



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

Ecclesial networking for integral ecology: A space for listening, discerning, and acting

Pedro Walpole SJ, Network Coordinator - RAOEN



From 2 to 4 July, over forty representatives from the Ecclesial Networks Alliance for Integral Ecology (ENA) from different territories around the world met in the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development (DPIHD). RAOEN, the River Above Asia and Oceania Ecclesial Network joined the meeting. The RAOEN delegation consisted of **Anthony Cardinal Poola** of the Archdiocese of Hyderabad, India; **Archbishop Peter Loy Chong** of the Archdiocese of Suva, Fiji; **Dr Leonaitasi Hoponoa** from the Kingdom of Tonga; and **Pedro Walpole SJ** from the Philippines as RAOEN Coordinator. **Alwin Macalalad**, the Regional Coordinator for Oceania and Central Asia of the Dicastery accompanied the delegation. The group sought to reflect on ENA's identity, mission, and vocation, and brought together diverse voices from the different territories around the world. The effort is to seek action for greater justice of urgent environmental challenges and what is impacting the lives and livelihoods of marginal peoples.

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

1. **Listening to voices of pain and vulnerability in local reality** |

The ecclesial networks from the different territories draw from deep within the local churches their experiences and seek to accompany the people and their faith in daily life. They listen and carry the cries and concerns of local voices, and hold their integrity, culture, identity, and ways, as crucial to change and genuine human development.

2. **Reflection** | The network is faith-based and journeys to share in the light of God in the various realities as it engages with the margins of a given area. It engages in theological and pastoral reflection particularly the silent presence of Christ amongst vulnerable people.

3. **Action** | The alliance is a basis for common action of the different networks. It reaches out and finds practical response to different contexts and shared realities of the different territories (e.g., social justice issues, clericalism, climate change, etc.)



"Sometimes my fear is we may remain in theory level. What I look (for) is some practical suggestions, especially of

working together: Working together, listening to one another, and having a heart of compassion. So, we want and we dream that our parish houses, presbytery, and community places be the house of compassion for the needy and vulnerable sections of society." Cardinal Poola



For RAOEN, the ENA meeting is an important gathering to listen to unheard voices of local communities from the Oceania-Asia biome, to share perspectives on how the local and universal Church can better accompany communities, and to discern ways to sustain its task of raising the territorial voices with hope while broadening its networking dynamics with other territories.



A critical part of the program is a historical reflection on the [Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery with Indigenous Peoples](#). The document is emerging as a reference point of ecclesial networking, in which territorial representatives will have the space to share their stories.



Vatican dicastery hosts meeting of Ecclesial Network Alliance for Integral Ecology (ENA)

The meeting, which took place from 2 to 4 July at the Vatican's San Calisto Palace, brought together representatives from the Americas, Africa, Asia, Oceania and Europe, who reflected on the identity, vocation and mission of this "network of networks" which seeks to apply the Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

The initiative was attended by around 45 members of Ecclesial Networks of Integral Ecology from seven biomes in the world: Amazonia (**REPAM**), Mesoamerica (**REMAM**), Acuífero Guaraní and Gran Chaco (**REGCHAG**),



Congo Basin (**REBAC**), Asia Pacific and Oceania (**RAOEN**), and other networks in Canada, the United States and Europe, such as the General Office of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (**JPIC**).

The event was also attended by special guests in some sessions, such as the Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, Cardinal Mario Grech and the Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Cardinal Michael Czerny.



For the full story, visit <https://www.humandevlopment.va>

Territorial Voices



Leonaitasi Hoponoa, a community doctor from the Kingdom of Tonga, shares about the realities and psycho-spiritual challenges experienced by the local people that exacerbates their vulnerability to socioecological threats. Pesticide use by the community is increasing, and the traditional ways of removing weeds is being forgotten. Deepening faith in a changing world is critical.

Listen to the Territorial Voices from Oceania and Asia as they courageously share their struggles and challenges. These are brief but compelling narratives of many marginalized communities in the biome. These stories are filled with hope and inspiring initiatives taken by individuals who deeply care for their communities and the environment.

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



Alma Lumista, from the Pulangiyen Indigenous Community in Mindanao, Philippines, highlights their spiritual relationship with Creation, and how the Pulangiyen's culture teaches them to value all forms of life.

"I am engaging with different Selda groups – a basic ecclesial community or BEC – to encourage us to continue our faith and to always be connected to Selda activities. Through these activities our understanding broadens to the sacraments we receive so our faith is active beyond Sunday mornings.

