are:

a. *Duty (Amanah) and Stewardship (Khilafah):*

Islam believes that people have been given the responsibility of caring for and protecting the Earth as stewards (Quran 2:30). This highlights our obligation to preserve natural resources, manage them sensibly, and guard against environmental damage.

The implication of this is that every Muslim must

- Promote eco-friendly behaviours and sustainable activities.
- Encourage the preservation of the environment.
- Encourage environmental laws and programs.

b. *Interconnectedness (Tawhid) and compassion (Rahmah):*

Islam places a strong emphasis on having compassion for all living things and acknowledges the interdependence of all things (Quran 6:152). This teaches us to appreciate the roles that plants and animals play in the ecosystem and to treat them kindly.

The application of this is that every Muslim and by extension everybody must encourage conservation and animal well-being by;

- Preserving habitat and reforest.
- Promoting environmentally responsible behaviours that reduce damage to the environment.

8. Five environmental teachings from Islam. Learners should list five examples from the teachings covered in this lesson with reference to the scriptural origin.

## Extended Reading

1. [https://bio.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Introductory\\_and\\_General\\_Biology/Introductory\\_Biology\\_\(CK-12\)/01%3A\\_Introduction\\_to\\_Biology/1.06%3A\\_Interdependence\\_of\\_Living\\_Things](https://bio.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Introductory_and_General_Biology/Introductory_Biology_(CK-12)/01%3A_Introduction_to_Biology/1.06%3A_Interdependence_of_Living_Things)
2. Galamsey-polluted Pra River doubles skin diseases, diarrhoea cases in Shama District
3. <https://citinewsroom.com/2020/02/galamsey-polluted-pra-river-doubles-skin-diseases-diarrhoea-cases-in-shama-district/>
4. Human impacts on the environment
5. <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/resource-library-human-impacts-environment/>
6. A video of galamsey activities destroying river bodies and cocoa farms in Kwabibirim Municipal Assembly- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMPiC7shLPY>
7. Cocoa farmer leases his cocoa farm
8. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxvMiVorNPs>
9. Magesa, L. (2017). African indigenous religion and environmental sustainability. In Proceedings of the International Conference on Religion and Environmental Sustainability (pp. 123-135).
10. Church of Pentecost launches a tree planting project
11. <https://thecophq.org/the-church-of-pentecost-kick-starts-1million-tree-planting-project/>
12. The official launch of Laudato Si' Action Platform <https://www.aciafrica.org/index.php/news/4772/catholic-bishops-in-ghana-launch-five-year-laudato-si-program-to-prepare-for-the-future>
13. Catholic youth in Ghana embark on clean-up campaign
14. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/africa/news/2024-02/ghana-s-young-people-to-observe-lent-through-environmental-stewa.html>
15. Qur'an: 30: 41(corruption), 7:31(eat and drink but waste not by excess)
16. Hadiths: Musnad hadith number 415 (planting), al- Bukhari hadith number 2320 (acts of charity), Ibn. Maajah hadith number 419 (water conservation)
17. Mishkat al-Masabih, chapter 7, 8:178 (respect for all creatures).

## References

- Africa, G. B. (2018, November 1). *Tanoboase Sacred Groove*. Retrieved from Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/blackstarofafrica/posts/tano-boase-sacred-grove-menstruation-is-not-allowed-women-are-not-allowed-to-visit/298834014058332/>
- Atigah (2015), Unpublished thesis, on Biomedical Solid Waste Management in TaMA for an award of MSc. Environmental Science Policy and Management, submitted to Institute of Local Government Studies (affiliated to Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology), for the award of an MSc. Environmental Science, Policy and Management.
- Mbiti, J. S. (1970). African religions and philosophy. Heinemann.
- Idowu, E. B. (1973). African traditional religion: A definition. Orbis Books.
- Bujo, B. (1998). The ethical dimension of community: The African model. Paulines Publications Africa.
- Nyamiti, C. (1996). Christ as our ancestor: Christology from an African perspective. Mambo Press.
- Kunene, M. (2017). African indigenous religion and the environment. *Journal of Black Theology*, 25(1), 53-66.

- Moyo, A. (2018). Environmental ethics in African indigenous religion. *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, 40(2), 147-162.
- Orobator, S. E. (2015). The environment in African indigenous religion. *Journal of Religion and Ecology*, 22(1), 1-15.
- Magesa, L. (2017). African indigenous religion and environmental sustainability. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Religion and Environmental Sustainability* (pp. 123-135).
- Njoroge, L. (2019). Environmental values in African indigenous religion: A case study of the Kikuyu people (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi).

## Glossary

### WORDS

### MEANING

<b>Advocacy:</b>	Active support of an idea
<b>Aesthetic:</b>	It is the appreciation or enjoyment of beauty, taste, or artistic quality. In the context of environmental conservation, aesthetic values relate to the visual or sensory appeal of natural landscapes, ecosystems, or habitats.
<b>Bacteria Mitigation:</b>	The actions taken to reduce the severity or impact of something, often in the context of environmental conservation. Mitigation strategies aim to minimize harm or damage
<b>Biodiversity or biological diversity:</b>	Refers to the variety of different species of plants, animals, and microorganisms that live in an ecosystem or on Earth as a whole. Biodiversity includes:
<b>Communalism:</b>	Working together for the common good.
<b>Conservation:</b>	Management of the environment and of natural resources
<b>Ecosystem:</b>	is a community of living organisms (plants, animals, microorganisms) and non-living components (air, water, soil, sunlight) that interact and exchange materials in a specific environment.
<b>Encyclical:</b>	It is an official letter from the leader of the Catholic church.
<b>Extravagance:</b>	Wasteful
<b>Habitation:</b>	The act of living or dwelling in a particular place or environment.
<b>Hadith sahih:</b>	Authentic hadith or sound hadith or a saying or action attributed to the prophet Muhammad that meets the standards of authenticity set by Muslim scholars.

<b>Interdependence:</b>	The state of being dependent on each other, where the well-being, survival, or success of one entity is linked to the well-being, survival, or success of another entity. In the context of microorganisms, ecosystems, and habitation, interdependence highlights the complex relationships and mutual reliance between these components.
<b>Microorganisms (microbes):</b>	are tiny living organisms that are too small to be seen with the naked eye.
<b>Preservation:</b>	Protecting something from loss or danger.
<b>Prudence:</b>	Caution
<b>Reciprocity:</b>	Giving back to nature.
<b>Stewardship:</b>	Caretaker
<b>Symbiotic:</b>	A close, often long-term relationship between different species, in which one or both species benefit. Symbiotic relationships can be: Mutualistic (both species benefit), Commensal (one species benefits, the other is unaffected), Parasitic (one species benefits, the other is harmed)
<b>Tendaana:</b>	Earth priest/ custodian of the earth
<b>Trusteeship:</b>	Caring for the earth.
<b>Vicegerent:</b>	Deputy or someone appointed by a ruler as an administrative deputy.

## Acknowledgements



Ghana Education  
Service (GES)



## List of Contributors

Name	Institution
Kyei Addai Daniel	Fumbisi SHS, Upper East Region
Emmelia Sablah	Pope John SHS, Koforidua
Clement Nsorwineh Atigah	Tamale SHS, Tamale
Abdul-Rahaman Abdul-Wahab	Gambaga Girls SHS
Joseph Abass	Okuapeman SHS, Akropong