

**PROGRAM FRAMEWORK
AND
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

Eco Churches - Portugal

Based on the "A ROCHA" Sustainability Indicators

Diagnosis support program, continuous improvement plan and
communication of the sustainability of Christian communities

FRAMEWORK OF THE PARTNERSHIP IN THE SCOPE OF THE ECO PROGRAM

CHURCHES PORTUGAL

1 - General framework and presentation of the Eco Churches program – Portugal

The Eco Churches Portugal program is led by a Non-Governmental Organization of Environment call - ROCHA – The ROCK - and its partners are the Portuguese Evangelical Alliance; COPIC (Council Portuguese of Christian Churches), the NETWORK Caring for the Common Home and the Portuguese Roman Catholic Episcopal Conference (PRCEC).

This program has the following general objectives:

- To promote the ethics of sustainability, as we found in the eco-theological principles of Christianity, and in the concrete practice of Christian communities;
- Provide adequate training in terms of biblical and theological foundations, in particular with the young generations, in order to commit factual creation safeguarding;
- Share examples of good practice that can be taken into account in decision-making turned towards ecological sustainability of Christian communities;
- Facilitate access to the opinion of experts on ecological transition who make Factual recommendations within the framework of a sustainable and integral ecology;
- Promote in Portugal communication of the sustainability of Christian communities, places of worship and equipment;
- Create large-scale positive environmental impacts, not just through the participation of internal audiences of Christian communities, but also of the general public, in concrete actions that can be environmental measurable;
- Contribute to changing lifestyles in line with a sustainable and integral ecology.

The Eco Churches Portugal program is based on the introduction of the Sustainability Indicators that comes from “A ROCHA” and in the Portuguese context. These indicators constitutes a diagnostic tool, environmental education and management/continuous improvement and communication of ecological sustainability of Christian communities. They were originally developed and implemented in the UK, for more than five years, but they have been used in other countries, such as in France at the “*Église Verte*” – Green Church - project, for which they have had a strong support from local Churches (with more than 550 communities with a “green seal”) and presenting positive environmental impacts. The availability of indicators in the Portuguese context still requires a work that allows its measurement and adaptation to the respective Christian communities, as well as the organization of an experts team to closely monitor its use.

It is still necessary to develop the task of communicating the indicators, not only for the accession of Christian communities to eco-certification, as well as for the dissemination of sustainability environmental impact of Christian communities in Portugal.

The relevance of developing the program in Portugal at this time is linked to the fact that there are already some faith communities adopting the practices operationalized in the multidimensionality of A ROCHA sustainability indicators, even the most demanding from the point of view of the involvement of human and financial resources. Its expected this to contribute to the visibility of the communities that already adopt these environmental practices, motivating them for continuous improvement. We also consider that this visibility and prominence may promote social mimesis among the Christian communities and other communities regarding to such environmental practices. Therefore, one of this purposes logics its focuses on the ethics of example, within the necessary coherence between the defense of theological and philosophical principles (ethics of principles) and the factual practice of the communities. Ecological conversion is not just about a way of thinking, but also by a way of acting.

Another of the logics of this proposal is its participatory nature, in a work and meditation/reflection groups, between various Christian communities, assuming the field of integral ecology as a path of common witness. Thus, mediation/reflections, and appeals coming from multiple quadrants, from the World Council of Churches, to Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, with the proposal of the *"Time of Creation"*, to the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, or to the Lausanne Movement and the World Evangelical Alliance with the Consultation Global Care with Creation (Jamaica, 2012), which by its turn develops the Cape Town Commitment (2010), or also to Pope Francis, with the vehement affirmation of the urgency of integral ecology (*"Laudato Si'*, May 2015) and the construction of a new fraternity (Fratelli tutti, October 2020). The world and European ecumenical assemblies have gone in the same direction since 1974 in Bucharest (CEC, Church and Society Com.), WCC. in Seoul 1990 (which launched the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation program), Basel (1989, with Protestants, Roman Catholics and Orthodox) have emphasized the centrality of the theme of respect and care for creation with the dimensions of justice and peace, the same, coming expressed in the commitments and challenges of the Charta Oecumenica, 2001.

The already extensive biblical-theological studies developed in this context, has contributed to overcome limited or even wrong views of Christian doctrines about Creation, which were often a pretext to sustain the irrational and selfish domination of human beings over nature, feeding social representations (worldviews) that have contributed to the ecological environment crisis in which we find ourselves.