We hope that the time will come that the church will find ways to be more inclusive of us as Indigenous Peoples and recognize and value our traditions and seasonal practices of gratitude and renewal. We hope that our spiritual needs will be given importance by the church for our faith in God."

Our home is on fire! A Tagi Production



The TAGI Production showcased a 300-member choir, local artists, cultural dances, and stories from the frontline of climate change. The cast includes students from Marist Brothers High School, Saint Joseph Secondary School, Saint Anne's Primary School, and the Lomary Tagi Choir. It is hoped that the TAGI production will travel and be performed in various places including Australia.

Some comments from those in the audience:

"Beautifully interwoven cultural approach to send this critical message across ... especially to those in power." **Vunibobo Savirio**

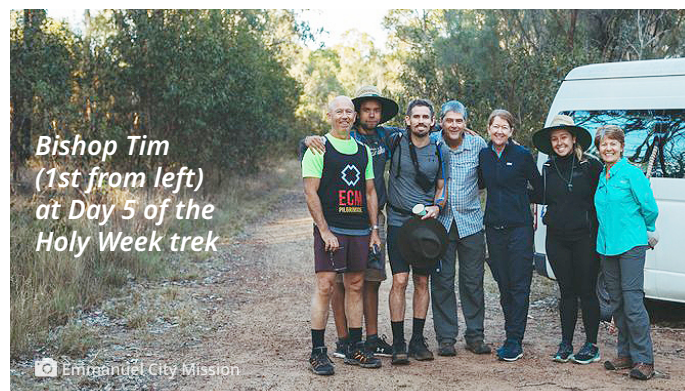
"You speak on behalf of your people our islands and the threats climate change has brought upon your home. We stand together with you Kiribati and together we raise our tagi for the world to hear."
Mosese P Natuilagilagi

The production is an initiative of the Archdiocese of Suva with Caritas Fiji. The TAGI project supports Pope Francis' global campaign 'Together We' for an integral ecology.



Bishop Tim walk of faith to support the vulnerable in Brisbane Diocese

Timothy John Norton SVD has served as an Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Brisbane since 2022. He is a member of the Society of the Divine Word. This year, Bishop Tim embarked on a meaningful seven-day trek during Holy Week, culminating in his arrival in Cherbourg, northwest of Brisbane, on Easter Saturday. Accompanying him on this journey were members of the Emmanuel City Mission, led by director Roby Curtis. Emmanuel City Mission's primary mission is to provide care and support for the homeless and vulnerable, operating from South Brisbane.



The trek itself followed an old rail trail and a Cobb and Co route, incorporating portions of an ancient Aboriginal songline. For Bishop Norton, this pilgrimage held profound significance. It served as a conduit to connect with, respect, honour, and gain deeper insight into the Cherbourg community.

Bishop Norton reflected on the long-standing tradition of pilgrimages, "Pilgrimage is an honoured practice that stretches back centuries in many religious traditions. When people do pilgrimages, they want to step out of themselves and experience something bigger than their own humanity. We call that an encounter with God. I have every belief that my faith will be strengthened by this journey to Cherbourg. It's a time away and a time out from our normal rhythm. And it gives space for the Spirit to do what the Spirit does."

To learn more about the Emmanuel City Mission and the sanctuary for homeless and vulnerable, visit: <https://emmanuelcitymission.com/>

Japanese and Korean faith leaders and civil society unite against Fukushima's contaminated water release

RAOEN shares this excerpt (translated in English) of a statement by faith leaders and civil society groups against the contaminated water of the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant. Plans of the Japanese Government to dump 'treated' radioactive water in the Pacific Ocean has been widely met with protests from civil society, fishermen unions, and faith groups. The full statement in Korean can be accessed [here](#).

In 2021, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan released a statement with CBCK against the contamination that will detrimentally affect the health of marine ecosystems and people. The statement in Japanese can be accessed [here](#).

On April 5, 2023, the Citizens' Radiation Protection Centre and the Environmental Movement Association released the "Japan Agricultural, Fisheries and Livestock Products Radioactive Pollution Analysis Report" that analyzed the radioactive substance test results. Radioactive contamination has been identified in 5.3% of aquatic products, and 29% of marine wildlife. Radioactively contaminated seafood is still being found in waters near Fukushima.



