



Water Schools Program



Faith schools around the world participating successfully in water and sanitation programs

What is the Water Schools programme?

Water Schools was launched in early 2010 following the success of the first International Faith in Water Workshop in July 2009. It was jointly organised by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), the Ecological Management Foundation (EMF) and the International Water & Sanitation Centre (IRC).

This event brought together for the first time key faith school networks, secular bodies, entrepreneurs and innovators. UNICEF, the UN, the World Bank and DfID were represented at the Faith and Water Workshop.

Why work with the faiths?

85% of the global population claims to belong to one of the major religions. More than 50% of schools are faith-based, and the percentage is higher in the developing world. Not only do most faiths have strong social outreach programmes, but they also celebrate water as sacred through rituals and ceremonies, often representing new beginnings and rebirth. So they have a deep understanding of the significance of water. Therefore, Water Schools aims to link the faiths with organizations that can facilitate access to water and sanitation solutions as well as develop water/environmental educational programmes for teachers and pupils.

Water Schools works with the faiths, secular bodies and innovators to promote water and education issues such as WASH in faith schools, particularly in developing countries.

Plans

A major focus is on the role of faith-run schools in Sub-Saharan Africa and their situation as the faiths' main instruments for implementing environmental programmes encompassing water issues. These range from protection of watersheds through tree planting, sustainable agriculture on school/church/mosque lands and appropriate water technology

especially grey water use, to specific sanitation issues. These initiatives will be developed by 24 faith traditions across Sub-Saharan Africa including Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. They will be launched in Summer 2012.

Why faith schools?

- Faiths run hundreds of thousands of schools around the world.
- Good facilities and good practices in schools can reach many children at ages where they can internalize the habits they learn, leading to cleaner, healthier lives and a reversal of environmental destruction
- in almost all cultures schools, teachers, and religious institutions are respected, bringing trusted knowledge, values, and skills to the children, their families, and their communities.
- Many faiths run informal education networks such as youth groups where information and experience can be exchanged

ARC and EMF

The ultimate goal of this project is twofold: to help the faith schools to address provision of fresh, clean water for all (and especially sanitary) needs, and to raise awareness of water and wider environmental issues through the network of faith schools and their educational programmes.

To this end, ARC will develop the project and consult its network of the faiths. EMF on the other hand functions as an independent consultant that, together with its partners, provides expert advice on water treatment technologies most appropriate in each situation.

Akvo

One of EMF's partners in the project is Akvo, an online communication platform bringing together donors and incubators of water projects. The Water Schools that will be set up eventually will all receive their own webpage on www.akvo.org, on which their progress will be broadcast. Moreover, Akvo's online encyclopedia Akvopedia, will provide information on the different water treatment technologies available, to which ARC in turn has access as well.