



**LEAVES, A Newsletter of the
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International Environment Forum A Baha'i inspired organization addressing
the environment and sustainable development

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From the Editor, Request for information for upcoming newsletters

This newsletter is an opportunity for IEF members to share their experiences, activities, and initiatives that are taking place at the community level on environment, climate change and sustainability. All members are welcome to contribute information about related activities, upcoming conferences, news from like-minded organizations, recommended websites, book reviews, etc. Please send information to newsletter@ief.org

Please share the *Leaves* newsletter and IEF membership information with family, friends, and associates and encourage interested persons to consider becoming a member of the IEF.

Ian Hamilton joins IEF board

The IEF Governing Board is pleased to announce that Ian Hamilton, the new Representative for Sustainable Development in the U.S. Baha'i Office of Public Affairs, has agreed to contribute his expertise to IEF as a co-opted member of the Governing Board. Co-opted members are invited to join in the work of the board to contribute a particular perspective or diversity of opinion that the board feels it needs, without the right to vote that is the prerogative of elected members of the board. This will extend the close working relationship between the Office of Public Affairs and the IEF that has been so fruitful in the past. For example, it was through this link that IEF members were officially accredited to COP21 in Paris last December.

Ian has a Master of Science in Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility (2010), and has been Program Manager at the College of Energy, Environment and Sustainability. Most recently he has been a consultant to the African Development Bank, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and to the Climate Investment Funds of the World Bank.

Peter Adriance, who has just retired from the U.S. Office of Public Affairs after many years of devoted service, will obviously continue as an elected member of the IEF Governing Board.

Values-based Education for Environment and Sustainable Development

IEF President Arthur Dahl has published on the IEF web site (<http://iefworld.org/ddahl16a>) a paper on "Values-based education for environment and sustainable development" based on a briefing paper he recently prepared for the United Nations Environment Programme. This builds on the work that has come out of the IEF collaboration with PERL, the Partnership for Education and Research about Responsible Living, and explores the role of values-based education in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Upcoming IEF Conference in South America

The next International Environment Forum Annual Conference and General Assembly will be held at Nur University in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, on 7-9 October 2016, the week before the dedication of the Bahá'í House of Worship for South America in Santiago, Chile, on 13-16 October, and the Habitat III Conference in Quito, Ecuador, on 17-20 October. For those hoping to combine participation in the IEF Conference with attendance at the dedication ceremony in Santiago, pre-registration for the latter is now open (<http://dedicaciontemplo.bahai.cl/incriccion-2/#1>) with a deadline of 15 May. Participation from outside South America will be limited, so early pre-registration is necessary and should be done immediately. Those whose registrations are accepted will be advised by 15 May so that they can plan their travel accordingly.

The programme for the IEF conference is still being planned, but will probably focus on implementation of some of the relevant Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America, including in particular responsible and sustainable lifestyles, values and education, and sustainable urban communities.

U.S. Faith Climate Action Week 15-24 April

In the United States, people of many faiths, including the Baha'i community, will be celebrating **Faith Climate Action Week** on 15-24 April 2016 to coincide with Earth Week, including Earth Day on 22 April. Activities are being organized by Interfaith Power and Light, which in previous years held a Preach-In on Global Warming in February. This will be an annual interfaith event aiming to create greater awareness of the changing climate, the challenges it presents, and solutions.

Baha'i communities in America have actively support this event, and this year the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States has again written to all Baha'i communities encouraging them to participate. The following are excerpts from their letter of 2 March 2016:

"A little over two months ago, in a suburb of Paris, a highly significant event focused on climate change was taking place as the year rapidly drew to a close. Styled COP21 (short for the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change), the event drew to the famed City of Light more than 150 heads of state, some 30,000 representatives of governments, international organizations, civil society, and business—and the news media.

"In partnership with the Bahá'í International Community (BIC) and the International Environment Forum (a Bahá'í-inspired organization), this Assembly sent a small delegation to COP21. A statement — [Shared Vision, Shared Volition: Choosing our Global Future Together](#)—was prepared and circulated by the BIC. Bahá'í participants also organized or co-sponsored five panel discussions on a wide range of related topics. The discussions presented positive examples of how spiritual qualities such as justice, trustworthiness, accountability, and unity can be brought to bear on the problem of climate change.

"After two weeks of negotiations, the 195 states participating in COP21 adopted by consensus the historic Paris Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to a safe level, setting themselves and much of the world on a common pathway to clean energy.

While the Paris Agreement represents a landmark achievement in international cooperation, the challenges of implementing it are formidable and are not only practical but spiritual in nature. Faith communities will continue to play an important part in this work by highlighting the moral and ethical principles supporting action on climate change, and by taking practical steps to alter their own impact on climate.

"In recent years, Bahá'í communities across the country have participated in the annual Preach-in on Global Warming organized by Interfaith Power and Light. This year, the Preach-in has been scheduled to coincide with Earth Week, April 15–24, and has been renamed "Faith Climate Action Week." Planners envision it as an occasion for getting outside, celebrating the splendors of our natural world, engaging in acts of service benefitting the environment—tree planting and park clean-ups, for example—and taking steps to reduce wasteful energy-use habits. It will also be an occasion for finding the spiritual dimension of efforts to ensure the earth remains—for present and future generations—a beautiful, livable planet with abundant, clean, and healthful natural resources. We encourage you to join with other people of faith in this endeavor...."

The U.S. Baha'i Office of Public Affairs provides a [Climate and Sustainability Resources](#) page to assist communities with their activities, and the IEF web site is listed as another resource to consult. Perhaps other communities will be inspired by this to partner with different faiths in raising awareness about the need to be coherent with our ethical principles and act rapidly on climate change.

AIESEC Global Leaders Summit

Marrakech, Morocco, 13-17 February 2016

On 13-17 February, IEF President Arthur Dahl was invited by AIESEC, the world's largest student-run organization with about 43,000 members in 120 countries, to participate in their **Global Leaders Summit 2016** in Marrakech, Morocco. IEF's partner Baha'i-inspired organization, ebbf - Ethical Business Building the Future, of which Arthur is also a board member, has collaborated with AIESEC for 20 years, and he has often spoken as a representative of ebbf at AIESEC conferences. There were two meetings as part of the summit, the International Presidents Meeting (IPM) and the Global YouthSpeak Forum which was dedicated to the Sustainable Development Goals.