Although a certain trend in the era of modernity and postmodernity continues to insist in a direction of the sense of the marginalization of religions from the sphere of public life, today there is also a growing awareness of the importance of the religions involvement in social and environmental problems, recognizing the dialogue between faith and interreligious cooperation as an opportunity to bring back and consolidate the ethical values that contributes to recreate new conceptions of the human being in a sustainable, peaceful and righteous universe.

Indeed, the relevance of working directly with faith communities for protection has been highlighted by institutions such as the United Nations or the Bank World, which clearly state the importance of networks between the civil institutions of society (we should

mention one of the partners, A ROCHA, in 1983), as well as the faith organizations, pointing them out as one of the 50 most important actions to save the planet (UNEP, 2016; World Bank, 2006). The importance of this action is linked to the fact that, today, a vast majority of people are members of religious groups, basing their behavior on the values of their respective traditions.

The challenge will therefore be to integrate the concern and care for the common home, in an integral perspective, within the framework of such religious and spiritual principles, in order to lead to a change in behavior and attitudes. Against populism and other types of appropriations and manipulations of environmental concerns, religious traditions can on the contrary, lead to an ethics of care, responsibility and solidarity.

In turn, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in its guidelines contained in the *Faith for Earth* project of the United Nations, it calls for the holistic dimension of sustainability in the places of worship. This means that, in addition to the importance of introducing improvements to the point of view of saving and safeguarding resources and transition to a circular economy in places of worship (temples, monasteries, churches, shrines, community places, farms and reserves, among others), lifestyle guidelines based on values should also be proposed, contained in eco-theological principles and which are transmitted in so many moments as celebration.

Despite the recognition of the potential of eco-theological principles as important catalyzing elements of ecological action, Christian communities have not always obtained good results in their role as witnesses and agents of ecological education. Among the various factors responsible for this difficulty, there is a lack of biblical-theological reflection in the field of eco-theology and its application in the area of life sciences and environment. Another problem identified is the aforementioned inconsistency that sometimes still occurs between these same principles and the factual action of Christian communities.

2. Program implementation

The Eco Churches Portugal program, by integrating an instrument such as the *Indicators of Sustainability ROCHA* allows you to carry out an assessment of the internal organization of the Christian communities in a perspective of continuous improvement. The use of performance indicators is current practice in modern environmental management systems, including often dimensions of quality, environment and society. Indicators allow access to the state and evolution of organizations performance, being an essential tool for continuous improvement and facilitators of clear and synthetic communication, within and outside the organization, about achieved the performance.

Although this set of indicators has as its main goal the internal evaluation in a continuous improvement perspective, it will also contribute to the measurement and accreditation of the sustainability of Christian communities by society at large. So, although ecological accreditation can become available to a wider audience, the main goal in a first moment is to

constitute a tool a management and ecological education tool for Christian communities.

The proposed tool has the advantage of providing Christian communities with a checklist of good practices in several dimensions, as follows:

- celebration and formation;
- building management;
- management of other properties;
- community and global involvement;
- lifestyles

As the designations indicate, direct measurement environmental criteria are included, such as those that are used for the adaptation of buildings, and of indirect measurement, such as the social indicators of sustainability (for example, criteria for choosing suppliers aligned with the principles of fair trade and authenticity, protection of natural values and heritage, sociocultural authenticity, effectively sustainable exploitation of resources).

A decisive step in the adaptation of the A ROCHA Sustainability Indicators and its resources (the good practice checklist converted to a 5-point scale) is the selection of items to ensure the reliability or internal consistency of the indicators, but also the its validity. Validity is related to the methodology for its aggregation. The achieved results through the indicators should allow a clear enough characterization of the organization to, either make informed decisions or to proceed to intra - and inter-organization/dioceses/country comparisons.

It is intended that the methodology allows, in a transparent and traceable way, to implement a eco-certification system of Christian communities and, at the same time, promote the practice of communicating the achieved indicators, both in synchronic terms (according to the various subtopics) and diachronic terms (evolution of community practices over time). As a horizon, it is intended that such results can be made available through a web application.

3. Program impact indicators

There are multiple possible impact indicators for this program, which, by nature, has a

integral ecological scope, touching different dimensions, here indicated only as a indicative title:

- Environmental impact – incentive to decarbonization, circular and efficient economy.
- Social impact – support for the most vulnerable, combating poverty and inequalities social, welcoming and integrating ethnic minorities and migrants and consolidating of faith communities committed to build a more just and fraternal world.
- Economic impact – improve the balance of accounts of Christian communities and increase the retention of economic earnings for the local economy.
- Cultural impact - changing lifestyles supported by new ways of living and transform the world, and to safeguard and enhance the material heritage and immaterial.

