

Indian children spread pope's message on climate change



Children dancing in the rain in New Delhi during an event to create awareness for the environment

Supporting Pope Francis' global call for urgent action on climate change, children in New Delhi took to the streets to create awareness for the environment.

"People tend to ignore the need to preserve the environment and carry on with their lives. I hope they will take into consideration what the pope has said on the issue," Kalpana Singh told ucanews.com.

Singh was among the 7-15 year-olds taking part in a dance event on New Delhi streets July 12 using colorful umbrellas, unicycles and holding banners, despite the heavy downpour.

Deepak, who uses only one name, told ucanews.com, that he was concerned about the increasing number of natural calamities across the world. "We have caused this harm to our mother Earth and we will have to take steps to rectify it. The sooner we start, the better."

Pope Francis recently released the encyclical *Laudato si'* (Praise be to you — On Care For Our Common Home). Addressed to every person on the planet, the pope blamed human greed for the critical situation "Our Sister, mother Earth" now finds herself in.

"This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her," he wrote.

The New Delhi event, a part of the Pope4Planet campaign, was organized by the Church-based social organizations Caritas India, Chetnalaya and Nine is Mine.

More than 250 people signed petitions addressed to world leaders in the U.N. Climate Summit to be held in Paris in November, asking them to take responsibility for climate change and take steps to control it.

“People are just waiting for an opportunity to do something for the environment,” Amrit Sangma, spokesman of Caritas India, told ucanews.com.

Pope Francis’ letter expressing concern about climate change provides them this opportunity, he added.

Sangma also pointed out that the “church's large network should be put to use to spread awareness about this increasing problem and ways to tackle it.”

The campaign has the support of more than 200 partners in India working in solidarity with more than 164 international member organizations under the aegis of Caritas Internationalis.

It prioritizes afforestation activities in India in order to limit global warming levels to a maximum of two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, as proposed by U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Caritas India is also planning a number of “green activities” to encourage afforestation, renewable energy and sustainable agricultural practices, according to Fr. Frederick D'Souza, executive director of Caritas India.

Ritu Sharma, New Delhi-UCANews