



# The River Above

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**The Quarterly Newsletter of the River Above Asia Oceania Ecclesial Network (RAOEN)**

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<https://www.raoen.org/>

*For peoples, oceans and forests*

## To be synodal

Pedro Walpole SJ, Network catalyst

The cry of the Earth and cry of the poor are most deeply felt in the peripheral communities of Oceania and Asia. Large Ocean States are experiencing sea-level rise, sea-bed mining, and extreme weather events. Similarly in Asia, climate events impact vulnerable communities that continue to see destruction in the forests, coastal areas, and the greater biodiversity that sustain all our lives. These concerns are interconnected by way of the "river above" – "the Pacific Ocean is the life, the river of Asia feeding all rivers, seasons and lives. This flow is life-giving and life-taking, especially as the climate is changing and resources are being exhausted." Addressing these concerns will only be possible if Oceania and Asia act together. Seeking to renew our vision and commitment towards a Church that listens and dialogues, RAOEN aims to listen to the voices of Synodality for Oceania and Asia. Pope Francis emphasizes the value of Synodality as key for the Church in the Future. Synodality literally means "walking together", referring to "involvement and participation of the whole People of God in the life and mission of the Church" (SLMC 7). RAOEN in collaboration with FABC, FCBCO, Global Alliance of Ecclesial Network, Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and Caritas aims to create a space for synodality through this dialogue between local voices and Church and ecumenical leaders. The hope is to strengthen collaborations and commitments amongst these groups grounded on the common desire to care for the oceans and forests.

*Laudato Si' the coming together of an Integral Ecology calling for an Integral Economy,  
Pedro Walpole 2022.*

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*RAOEN seeks to highlight the faith dimension of advocacy, in the spirit of synodality and talanoa.*

Please consider contributing to our quarterly newsletter.

Email us at [raoen.network@gmail.com](mailto:raoen.network@gmail.com)

## Voices of Concern

**Fiji** "The ocean is probably the most important part of the planet that we need to care for. This is one area that we must put a lot of investment in: caring for the ocean." -



Archbishop Peter Loy Chong,  
President of the  
Federation of  
Catholic Bishops'  
Conference of  
Oceania

**Myanmar** "Over 450 million Asians live in or around tropical forests and savannahs, and of them, 84 million live in extreme poverty. Amidst all these persisting challenges, we humbly ask, as Church, how do we listen to stories from the ground and build bridges with all faiths to respond to the concerns of indigenous and vulnerable communities across the region?"



His Excellency  
Charles Maung  
Cardinal Bo  
President,  
Federation of Asian  
Bishops Conference

### Whanganui Aotearoa New Zealand

"Our waters were contaminated with toxins and pollutants as a result of industry which continue unabated today. The quality of the water was degraded which led to the destruction of our traditional fishing and the knowledge that comes from the river"



Sr Makareta  
Towaroa  
Sisters of  
Saint Joseph  
of the Sacred  
Heart

## Ecological Threats, Vulnerability and Global Climate Risk across Oceania and Asia

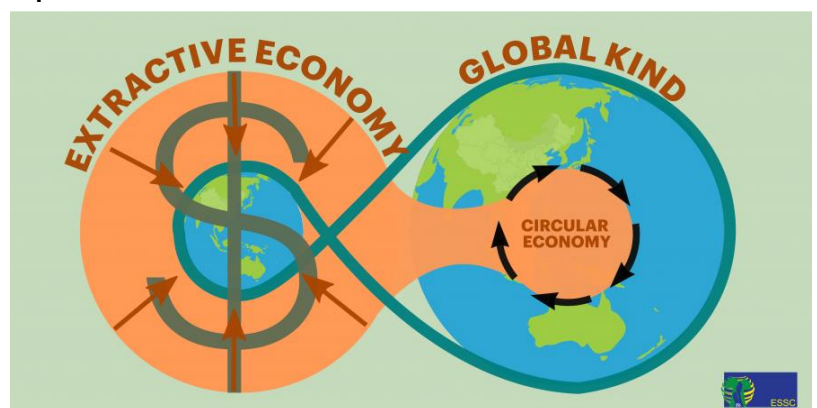


*"Addressing these concerns will only be possible if Oceania and Asia work together."*  
**RAOEN for peoples, oceans and forests**

## Reflections on Forests, Oceans and Cultures

How can the Catholic Church in Oceania and Asia listen to the life and concerns of ocean, coastal, and forest peoples, enabling their voices to be heard? The RAOEN proposes four ways in which we can come together as people and as Church.