AIESEC International Presidents Meeting

The International Presidents Meeting brings together the presidents of each of the 120 national committees to elect the new International President of AIESEC. The organization is unique in that every position of responsibility rotates every year, so no one holds on to power, yet it has maintained its culture of working for peace and international understanding since 1948. Success comes from carrying out a leadership responsibility for one year, and then passing it on to a successor. It is possible to rise through the organization, say from a vice-president to president, and from a local committee to a national committee to the international team based in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, but no one stays more than 5-6 years. AIESECers also go on exchanges around the world, so that the president, say, of the Mexican national committee becomes president in the Seychelles the next year to help build the organization there. Six of the candidates were vice-presidents in the international team. The organization builds leadership skills and an international perspective, and those that come to the International Presidents Meeting are a remarkable and diverse group of talented leaders. Arthur was asked to moderate a 90 minute panel of the seven candidates for International President to explore their knowledge of international issues and global priorities before the election.

Global YouthSpeak Forum

AIESEC has undertaken a global YouthSpeak Survey of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that Millennials care about the most, and is reassessing its entire programme of activities and exchanges to ensure that they are coherent with and support the SDGs. It therefore organized a Global YouthSpeak Forum as part of its Global Leaders Summit on the topic: **"Mobilizing Young People to Achieve the SDGs: Aligning AIESEC's Projects to the SDGs"** for a day and a half in the middle of the summit.



ebbf was featured as a Global Partner in the conference.

After a video message from UN Youth Envoy Ahmad Alhendawi, Arthur gave the opening keynote on "Mobilizing to Achieve the SDGs: A Challenge for AIESEC", in which he described the steps leading up to the SDGs, including the participation of IEF and ebbf in the UN processes, and underlined the opportunities that the SDGs represent for young people. He emphasized the importance of values in making career choices.

There were workshops on "Entrepreneurship & Innovation" by IE Business School, "Sustainable Cities & Environment" by UN Habitat, "Impact of Global & Local Media" by Al Jazeera Media Network, and "Education" by ebbf. After some other keynotes, further workshops considered case studies in project management, and participation in action spaces to design projects. The forum closed with the launching of "Youth 4 Global Goals" with the participation of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), UN Habitat and PVBLC Foundation.

There were many opportunities to discuss individually with participants, and a number came to Arthur for advice on their projects and their future careers. For AIESECers, it is always a challenge to find a continuing ethical motivation "after AIESEC" and over the years a number have joined ebbf.

For more pictures, go to http://yabaha.net/dahl/travel/t2016/AIESEC_Morocco/AIESEC.html

Indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals approved by UN Statistical Commission

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=53429#.VuVu2BiisXw>

The United Nations Statistical Commission today agreed on a set of global indicators that will measure success towards the new sustainable development agenda, which will lead anti-poverty efforts through 2030.

On the last day of its 47th session, the Commission approved a draft global indicator framework intended for a global follow-up and review of the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#).

“Completing the indicator framework is of course not the end of the story – on the contrary, it is the beginning,” said Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Wu Hongbo, in remarks delivered by Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development Lenni Montiel.

According to a news release, the set of 230 global indicators proposed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG indicators (IAEG-SDGs) is “a robust framework intended for follow-up and review of progress at the global level towards achieving the 17 SDGs.”

The framework is not meant to track success at regional and national levels, which will depend on the realities on the ground for each country. National and thematic reviews of the 2030 Agenda’s implementation will be reviewed by the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development starting in July.

“The SDG indicators will require an unprecedented amount of data to be produced and analysed – and it is evident that this will pose a significant challenge for national statistical systems, in developing as well as developed countries,” underscored Mr. Wu.

The initial global indicator framework will next be submitted to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the General Assembly for adoption.

"Implementing Human Rights Obligations Relating to the Environment" side event at UN Human Rights Council session

Among the many side events at the 31st session of the UN Human Rights Council, meeting in Geneva this month, the Geneva Environment Network (of which the IEF is a member), UNEP and several governments co-organized a side event on "Implementing Human Rights Obligations Relating to the Environment". The featured speaker was the Special Rapporteur on human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, Mr. John Knox.

The side-event discussed the Special Rapporteur’s report (A/HRC/31/53) on implementing human rights obligations relating to the environment which describes possible methods of implementing human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a healthy environment. The proposals are addressed to: (a) the Human Rights Council and other international organizations; (b) regional human rights bodies and other regional organizations; (c) national governments; (d) civil society organizations; and (e) the Special Rapporteur himself.

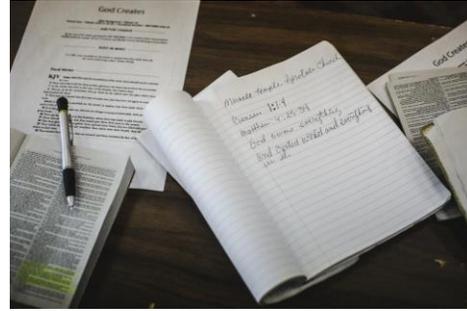
He noted that the implementation of human rights norms relating to the environment is even more difficult than their conceptualization. After many consultations with different stakeholders, he issued a mapping report and a good practices report. Last year, the Human Rights Council renewed his mandate for another three years, upgraded his title from Independent Expert to Special Rapporteur, with additional responsibilities, namely promoting the implementation of and compliance with those human rights norms relating to the environment which are already delineated clearly enough.

For a complete report on the meeting, see the Geneva Environment Network web site: <http://www.genevaenvironmentnetwork.org/?q=en/events/implementing-human-rights-obligations-relating-environment>

An Evangelical Movement Takes On Climate Change



Pope Francis arrives at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception to celebrate a Mass for a crowd of 25,000 people on September 15, 2015, Washington D.C. JUAN HERRERO



Material from one of the bible class students of Pastor Charlotte Keys lies on a table on October 11, 2015, Hattiesburg, Mississippi. One of the biggest challenges for religious environmentalists is convincing those who tend to make faith-based decisions to fully embrace the reality of global warming. JUAN HERRERO

March 9, 2016 By Tik Root Newsweek
<http://www.newsweek.com/2016/03/18/creation-care-evangelical-christianity-climate-change-434865.html>

John Muir was a fervent believer. Not just in science or conservation or the National Park Service, which he championed. The founder of the Sierra Club and father of American environmentalism also believed in God. “The forests of America, however slighted by man, must have been a great delight to God,” Muir wrote in his 1897 essay “The American Forests.” “[For centuries] God has cared for these trees, saved them from drought, disease, avalanches, and a thousand straining, leveling tempests and floods; but he cannot save them from fools.”

