

Did you do a type of study?

Yes, there was community needs assessment by the committee with the help of Sr. comfort, (Justice Coordinator for Ghana) to see what can be done to and with the neighbors and then engage others.

Responding to the urgent need of excess plastic wastes that are clogging drainage systems, accelerating the spread of deadly water-borne disease and polluting the environment in Ghana, West Africa by initiating the development of a Plastic Waste Recycling Program.

During the early stages of the program, it focused on education and awareness by purchasing local advertising messages on radio, visiting local parishes, and providing education to children enrolled at Our Lady of Holy Cross School, Kasoa, Ghana. It is believed that early education on the need for proper management of plastic wastes is needed and that children will take that knowledge back to share at home with their families.

How did you gain the support of the residents for this project?

It all started as the sisters started visiting the neighbors, talking with some of the staff at Our Lady of Holy Cross School and seeing how the plastic waste was choking the drainages. The residents agreed that there is a need to clean up and the sisters(Committee) decided to gather the plastic waste for recycle so that the neighbors can also get something in return, as job, T-Shirt for motivation so they supported.

This program engages local citizens in the clean-up effort while at the same time providing jobs to the poor and unemployed for their efforts collecting discarded plastics. Local citizens who participate are paid based on the value of the plastic to recycling processing companies.

How does the collecting take place? Is there education for the families to do this and is their an inclusion of a the spiritual perspective?

Beginning was a celebration of the World Earth Day prayer through the lenses of Laudato Si. The prayer service from the Justice Office (U.S) was used by the sisters with the students and staff of Our Lady of Holy Cross School. A talk was also given on the care for our common home and using the Integral part of Laudato Si on radio and parishes.

So the neighbors from the immediate community started collecting with some of the staff of Our Lady of Holy Cross school and bring for the sisters to weigh and pay them per the weight and T- Shirt given to them. They pick them from their immediate surroundings, homes and some go to the street to pick.

After weighing it, the employee for the Justice Committee washes and bag them with the support of the volunteers for the big sale in the city

The program began in November 2017 in a pilot phase and seeks to expand through the purchase of a truck to haul the collected plastic to recycling processing centers. The project is currently centered in Kasoa, Ghana but hopes to expand to other areas in the Archdiocese. The project is a direct response to Pope Francis' Encyclical, Laudato Si' where the Holy Father asks us to be more attentive to the care of our common home.

The program operates by asking local citizens to collect plastic wastes which the Plastic Waste Recycling ministry will then pick up and take to Accra for sale. Revenues collected from this sale are returned to the local people who helped collect the plastics according to the weight they collected. This provides many with a much-needed source of income especially for women who are not working full-time.

How many people are employed? Volunteers?

Currently we have two employed. A guy who helps with all the Justice activities by the committee. And a driver who helps to haul the waste to the city for the Recycle. Their contract is reviewed and renew on annual bases.

We have many volunteers who come to help with bagging and packing and when getting them ready for the cities.

And we have over twenty(20) women who collect and bring to be paid after weighing it.

We also have others who are home that the Justice employee go with the driver to buy them from people homes.

We have parishes and schools who supply us with plastics after giving them big bins for collecting.

What actually happens with the recycling process.

After the committee has washed and bagged them in big bags, they haul it to the cities for the recycle companies. They also weigh them again and pay per the weights.

The companies have big machines that are in stages of what they want to use the plastic for.

First, they wash in one machine when needed and put transferred to another for grinding. Then to another for heat or fire to melt and colors added and made into another polythene bags, plastic chairs, bowls, rubber spoons and plates etc.

There is another company (Environment 360) who uses the plastics for bags and purse and other things without processing the plastic. They used it also for educational activities where schools and organization go to learn.

Is the facility now part of the organization that the Sisters of the Holy Cross initially given from money saved through the carbon footprint fund?

Initially, part of it was from the Justice annual budget from the Congregational Justice Office given to the country and part was from the Common Fund for the poor.

Later, through the development office, other NGO's also donated to help.

In Ghana, the Carbon footprint fund has been more for Solar energy, Solar Freezers and tree planting or greening the environment.