

National Policy Workshop Webinar Series  
On  
Countermeasures for Riverine and Marine Plastic Litter in India  
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*Session 2: Community Perceptions and behavioral aspects for plastic management and promotion of countermeasures to address*

**Opportunities and challenges in engaging Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) in abetting riverine pollution**

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*To resolve the covid-19 pandemic and environmental emergencies, we must work together as an international community. Like the coronavirus, environmental crises respect no boundaries. Isolation is a trap. We should work together NOW and TOGETHER.*

**- Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of the UN, 2020**



## Faith based organizations?

FBOs: A religious congregation with primary missions of worship and religious education (Chaves, 2004) they can differ in theology, structure, size, location or types of teachings. It is an umbrella term for the purpose of this presentation.



# United Religions Initiative (URI)

- **A global grassroots interfaith network** cultivates peace and justice
- **109** countries & have over **1000+ member** Cooperation Circles (CC) globally; 23 Regional Offices in India
- Consultative status at the **ECOSOC**
- Selected as **one of the 10 most innovative and successful grassroots initiatives** building culture of peace, justice and healing for all human beings and mother earth by the **united nations alliance of civilizations.**
- Engaging communities from different religious backgrounds and faith leaders to address local, regional and global challenges.

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# The Plastic Pandemic: Recognizing the Challenge



A situation arising from **decades of oversight and neglect**. Including the ones contributed by religious institutions. 'India generates close to 26,000 tons of plastic a day, according to a CPCB estimate from 2012. Worse, a little over 10,000 tons a day of plastic waste remains uncollected.'

It is considered a **business as usual** and a standard for using plastics in several FBO and devotees too. A new normal



Millions of plastics are utilized in the **entire supply chain** as a measure of long shelf life, durability, good aesthetics, weather-proof, etc.



# Existing policy safeguards

- **Local**
  - Village, municipalities
- **Regional**
  - Block, district, tehsil
- **State**
- **National**
  - Polluters Pay principle
  - Producers Responsibility
  - Source segregation
- **International**
  - UN SDGs

# Plastics Pandemic : FBO's

- Faith based references
- Behavioral change
- Consumption patterns
- Availability of alternatives
- Applicability in the ecosystem
- Supply-demand chains
- Socio-cultural context
- FBOs are often seen as unconventional partners from the policy point of view



# Examples of Policy Safeguards

- **Plastics waste management rules 2016**
- **Municipal solid waste management rules 2016**
- **Key application**

The rules shall apply to every urban local body, outgrowths in urban agglomerations as declared by the registrar general and Census Commissioner of India, notified areas, notified industrial townships, areas under the control of Indian railways, airports, airbase, port and harbor, defense establishments, special economic zones, state and central government organizations, **places pilgrims, religious & historical importance as may be notified by respective state government from time to time** and to every domestic, institutional, commercial and any other non residential solid.

Broadly: the law also enshrines duties for waste generators and producers of horticulture waste and those providing food to segregate waste but also look for composting options within their premises if over >5000 acres of land. Leaving room for faith institutions to be monitored. (Duties of waste generator rule 7 section 4)

# Importance of FBOs

- Massive public following
- Source of Spiritual values for individual behavior change in devotees
- Lifestyle influencers: simple and sustainable living (a world where everything is in balance)
- Inter-connecting science and spiritual based practices
- Potential Multiplier effect: mobilizer of local community.
- Drivers of cultural values, social inclusion, political engagement and economic prosperity
- Trustworthy community driven Models for stakeholder engagement, participation, ownership and operations.
- Agents of advocacy and change







## **Change and shift : Opportunities in climbing the change ladder along with FBO**

- Identify the role of faith-based organizations as decision makers and instrumental stakeholders for implementing 3rs/5rs .
- Recognize them as significant behavioral change influencers amongst their large follower base, specially in a country like India where religion plays a pivotal role.
- Recognizing them as advocacy partners , getting messages out from classes n closed door meetings to the masses
- Effective value change and behavior change agent
- No data does not mean no work. 190 environmental FBOs have been addressing environmental and climate related crisis at some level or the other.
- Mainstreaming their work on environment and recognizing their on-ground impact.



# Existing Good practices

- Aranmula Parthasarathy Temple, Trivandrum
- Use of steel plates and utensils in Gurudwara
- Promoting sustainable consumption in mosques, UK
- Collection of plastic wastes every Sunday for recycling in churches, Mumbai
- Temple composting project at KMS (2011-2019) by IYCN
- DisposeWell, an organization in West Delhi is involved in properly disposing of the waste that is produced during religious rituals.
- GLOBAL INTERFAITH WASH ALLIANCE( GIWA) impacting sanitization and open defecation in river bodies.
- Renewable energy and waste segregation efforts by institutions like Art of Living, Brahmakumaris, Mata Amritanandmayi etc.



# Gap Areas

## Physical components

- Collection
- Disposal
- Recycling
- Technical know how/resource materials
- Recognizing them as behavioural change

## Governance features

- Sensitization & Stakeholder inclusivity
- Financial Stability
- Sound Institutions
- Well developed legal mechanism
- Lack of convening programs



# Way forward

- Education, empowerment and energizing
- Organizing more convening and training platforms for FBOs
- Recognizing best practices in the field and supporting them to improve efficiency.
- Undertaking survey to identify the knowledge gaps like amount of plastic production and consumption thereby making relevant policies for the same.
- Equipping FBOs with tools and resources for change like declarations, tool books, manuals etc. - that nurtures the bond between religion and environmental sector.
- Recognizing the role of interfaith organizations like URI, green faith, Bhumi project , Civicus
- Building bridges between communities, create platforms and resources by linking grassroots experiences with existing policies.



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**Thank You**

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