This sort of religious language was “very much present in early conservation movements,” says Evan Berry, an associate professor at American University and author of *Devoted to Nature: The Religious Roots of American Environmentalism*. George Bird Grinnell, founder of the Audubon Society, also invoked faith, and many of the environmentalist leaders in the late 19th and early 20th century were Congregationalists, a traditional Protestant sect, says Berry.

But then God abandoned the forest. During the Great Depression and two world wars, environmentalism took a backseat to what felt like more pressing issues, only to re-emerge in the 1960s in more secular forms, like Rachel Carson’s book *Silent Spring*. The new wave, Berry says, “wanted to build practical, policy-driven solutions to environmental problems without getting caught up in the messiness of religious ethics.”

For years, conservationist and faith-based views on the environment progressed on separate tracks, but

in 1986 Prince Philip, then president of the World Wildlife Fund, organized a summit where leaders of the five major world religions—Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism—discussed how their faiths could help save the natural world. By the 1990s, religious groups such as the World Council of Churches were participating in international climate debates and conferences.

In the late 1990s, the Evangelical Environmental Network helped shepherd the Endangered Species Act through Congress, characterizing it to *The New York Times* as the “Noah’s ark of our day.” In 2002, the network launched a headline-grabbing “What Would Jesus Drive?” campaign to call attention to fuel efficiency. In 2006, the group organized the Evangelical Climate Initiative, which released a statement making a moral argument for climate action. Dozens of evangelical leaders signed, including Rick Warren, Leith Anderson and Joel Hunter, whose megachurches have tens of thousands of members. Meanwhile, the Regeneration Project’s “Interfaith Power and Light” campaign, which launched in 2000 as “a religious response to global warming,” rapidly expanded its membership. According to the campaign’s president, the Reverend Sally Bingham, the organization comprised 14 congregations in California in 2001; today, it is in 40 states and includes some 18,000 congregations.

The interfaith section of the 2014 People’s Climate March in New York City saw thousands of people from more than 30 faiths—Baptist, Zoroastrian and everything in between—rally for climate action. The *World Council of Churches*, representing hundreds of millions of Christians, has committed to divesting its multimillion-dollar endowment from fossil fuels. At December’s historic climate summit in Paris, there were morning worship groups, Vatican negotiators and an exhibit at

Notre-Dame Cathedral called “Ode to God's Creation.” “None of this was really on the horizon 20 years ago,” says Mary Evelyn Tucker, co-director of the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University. “There has been an explosion.”

Still, America's attitude toward climate change continues to be characterized by apathy. According to a [2014 Gallup poll](#), Americans rank the environment and climate change near the bottom of their priority list; putting the concerns at 13th and 14th (out of 15), respectively. By comparison, a [September CBC poll](#) showed that Canadians rank the environment second (out of 13) on their list of most important issues, ahead of education, jobs and foreign policy. And caring in the U.S. breaks along political lines. A 2014 Public Religion Research Institute poll shows that while 65 percent of Democrats believe climate change is manmade, only 22 percent of Republicans do.

As faith-based environmental activism—“creation care,” as many call it—continues to grow, it hopes to help America break through some of these barriers. Whether that means reaching conservative politicians through faith or prompting action from the pews, the idea is that religion can move those unconvinced by the science.

Blown Off the Commode

On February 23, 1980, at age 16, Charlotte Keys was born again. “It gave me the strength and the ability not to have fear,” she says of her Pentecostal faith. It also led her to see homosexuality as a sin, evolution as dubious and abortion as violating the sanctity of human life. That's the word of God. And for the same reason, she's an environmentalist.

Keys found her calling about a decade later. She was working in the county clerk's office, where she came across documents detailing a chemical spill in the Web Quarter neighborhood of Columbia, Mississippi, where she grew up. “When I discovered that we had a lot of health problems going on, the Lord just moved in my spirit,” says Keys. “God's people don't deserve this.”

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the Reichhold chemical plant was home to turpentine, diesel, the now-restricted pesticide pentachlorophenol and countless other chemicals. In March 1977, it exploded, and the Web Quarter took a direct hit. One local recalls her neighbor across the street being blown off the “commode.” Residents say chemicals seeped down the runoff ditches and into the ground, and for years the grass would spontaneously burst into flames. The EPA declared the area a Superfund hazardous waste site. Workers in protective suits cleaned up what they could, and activists say the company disposed of the rest. Although the EPA took the site off its priority list in [2000](#), many in the community believe the Web Quarter remains contaminated. “I'm scared I won't wake

up one morning,” says Mack Oatis, who has lived in the neighborhood most of his life.

Appalled, Keys founded a nonprofit called Jesus People Against Pollution in 1992, and for more than two decades that's been her mission. She calls it her “kingdom assignment” from God. Gradually, her work has grown to include not only the Reichhold spill but also clean air and clean power legislation, issues she collaborates on with organizations such as [WE ACT](#), an environmental group based in Harlem, New York. Still, her main goal is to relocate as many people as possible from the Web Quarter to a small community on the other side of town to be made up of a church, 16 housing units, a snack bar and her own house. With time and financial support from her husband, Willie, she's amassed about 9 acres of land and poured a 1,800-square-foot concrete pad upon which she plans to build the American Temple Apostolic Church.

In the meantime, her ministry is in a small conference room at a Comfort Suites off U.S. Highway 98. It has a lectern that doubles as a pulpit, and there's a continental breakfast in the lobby. “Whoever shows up, shows up,” the Reverend Keys says on her way to service one Sunday. The three rows of tables can get cramped when 15 people come, but sometimes only one or two attend. After a quick stop to pick up one of her congregants, she heads to the hotel.

Once inside the conference room, she passes around a handout with “God creates” at the top. Aside from the one man who came with Keys, there is a couple, Lakeidra and Maurice Keys (no relation), and their four children. To begin the morning, they all join in a rendition of the gospel song “What a Mighty God We Serve,” which is followed by an opening prayer and a bit more singing. Then it is time to focus. “Look at your scripture.” Lakeidra says, separating Kyliah, 7, and his brother, Jyisiah, 5. “Pay attention.” Distractions dealt with, Keys opens to the Book of Genesis. “In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth,” she booms. “But do you think God created this stuff for us to mess it up?” “No,” comes the response in imperfect unison.