1. Interfaith Dialogue
2. Discernment as Voices of Conscience
3. Dreams of a stable climate and a balanced oikos
4. Deeds







*Listening to our youth, Sr Ana and Novita in Kalimantan, dreaming of bamboo.*

## Listening to our Youth: Caritas Oceania Laudato Si' Youth Forum

**Mareta Lavea Leitupo** [alofa.oceania@gmail.com](mailto:alofa.oceania@gmail.com)

To celebrate Laudato Si' Week 2022, the Caritas Oceania Youth Alliance hosted a Caritas Oceania Laudato Si' Youth Forum which provided the space and opportunity for young people across Oceania to come together to discuss their particular concerns as well as share their ideas for action to care for our common home. The Forum focused on the theme "Heart, Head and Hands" and consisted of three daily webinars that ran from 24th-26th May, 2022, each day focusing on one aspect of the theme. The young people of Oceania have recognised the urgent need to take action and to work towards ecological justice, and so hosting the Laudato Si' Youth Forum was a great way to come together to discuss the issues we each are facing in our respective island nations and to share our ideas on how to address these issues and better care for creation.

How do we honor the knowledge and wisdom of local communities and Indigenous Peoples in caring for Creation? Interfaith Dialogue is a way to connect FORESTS, WATER AND PEOPLE. How do we honor the knowledge and wisdom of local communities and Indigenous Peoples in caring for Creation? Interfaith Dialogue is a way to connect with diverse peoples in the region taking part in the common mission of caring for Creation and neighbor. Catholics may only be 3% of the region's population yet being part of the local culture gives us an opportunity for accompanying and responding to the most in need.

*"The young people of Oceania have recognised the urgent need to take action and to work towards ecological justice."*



The Forum was the first event that was hosted collaboratively by the Caritas Oceania Youth Alliance Directors and Bishops were

invited and encouraged to extend the invitation to their own networks, and promotional material was also posted on various social media platforms in the weeks leading up to the Forum. In total, we received 89 registrations for the event and an average of 50 people attending on each day. There was plenty of stories and learnings that were shared and these discussions reflected the mutual desire to address the environmental issues across Oceania and the importance of working together and individually to achieve this.

## Dreams for RAOEN

Pope Francis February 2020

*"I dream of a ..... region that fights for the rights of the poor, the original peoples and the least of our brothers and sisters, where their voices can be heard and their dignity advanced.*

*I dream of a ..... region that can preserve its distinctive cultural riches, where the beauty of our humanity shines forth in so many varied ways.*

*I dream of a ..... region that can jealously preserve its overwhelming natural beauty and the superabundant life teeming in its rivers and forests.*

*I dream of Christian communities capable of generous commitment, incarnate in the Amazon region, and giving the Church new faces with Amazonian features."*

RAOEN was dreamed into being after a meeting at Georgetown University in 2020. Following the footsteps of REPAM in the Pan-Amazonian region and inspired by the Synod on the Amazon that draws from Pope Francis' orientations given in *Laudato Si'* and *Querida Amazonia*, the Church in Oceania and Asia is forwarding a network of organisations showing humanity the way forward in the present socioecological crises.

What is **your** dream for RAOEN as we listen to the margins across Asia and Oceania. *We need your voice to listen and respond. Can you help?*

Oceania Talanoa (*talanoa*, a traditional Fijian term for "inclusive, participatory and transparent dialogue") is a faith-based process seeking coherence and greater action in the care and protection of the oceans, their biomes and biodiversity which are integral to peoples' lives and culture.



The RAOEN Logo was created with inspiration from ocean depths, the moving clouds, new growth and the land and sea with us caring for it.

**Share your reflection – visit [www.raoen.org](http://www.raoen.org) using the RAOEN Toolkit you can add your voice.**

**A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal. (LS 202)**



## Desires: Your Voice helps RAOEN grow

**VOICES OF CONSCIENCE.** As Church we are challenged to listen from the ground up and build bridges with all faiths to respond to the concerns of indigenous and vulnerable communities across the region.

### **RAOEN draws from:**

The Catholic Church in Asia and Oceania is forwarding an ecclesial network of organisations inspiring a way forward. The Federation of Catholic Bishops' Conference of Oceania (FCBCO) accompanies 16 small island states in Oceania, as well as Papua New Guinea, Australia, and New Zealand.

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC) is on the ground in six countries spanning the Mekong River Basin, five countries in the Himalayas including the Catholic Bishops' Conference (Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines).