4. Program recipients

This Program presents itself as a collaboration platform in order to ecological conversion and eco-certification of Christian communities in Portugal, therefore open to plurality of Christian expressions present in the national territory.

This fact does not prevent, but sustains and implies a dialogue with civil society, both at the level of other religious traditions, as with people and institutions interested and committed to same care with the common house and with the transformation of values and behaviors.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

This memo is intended to facilitate good understanding and commitment between the parts for collaboration in the actions that lead to the development and implementation of the Program and is ruled by the following clauses:

CLAUSE ONE (Scope)

This "Memorandum of Understanding" formalizes the commitment and lays the foundation for the collaboration of implementing entities, hereinafter referred to as "Partners", within the scope of the Eco Churches Portugal program.

SECOND CLAUSE (Partners)

The Partners of this "Memorandum of Understanding" are as follows:

A ROCHA – Christian Association for the Study and Defense of the Environment,

headquartered in Cruzinha –Apartado 41, 8501-903 Mexilhoeira Grande, legal person no. 503177440, legally represented by Maria da Conceição Braga de Almeida Santos, as President Management, which is designated as **Partner Entity 1**;

Aliança Evangélica Portuguesa (AEP), headquartered at Avenida Conselheiro Barjona de Freitas 16B, 1500-204 Lisbon, legal person No. 592 000 834, legally represented by António Francisco Lopes e Calaim, as Chairman of the Board, to which he is assigned the designation of **Partner Entity 2**;

The Portuguese Council of Christian Churches (COPIC), headquartered in Rua Afonso de Albuquerque nº 86, 4430-003 Vila Nova de Gaia, legal person nº 500 878 935, legally represented by José Jorge Tavares de Pina Cabral, as Chairman of the Board, to which the designation of **Partner Entity 3**;

THE NETWORK Taking care of the Common House, legally represented by Rita Maria Pardal Monteiro Coelho Beirão da Veiga, as Coordinator of the Executive Committee, to which he is assigned the designation of **Partner Entity 4**;

THE PORTUGUESE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE (CEP), headquartered at Quinta do Bom Pastor, Estrada da Buraca, 8-12, 1549-025 Lisbon, legal person no. 500939500, legally represented by José Ornelas Carvalho, Bishop of Setúbal, as President of the CEP, which is assigned the designation of **Partner Entity 5**.

THIRD CLAUSE (Goals)

The Partners of this "Memorandum of Understanding" undertake to submit all efforts to jointly pursue the following objectives:

- Promote the ethics of sustainability, contained in the ecological principles of Christianity, in the concrete practice of Christian communities;
- Provide adequate training in terms of biblical foundations and theological aspects, in particular within the younger generations, in order to commit concrete in safeguarding creation;
- Share examples of good practice that can be taken into account in decision making oriented towards the ecological sustainability of Christian communities;
- Facilitate access to the opinion of experts on ecological transition who make concrete recommendations within the framework of a sustainable and integral ecology;
- Promote communication of the sustainability of Christian communities, places of worship and equipments in Portugal;
- Create large-scale positive environmental impacts, not just through the participation inside the Christian communities, but also for the general public in concrete and measurable environmental actions;
- Contribute to changing lifestyles in line with a sustainable and integral ecology.

Thus, they assume this dimension of care for the common house as a fundamental element and structure in its own identity and mission, as well as a path to a common and most credible witness of the Gospel.

FOURTH CLAUSE

(Projects, Applications and other concrete actions)

In order to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the partners undertake to develop several projects, applications and other actions, which may imply the writing of addenda or other more specific documents, always framed and celebrated in light of the this Memorandum. These will describe the concrete commitments

assumed by each partner, as well as the coordination and management structure to be adopted in each case.

FIFTH CLAUSE (Revision)

The review of this "Memorandum of Understanding" must take place in case of departure or entry of new partners or when it is considered necessary to carry out a possible review of what is stipulated in it.

SIXTH CLAUSE (Validity)

This "Memorandum of Understanding" takes effect upon signature by the representatives of the Partners and will remain in force indefinitely, until the majority of the partners understand to review or terminate it.

Lisbon, June 12, 2021

A ROCHA Portugal

Maria da Conceição Braga de Almeida Santos

Signature: _____

Portuguese Evangelical Alliance - AEP

António Francisco Lopes e Calaim

Signature: _____

Portuguese Council of Christian Churches - COPIC

José Jorge Tavares de Pina Cabral

Signature: _____

REDE Cuidar da casa Comum

Rita Maria Pardal Monteiro Coelho Beirão da Veiga

Signature: _____

A CONFERENCIA EPISCOPAL PORTUGUESA

José Ornelas Carvalho

Signature: _____