Keys is far from the only religious figure fighting for environmental action. The Reverend John Rausch in Kentucky is going after Big Coal. The Reverend Jeffrey Allen is drawing attention to polluting practices such as mountaintop removal in West Virginia. And Katharine Hayhoe, director of the Climate Science Center at Texas Tech University, is breaking the climate activist mold. She used to rely solely on science to make the case for why we need to deal with climate change, but she frequently sensed a disconnect with her Texan audience. Trying a new tact, Hayhoe started to bring her evangelical beliefs into the conversation. Initially, she says, it felt like “pulling down your pants in public,” but she and her pastor husband went on to author the book *A Climate for Change: Global Warming Facts for*

Faith-Based Decisions. The book's creation care message took off and landed her on *Time*'s list of "The 100 Most Influential People" and Showtime's *Years of Living Dangerously*, a program about global warming. "Until we connect all those [scientific] facts to our hearts," says Hayhoe, "we lack the motivation to act."

Momentum for this moral approach to climate action reached new heights when Pope Francis made environmentalism a pillar of his papacy. The effort began with his choice of namesake—Saint Francis of Assisi, who is considered the unofficial patron saint of ecology—and reached a crescendo this past summer with the release of a nearly 200-page encyclical, "Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home." In it, the pontiff argues that we need to accept climate change as real and recognize that if we don't do anything about it, it will soon cause devastation to the poor and disadvantaged across the world. Speaking from the South Lawn of the White House this fall, Francis issued a call to action: "Climate change is a problem which can no longer be left to our future generation. I would like all men and women of goodwill in this great nation to support the efforts of the international community to protect the vulnerable in our world."

It appears his people may be listening. Polling from the Yale Project on Climate Change Communication shows that between March and October the number of American Catholics who say they believe in climate change rose from 64 to 74 percent; the number who say the issue is very or extremely important to them personally jumped from 15 to 23 percent.

Sierra Club Weirdos

Keys remembers the 1990s fondly. She says Jesus People Against Pollution had 500 members, held rallies and marched. Residents remember her coming around and asking them to sign a petition demanding restitution from the chemical company. Decades later, though, many of the houses in the Web Quarter are run-down, and people still complain of a litany of ailments they believe are linked to the chemical plant—from cancer to super-sized mosquitoes. Some direct their frustration at Keys, accusing her of hoarding settlement money or being driven by ego. More often, they're sullenly indifferent. When Keys organized an October community meeting about the Clean Power Plan at a neighborhood church, only a handful of people showed up. One girl, wearing an orange T-shirt that read, "Be the change you wish to see in the world," spent much of the time staring at her phone. Another man fell asleep, snoring.

"It's a process," says Keys, standing on her front porch. "And the process is not easy." She steps inside briefly and comes back out dabbing tears. Having sunk all of her resources into her kingdom assignment, she and her husband live in a double-wide trailer on Friendship Church Road. Its blue paint is peeling, the floor is so swollen with water from a 2014 tornado that the door

doesn't quite shut, and the roof sometimes leaks when it rains. "I never thought in a million years I would be doing what I'm doing and seemingly to be stuck," she says.

Keys's struggles point to some of the hurdles facing the creation care movement. Declining church attendance, for one, has limited the reach of some faith leaders. Perhaps more problematic, however, is that religious donor bases have been historically tied to the fossil fuel industry or the political right—entities hardly eager to finance climate awareness. That often pushes activists toward more secular environmental groups, which in turn can put them in the difficult position of choosing between funding and their beliefs.

"I pray that my faith-based belief doesn't drive help away," says Keys. "To some extent, it may." But for her, separating religion and the environment is impossible. "This earth belongs to the Lord, whether we like it or not," she asserts. Evangelical Environmental Network President Mitch Hescoc is in a similarly sticky situation. "We consider creation care an aspect of the pro-life movement," he says. That's why he steers clear of "the far left" and groups like the Sierra Club, which he calls "a bunch of weirdos."

The problem is that many powerful Christian groups toward the right of the political spectrum are wary of—if not outright hostile to—creation care. "As soon as the [Evangelical Climate Initiative] was launched, a network of Christian right leaders forcefully attacked," writes sociologist Lydia Bean in a paper titled "Spreading the Gospel of Climate Change."

Unlike the Endangered Species Act or "What Would Jesus Drive?" efforts, the creation care push in the mid-2000s both affirmed human-caused climate change and called for federal legislation to lower greenhouse gas emissions. "[This went] directly against the anti-big-government, anti-regulation ideology that keeps the GOP coalition together," says Bean. In the face of stiff resistance, many of the initiative's signatories went quiet, support wilted and progress slowed.

At the center of the backlash to creation care is theology professor Calvin Beisner. He's the founder of the Cornwall Alliance, a nonprofit that argues the evidence for catastrophic anthropogenic climate change is not convincing, that humans hold "godly dominion" over the planet and that free markets are the best engine of ecological stewardship.

Through media campaigns and advocacy—like *Resisting the Green Dragon*, a set of 12 DVDs and a book outlining the "Christian response to radical environmentalism"—Beisner has rallied the Christian right. By making creation care controversial, he's been able to keep risk-averse evangelical leaders away and undoubtedly made it easier for establishment GOP

politicians—such as Jeb Bush—to stand against it as well. “I don’t get economic policy from my bishops or my cardinals or my pope,” said the former presidential candidate, one of many Republicans who have dismissed the “Laudato Si” encyclical.

Nevertheless, creation care appears to be adapting and growing. After the Evangelical Climate Initiative stumbled, leaders of the campaign realized they needed widespread, on-the-ground support. “We did not have a strong grassroots movement,” says Hescoc. The group, he says, has since increased outreach efforts and grown from about 15,000 people to over 800,000 in the past six years. The aim is to reach 3 million within the next two.

If that’s to happen, certain demographics will likely be key. Public Religion Research Institute polling found, for example, that Hispanic Catholics are much more likely to agree that global temperatures are rising primarily as a result of human activity than their white counterparts (61 versus 40 percent). The creation care message is also much more likely to resonate with younger Christians. “We are willing to vote for people who are willing to take action on climate,” says Rachel Lamb, 26, the spokeswoman for Young Evangelicals for Climate Action, a nonprofit focused on mobilizing evangelicals under 30. They have people on the ground in roughly a dozen states, with a focus on conservative swing districts. By starting from a Christian foundation, Lamb says, the organization is able to visit campuses (like Oral Roberts University in Oklahoma) unlikely to host traditional environmental groups. If they can get Christian youth on the side of environmentalism, then it won’t be long before religious and conservative leaders have no choice but to listen.