IAEA decommissioning team members walk past tanks that store contaminated water. Fukushima, Daiichi, 1 February 2015 | IAEA Mission Team (02110045) by Susanna Loof / IAEA / CC BY 4.0



The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has recently approved the discharge of nuclear waste water in the Pacific Ocean. However, the discharge, especially amid the growing impacts of the climate emergency, threatens the Common Home and exacerbates the vulnerability of communities that rely on the ocean for their lives and livelihood. The international community also raised concerns that the discharge is a direct violation of the provisions of the [United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea](#). Faith leaders and civil society unions in Japan and Korea continue to urge the Japanese government to explore alternative solutions to minimize ecological impact.



One kilometer along the coast of Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant where 12 meters below the sea surface a tunnel was constructed to use for controlled discharge of the ALPS treated water (edited with highlight in photo). Fukushima, Japan. 5 July 2023 | Rafael Mariano Grossi visits Fukushima NPP (01815846) by Katy Laffan / IAEA / CC BY 4.0

ENA Perspectives

News and reflections across the network



REPAM | Ecclesial Network on the Amazon Basin



REPAM



REGCHAG | The Gran Chaco and the Cuarani Aquifer Territory Ecclesial Network

A new Catholic Church network has been organizing in South America to address social and environmental challenges in the Gran Chaco zone, a mostly arid region spanning parts of Paraguay, Bolivia, Argentina, and Brazil. The new network is also focusing on the Guaraní Aquifer, a gigantic underground water system that spreads to Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay.



REMAM | The Mesoamerican and Mexican Ecological Network in Mexico and Central America

REMAM is the ecclesial network of the Mesoamerican region: Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama. The network started mobilizing in 2019 and has actively engaged in ecological concerns in the region such as gold mining, the privatization of drinking water, violence against socio-environmental leaders, and the vulnerability of fishing communities.



DPIHD



Mr. Mauricio Lopez, Coordinator of the Organizing Committee, stressed that this alliance of networks aims to be a space for listening to the bishops, to the ecclesial realities, and the different voices in the territories and that it seeks to have a minimum structure to accompany the native peoples and seek new ways to promote integral ecology.

www.repam.net/es/
repam@repam.net



ECLESIAL NETWORK OF THE CONGO BASIN FOREST

IN COLLABORATION WITH SYMPOSIUM OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR



REBAC | Ecclesial Network on the Congo Basin Forest



Rigobert Minani SJ, Regional Coordinator shared the pooling made it possible to realize the similarity of the cries of mother earth and humans who live in different parts of the planet. ...

A desire advocacy with the identified bodies: Holy See, United Nations, European Union, North America, BRICS (Brazil, India, China, South Africa), Australia, etc. The coordination committee entrusted REBAC with coordinating ENA's activities from 3 November 2023. A new challenge for the Church in Africa.

<https://rebacongobassin.org/>

UPCOMING EVENTS & CONFERENCES

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

JULY

Start of the Universal Phase of the Synod 2021-2024

AUGUST

World Youth Day (WYD) [1-6]

Lisbon 2023, Lisboa, Portugal

Ecojesuit Global Meeting 2023 [7-11]

Bendum, Bukidnon, Philippines

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples [9]

Virtual Commemoration on 9 August 2023 -

Indigenous Youth as Agents of Change for Self-determination (09-11am EST/New York time)

To register: <https://tinyurl.com/Indigenous23>

World Water Week 2023 [20-24]

Online and In-Person, Stockholm, Sweden

SEPTEMBER

Start of Season of Creation 2023 [Sept 1 to Oct 4]

The theme for 2023 is "Let Justice and Peace Flow".

3rd APTIK (Asosiasi Perguruan Tinggi Katolik) International Conference on Environment and Poverty, On Human Sensitivity: Justice, Solidarity, and Open Vision [8-9]

Onsite at Universitas Sanarta Dharma in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

2023 SDG Summit - the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development [19-20]

UN Headquarters, New York, USA, during the UN General Assembly High-Level Week

OCTOBER

Assembly of the Synod of Bishops [4-29]

Rome

The Economy of Francesco: Global Event 2023 [6]

Online event

World Food Day 2023 [16]

NOVEMBER

Asia-Pacific Climate Week 2023 [6-10]

Johor Baharu, Johor, Malaysia

UNFCCC COP28 [Nov 30 to Dec 12]

Expo City, United Arab Emirates



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