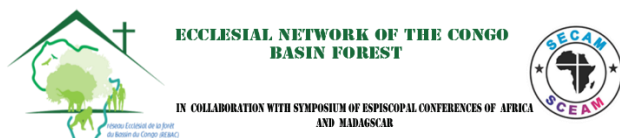
### **Ecclesial networks RAOEN collaborates with:**

REPAM the Ecclesial Network on the Amazon Basin  
[www.repam.net/es/](http://www.repam.net/es/)



REBAC The Ecclesial Network on the Congo Basin Forest (REBAC)

<https://rebaccongbassin.org/>



COMECE

The Catholic Church in the European Union

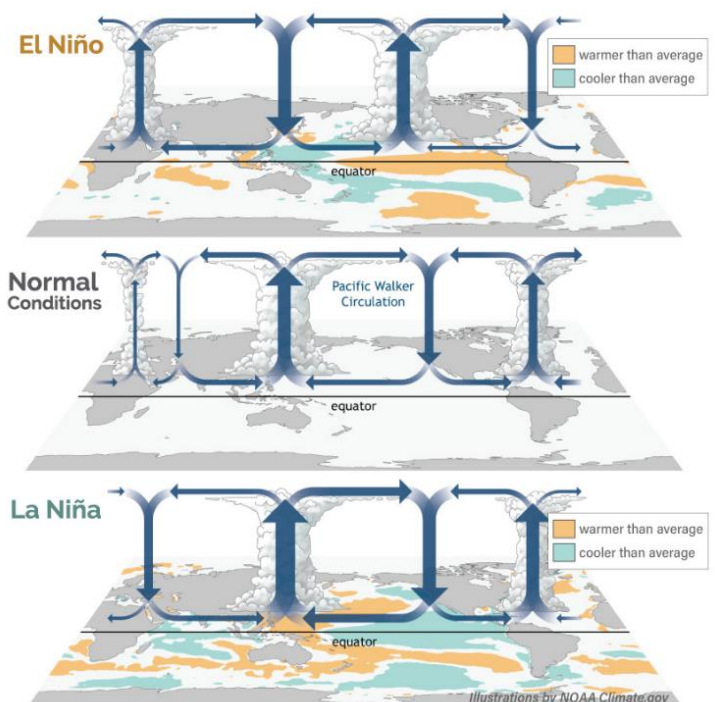


The River Above is created! As global warming exacerbates the impacts of La Niña, current ecological problems worsen and the risk of greater instability and vulnerability increases.



An image of the River Above linking the weather, ocean, land, and life across Oceania and Asia.

As global warming exacerbates the impacts of La Niña, current ecological problems worsen and the risk of greater instability and vulnerability increases.





# UPCOMING EVENTS & CONFERENCES

*RAOEN seeks to highlight the faith dimension of advocacy, in the spirit of synodality and talanoa.*

<b>OCTOBER</b>	<b>Season of Creation ends</b> <i>Listening to the Voices of Creation ending October 4<sup>th</sup></i> <b>FABC Assembly</b> <i>Federation of Asian Bishops Conference Bangkok 12-30<sup>th</sup></i>
<b>NOVEMBER</b>	<b>COP27</b> <i>The Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC will seek to build on previous successes paving the way for greater ambition to effectively tackle the global challenge of climate change.</i> <i>6-18<sup>th</sup> November Egypt</i> <b>Continental Synthesis</b> Release of the Instrumentum Laboris I of the Synod of Synodality from each Continent <b>Preliminary Meeting FCBCO Our Ocean Home</b> <a href="http://www.acu.edu.au/about-acu/faculties-directorates-and-staff/faculty-of-theology-and-philosophy/annual-lectures-talks-and-conferences/our-ocean-home">www.acu.edu.au/about-acu/faculties-directorates-and-staff/faculty-of-theology-and-philosophy/annual-lectures-talks-and-conferences/our-ocean-home</a>
<b>DECEMBER</b>	<b>COP15</b> <i>Will convene governments globally to agree to a set of goals for nature over the next decade through the Convention on Biological Diversity.</i> <i>7-19<sup>th</sup> December Montreal, Canada</i>
<b>FEBRUARY 2023</b>	<b>FCBCO Oceania Assembly Fiji</b> <i>Federation of Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Oceania (FCBCO) Assembly .5-10<sup>th</sup></i>
<b>March 2023</b>	<b>Oceans</b> 2023 UN Water Conference, Midterm Comprehensive Review of Implementation of the UN Decade for Action on Water and Sanitation (2018-2028) <i>New York March 22-24</i>



RAOEN

[www.raoen.org](http://www.raoen.org)



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