That Triggering Moment

It was a youth group that convinced former Senator Bob Inglis to shift his stance on climate change: his kids. When they reached voting age, they asked the South Carolina Republican to reconsider the issue. Driven by science and faith, Inglis has gone on to propose conservative solutions—like pairing carbon pricing with tax cuts—that led *Slate* to dub him “America’s best hope for near-term climate action.” “We are now stewards in this wonderful creation,” he said in an interview with the Evangelical Environmental Network. “Part of being faithful, it seems to me, is coming up with a way so that our society can really respond to this challenge of energy and climate.”

Reverend Gerald Durley is another creation care convert. The retired pastor at Atlanta’s Providence Missionary Baptist Church once scoffed at the idea of prioritizing polar bears,” preferring to emphasize topics such as racial justice or health. Then, in the mid-2000s, he saw a screening of *The Great Warming*, a

documentary that used both science and evangelical thinking to talk about the dangers of global warming. “After that, I began to connect the dots,” Durley says. He now believes climate change is one of the most urgent issues he can address from the pulpit.

“This will be the civil rights issue of our time,” says Durley, an International Civil Rights Walk of Fame inductee who marched alongside Martin Luther King Jr. He points out that in the 1950s and ’60s “there were hardcore skeptics who said, ‘You’ll never vote’”—that African-Americans might march but would never make it to the polls. Durley says faith was integral in proving that prediction wrong, and the lesson still applies today. Churches can be a powerful organizing tool, and religion offers a moral backbone and motivation to supporters. Another key, says Durley, is a flashpoint that brings a movement to the masses. A major catalyst in the civil rights movement, he notes, was the 1963 bombing of a black church in Birmingham, Alabama, that killed four young girls and injured numerous people. The incident led to national outrage, action and eventually change.

Once people form a personal connection to the issue, religion can be a strong motivator, says Cybelle Shattuck, a University of Michigan researcher who has been looking at the factors that influence faith-based environmental action at the community level. People she’s interviewed have told her “their faith gives them the ability to try something even if they don’t know they can do it.” And former Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt, an environmental advocate, says faith is pushing the climate movement closer to real change. “Political tipping points do come,” he says, “and they change us overnight.” Police violence against minorities is a recent example. Following a string of high-profile incidents, Gallup polls show that the percentage of Americans who report caring “a great deal” about the broader issue of “race relations” has jumped from 17 to 28 percent in just the past year.

These days, Christian environmental advocates like Keys are crisscrossing the country, hoping to bring about a similar shift in support for sustainability and conservation. That often means long stretches on the road, dwindling bank accounts and plenty of visits to Washington, D.C., including stops at the White House. Keys doesn’t know where all of this running around will ultimately take her or the creation care movement, but she’s heartened by the community of supporters and colleagues steadily growing around her. “I’ve never seen this magnitude of effort from the religious community placed on environmentalism,” Keys says. “It’s going to take the Christians who have the fear of God in them.”

Chris Berdik contributed reporting to this article, which was supported by a grant from the Society of Environmental Journalists.

India: Asian Buddhist and Christian clergy talk ecology and faith

March 10, 2016 Vatican Radio

http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2016/03/10/asian_buddhist_and_christian_clergy_talk_ecology_and_faith/1214442

An interreligious workshop in the eastern Indian state of Bihar focused on ways religions can work together to create a healthy and peaceful planet.

The Jesuit Conference of Asia-Pacific Region organized the three-day workshop on Buddhist-Christian dialogue, which concluded March 7 in Bodh Gaya, the town linked with Buddha's enlightenment.

"Gone are the days of individual salvation. One can no longer today attain salvation without the community and the entire creation, that is why we need to mend our ways and heal the wounded planet," Jesuit Father Jose Kalapura said at the workshop.

Quoting Pope Francis, the Indian church scholar contended that those who have destroyed the common home must rebuild it.

The workshop, held under the Interreligious Wisdom Sharing Program and organized by the Indian Buddhist Jesuit scholar Lawrence Eucharist, dwelt on the theme — ecology and religion.

Jesuits from Korea, Indonesia, Thailand and Japan and more than 100 Buddhist monks and nuns from the monasteries in Bodh Gaya took part in the event.

Jesuit Father Cyril Veliath, coordinator of the Dialogue Commission of Asia-Pacific Jesuit Conference, said that the Catholic Church teaches that every religion includes elements of truth and "that is why we should reach out to other religions and dialogue so that humanity improves."

Noel Seth, prominent Jesuit scholar on religions, stressed on the need for a multireligious identity.

"One needs to go beyond one's own religion and learn to treat all with respect, which is the only way to reach our destination," he said.

Buddhist monk Kabir Saxena argued that "we have still not discovered nature and the creation."

"We have become self-forgetful, imitative and artificial. The call is to become original and thus restore the true creation," he said.

Father Lawrence Eucharist said that, "in an age of religious violence and exploitation of nature, the enlightened believers should come together to appeal to the world about the essence of religions, which is love, compassion and peace and also jointly care for mother earth."

Father Bernard Senecal, a French-Canadian Jesuit who teaches a course on Buddhism at the Sogang Jesuit University in Seoul, South Korea, considers himself lucky to visit Bodh Gaya because of its importance to the Buddhist religion. "What touched me most was the deep personal sharing by some monks as to how Buddhism has changed their lives," he said.

Father Ingun Joseph, a Korean Jesuit working in Cambodia, shares the same feeling. "This was the sixth such workshop held in various parts of the world, but the first in India. Dialogue of this kind is very enriching and ennobling," Father Joseph said

‘Farm to Table’ to benefit thousands of youth

15 March 2016 Suva

<http://www.spc.int/en/media-releases/2394-farm-to-table-to-benefit-thousand-youths.html>



More than a thousand Fijian, Vanuatu and Samoan youths will be assisted to secure employment through organic agriculture with the launch of a USD 1.5 million two-year programme in Suva, Fiji, recently.

The ‘Farm to Table’ project is a partnership between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) and the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom) housed within the Pacific Community (SPC) funded by the Sustainable Development Fund (SDG-F).

Activities of the project will address the high levels of youth unemployment in the three countries through skills building in organic agriculture, income generation, food security and climate change resilience.

UNDP Resident Coordinator Osnat Lubrani said the UN is looking forward to supporting a programme focused on sustainable livelihoods that targets youths, adding the project can open up opportunities for income generation, boost confidence and empower young women and men.

“The UN is proud to work in partnership with SPC and POETCom on this initiative, an excellent approach to sustainable farming and at the core is that it relates to food security and nutrition as well as climate change adaptation,” she said.

“All these are closely connected to the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals.”

Organic agriculture builds resilient farming systems with the ability to withstand extreme weather events and can provide yields comparable to conventional or chemical based farms.

As lead implementing agency, POETCom will work with partner civil society organisations, FRIEND, Farm Support Association and Women in Business Development, and the governments of the three countries to identify suitable youths to receive training in organic agriculture and product development.

Target youths are those seeking employment between 18 and 30 years of age or transitioning to formal employment within the next 12 to 24 months.

The programme will address the high level of youth unemployment in the three countries, at around 44 percent of the youth population in Fiji and 8.9 percent in Vanuatu.

To do this, it will support linkages between the agriculture and tourism sectors of these countries, mapping value chains from the farms to hotel tables or retail outlets.

POETCom Coordinator Karen Mapusua explained that for example; “In Fiji we are going to focus on Cyclone Winston badly hit areas helping to rebuild the economy through supporting the value chains between the suppliers (youths) and buyers (hotels and restaurants), developing menus that will use local products or the promotion of local products.

“Simply, the youths will be trained to do organic farming, develop a product for example banana or coffee and be supported to market their product with the tourism sector.”

The programme responds to a call by Pacific leaders at the 2011 Pacific Island Forum for increasing youth employment and the aims of the Pacific Youth Strategy for young people to see agriculture as a viable career option.

Mapusua said the programme has the added benefit of getting more youth into agriculture which will boost the economic viability of the sector.

“Though agriculture remains for most Pacific Islands country’s’ population the main source of livelihood, its contribution to economic value added chain has generally declined over the last decade, whereas the tourism sector has seen significant growth,” she said.

“Reinforcing linkages and developing synergies between tourism and agriculture should help to achieve the objectives of sustained and equitable growth.”

IFAD’s Pacific sub-regional coordinator Sakiusa Tubuna said the focus is on poor small-holder farmers.

“IFAD recognises the importance and value of partnership as a means to achieving our development objective,” Tubuna said.

“This is the reason we are partnering with UNDP, POETCom and SPC in this project.

“Our focus is on poor smallholder farmers and this project will enable smallholder farmers in the three countries to benefit from business opportunities that are available locally.”

The United Arab Emirates is to fund three research teams from around the world to work out how to make it rain over the Arabian Desert

14 March 2016 Mannoura Egaiz

<http://www.scidev.net/global/funding/news/uae-funds-studies-rain-desert.html>

The teams, from Germany, Japan and the UAE, will share US\$5 million from the UAE Research Program for Rain Enhancement Science. Each team will tackle a different aspect of an evolving technology called cloud seeding — in which a chemical is injected into the atmosphere from an aircraft to encourage water condensation and cloud formation in the hope that it will rain.

“[The programme] will secure the UAE’s water supplies in the long run, and support innovation to reach future solutions that enhance water security in the region and the world,” says programme director Alya Al Mazroui.

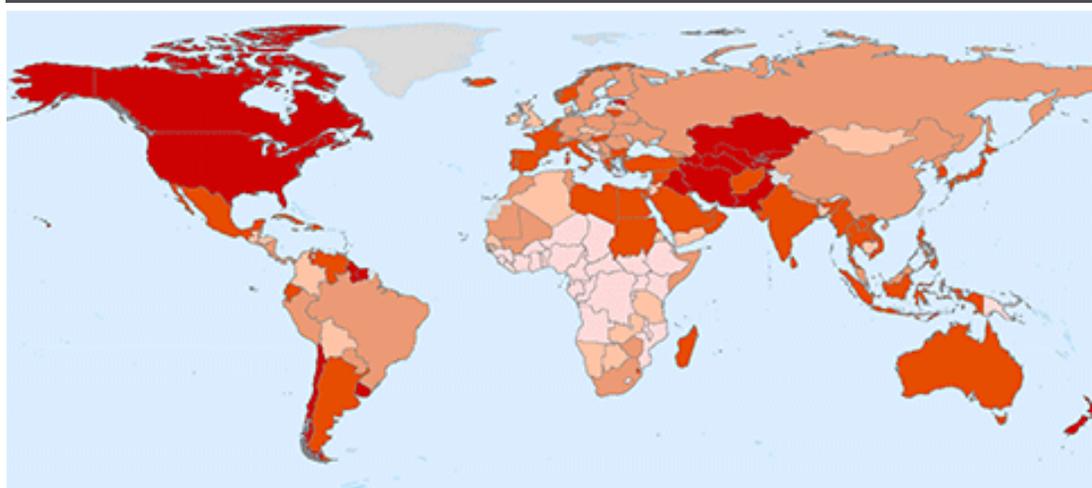
As part of the project, a team from Germany will try to find the best spots for seeding by looking at how weather convergence zones — places where two prevailing air flows meet — interact with land cover. The Japanese team will seek to develop new algorithms to identify the clouds most likely to be successfully seeded.

The UAE team, led by Linda Zou, an environmental engineer at the UAE’s Masdar Institute of Science and Technology, will look at alternatives to the salts and frozen carbon dioxide used in traditional cloud seeding. Zou’s research will cover the use of nanotechnology, including nanographene, to accelerate water condensation and make rain droplet formation more efficient.

Al Mazroui says the UAE’s current rain enhancement efforts involve seeding clouds with natural salts, which attract water vapour to form rain drops.

“This process requires 72 hours of preparations and weather forecasting to determine the feasibility of the process, and conducting it at the appropriate time,” she explains.

The Gulf is among the driest regions on the planet, and climate change has significantly cut rainfall over the past decade. At the same time, the resource-intensive lifestyles of many Gulf nation residents means water consumption per person is among the highest in the world (**see map**), leading to significant water shortfalls.



Water withdrawal per inhabitant (m³/year)

NO DATA <100 100-250 250-500 500-1000 > 1000 m³/year

Some researchers in the region are critical of the UAE’s approach to its water shortage problems. [Click here to enlarge.](#)
Credit: FAO Aquastat

It would be more useful to direct research towards ensuring the UAE makes full use of existing water supplies, says Mohammad El-Nesr, a water systems engineer at King Saud University in Saudi Arabia.

References

Mansour Almazroui and others Recent climate change in the Arabian Peninsula: Seasonal rainfall and temperature climatology of Saudi Arabia for 1979–2009 (*Atmospheric Research*, July 2012)

Mercury Rising

Mercury accumulates high up the food chain in animals that humans consume. What is being done to safeguard our health?

14 March 2016 UNEP

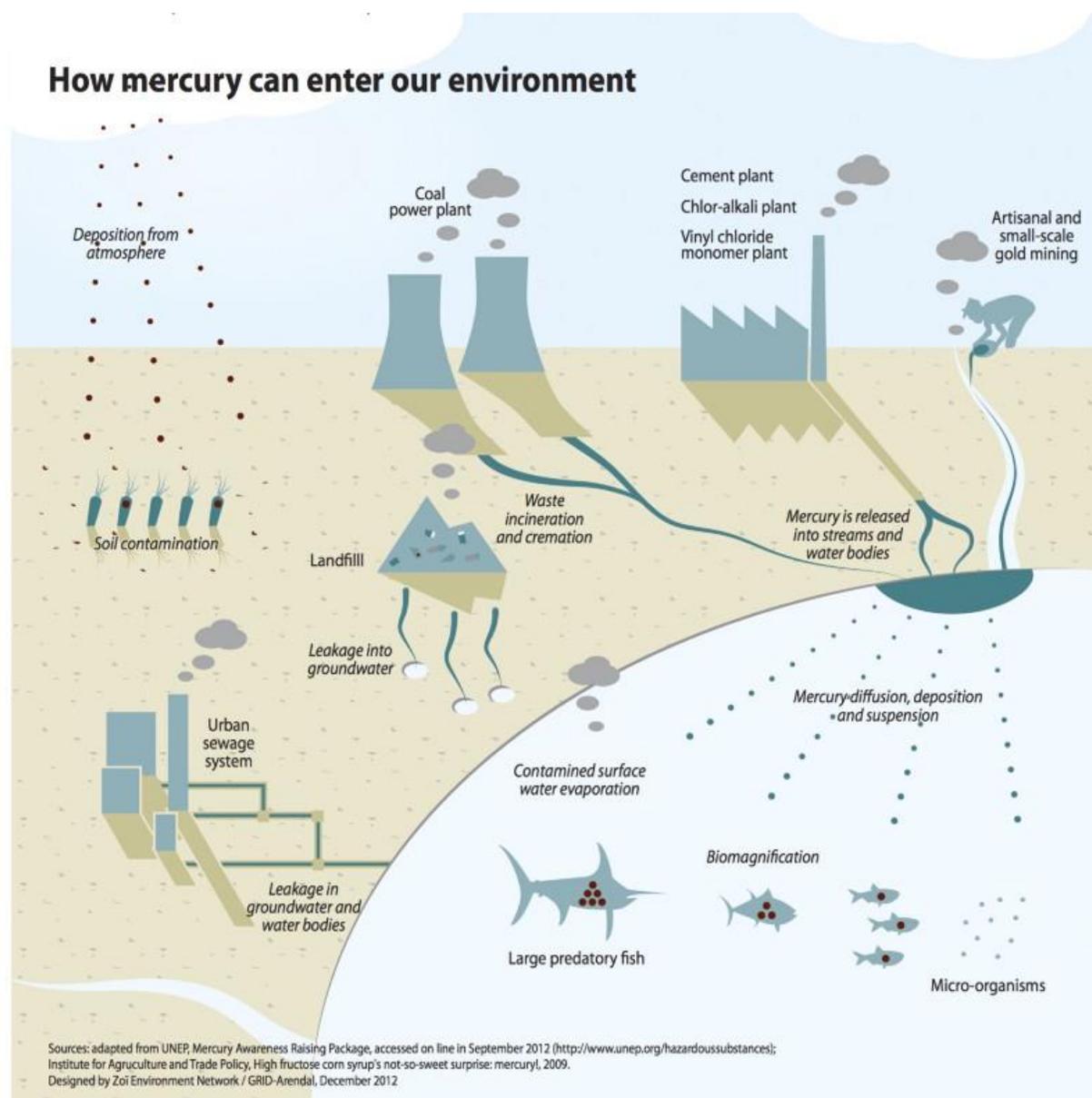
<https://medium.com/@UNEnvironment/mercury-rising-dd7f02c00876#.3a9gr66i2>

Almost 60 years ago, two sisters from an idyllic stretch of Japanese coastline became the first people to be diagnosed with a painful, irreversible and stigmatized illness that became known as Minamata disease. They were two and five years old.

Minamata disease was later discovered to be a consequence of mercury poisoning. The disease was devastating, affecting the central nervous system and causing a variety of dreadful symptoms. Loss of hearing, speech, vision and muscular coordination were common. Some victims went insane, and died within months.

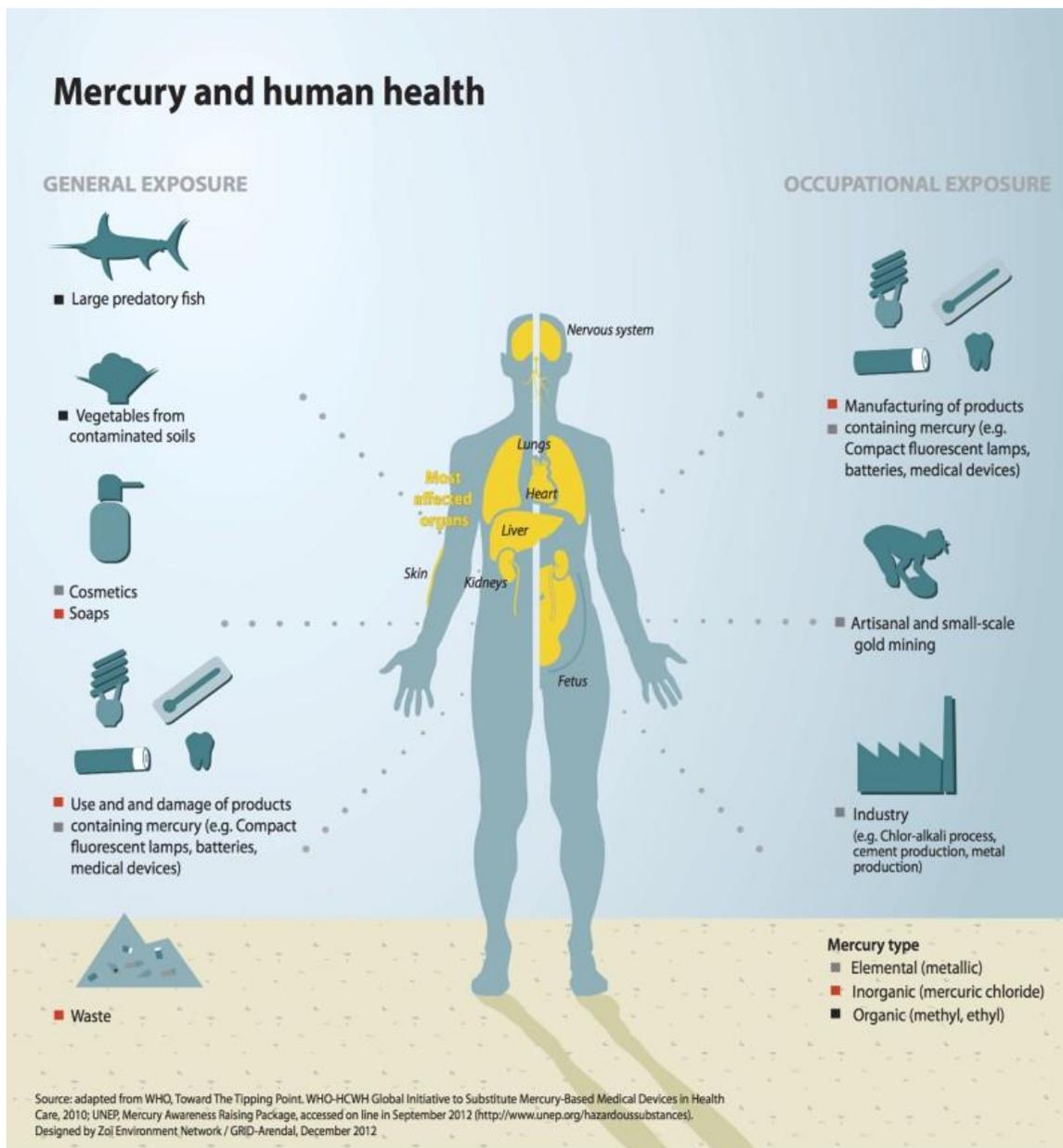
The two girls, and the many who would be diagnosed after had been poisoned by methylmercury, which had been discharged into Minamata Bay by a local chemical plant. Toxic concentrations had bioaccumulated in fish and shellfish, which were then consumed by the local population. Some 20,000 people have been diagnosed with Minamata disease since the first cases were detected in the 1950s.

Unfortunately, the tragedy in Minamata was not the last of its kind. Similar events occurred in Japan, in Canada, in Iraq, and elsewhere that resulted in many more cases of Minamata disease.



According to estimates, anthropogenic mercury emissions to air range anywhere from 1,000 to 4,000 tonnes per year. Small scale and artisanal gold miners account for over a third of mercury emissions. Activities such as coal burning, cement and metals production, waste incineration, and coal burning release mercury into communities often oblivious to either its presence or its potent effects.

Those potent effects can be devastating, as described earlier. However, in addition to the impacts on individual persons, in pregnant mothers, mercury poisoning can cause irreversible health effects to fetuses.



How mercury enters the human body

The events in Minamata, Japan were critical to drawing public attention to impacts of mercury on our environment and human health. Part of the legacy of the tragedy is the UNEP Minamata Convention on Mercury, a global treaty that is designed to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury and mercury compounds. 24 countries have ratified the Convention so far. When 26 more ratify, it will come into force.

Governments are meeting this week at the Dead Sea in Jordan to discuss the Convention's implementation. Controlling the anthropogenic release of mercury throughout its lifecycle has been a key factor in shaping the obligations under the convention. The major highlights include a ban on new mercury mines, the phase-out of existing ones, the phase out of

mercury in a number of products and processes, control measures on air emissions, and the international regulation of the informal sector for artisanal and small-scale gold mining.

UNEP's [Global Mercury Partnership](#) is also working toward effective implementation of the Convention, by bringing together expertise from IGOs, NGOs and the private sector.

With this convention, governments are targeting reductions in mercury pollution to ensure the health of the environment and that of current and future generations. The engagement on this issue from all sectors of society is important to the treaty's success. It is critical that we are all invested in ensuring another tragedy like Minamata cannot happen.

Videos of IEF participation at COP21 UN Climate Change Conference in Paris

Some of the videos from IEF side events at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris last December have now been uploaded to the IEF account on Vimeo and are linked from the report on COP21 on the IEF web site: <http://iefworld.org/cop21>. The presentations accompanying these talks can be downloaded from the report. The videos of other presentations are still in preparation and will be uploaded later. They are:

IEF comes to COP21

<https://vimeo.com/152629840>

This impressionistic video made by IEF member Ismael Velasco captures the spirit of the conference and IEF participation in the Climate Generations area.

Tanna After Cyclone Pam

<https://vimeo.com/158819708>

The island of Tanna in Vanuatu was hit by cyclone Pam in March 2015, causing great destruction. This video about the Baha'i communities on Tanna includes sequences made during and soon after the cyclone describing what they experienced and how they responded. The efforts of the Baha'is to build local capacity and responsibility increased the community's resilience in the face of a disaster that was certainly aggravated by climate change. The video provided the starting point for the International Environment Forum side event at COP21 on 5 December 2015 on the topic "Community resilience in the face of climate-driven extreme events, a Vanuatu case study", which is described in the IEF COP21 report.

The Policy Paradox, by Mo Sami - IEF Accountability 2

<https://vimeo.com/153837675>

This is the second of four panel presentations at the International Environment Forum side event on "Principles for accountability for climate change agreements" at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France, on 10 December 2015, by Dr. Mojgan Sami of the University of California Irvine Program in Public Health. This and the following videos were made by IEF member Temily Tavangar of the University of Hong Kong.

Personal and Professional Accountability: An Ethical Challenge, by Arthur Dahl - IEF Accountability 4

<https://vimeo.com/152637286>

This is the fourth of four panel presentations at the International Environment Forum side event on "Principles for accountability for climate change agreements" at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France, on 10 December 2015, by Dr. Arthur Dahl, President of the International Environment Forum.

Values-based Education for Climate Change, by Victoria Thoresen - IEF Education 1

<https://vimeo.com/156980260>

This is the first of four panel presentations at the International Environment Forum side event on "Values-based climate change education" at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France, on 11 December 2015, by Prof. Victoria Thoresen of Hedmark University College, Norway, Director of the Partnership for Education and Research about Responsible Living (PERL) and UNESCO Chair for Education about Sustainable Lifestyles.

Implementing Values-based Climate Change Education, by Arthur Dahl - IEF Education 3

<https://vimeo.com/157894789>

The third of four panel presentations at the International Environment Forum side event on "Values-based climate change education" at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France, on 11 December 2015, by Dr. Arthur Dahl, President of the International Environment Forum, Switzerland, and a partner in the EU-funded project on Values-based Indicators of Education for Sustainable Development (ESDinds).