

Environmental and Economic Sustainability (EES) Theological Research: Regional (Global North & Middle East) and Global Framework

Terms of Reference - October 2020

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Background

In 2017, Tearfund Corporate Strategy defined three institutional priorities. One of these is Environmental and Economic Sustainability, which emerges from the finding that environmental degradation affects the poorest most severely – those whom, ironically, have done least to cause it. The alternative to this reality is an economic model in which all people can satisfy their basic needs, we live within nature’s boundaries, and we do not accept inequality in its current extreme forms. One of the working objectives of Environmental and Economic Sustainability is the development of a theological framework that is biblically solid, theologically articulates an economic ethic of stewardship toward creation, and reflects the diversity of thought from the different contexts in which Tearfund works.

- Objective 1 of the Tearfund EES Priority focuses on theology and the importance of theological ideas and discussion in contributing to Environmental and Economic Sustainability. We will use the EES theology framework as the foundation to guide our work with policymakers, civil society movements, programmes, churches, and supporter education. We will do this through networking, resourcing, influencing, and demonstrating it through our own actions.
- This EES theology framework will be used as the basis for future development of resources, such as bible studies, short videos, other pedagogical resources or possibly a book.
- Thus far¹, we have completed two regional research pieces: LAC and Africa.
- We have ongoing EES research in Asia. Final Paper Due Nov 6th.
- We have two regional pieces remaining: Global North and Middle East
- In addition to these regional pieces, we want to have one global framework that incorporates the main findings and “spirit” of all the regional pieces.
- The context and focus of this theological research is Christian theology, including Catholic and Protestant traditions.
- In the research completed so far, we have found an imbalance towards environmental care theology; there has been less of a focus regarding the economy. We need forthcoming research to aim for more of a balance between these two key elements.
- A key aspect of Tearfund’s EES theology research has been its **‘spirit’ of inclusion and decolonisation**. That is, this includes listening not only to academic voices and written theology, but emphasising grassroots, practitioner & indigeneous voices and spoken (unwritten) theology. Further, we have started this work not by listening to the Global North voices, but the Global South voices. Also, we have wanted to intentionally create space for the role of *narrative* in embedding and communicating EES theology.²

Scope

This Terms of Reference incorporates three related but distinct work packages:

- Tearfund’s [Global North regional theological research paper](#)
- Tearfund’s [Middle East regional theological research paper](#)
- Tearfund’s [Global EES theology framework](#)

These three work packages are to be held together; We would like applicants to bid for all three together.

¹ As of early October 2020

² In much ‘modern’ literature, narrative is considered secondary or just an anecdotal expression of the deeper, more important and structures of truth. However, over the last few decades, increasingly, scholars from around the world (Cf NT Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 1992.) are recognising the significant role of narrative in which all ‘truths’ are embedded, and also the powerful ways in which ideas can be communicated through the medium of narrative. Rather than forcing all the theological content into strict categories, lists, or logical arguments, we’ve wanted to also create space for ‘narrative’ within our EES theology. In relation to EES, narrative is particularly important as many ancient cultures have built and explained their relationship with creation and living through stories. So, we wanted not only to discover their spirituality and theology embedded in those stories but also be able to use narrative as a way of communicating our own theological thoughts.

Global North regional theological research paper

Key Objectives

- Identify and explore key theological themes, questions, arguments and narratives around EES theology³ from Global North authors, thinkers, speakers, and practitioners.
 - In the research completed so far, we have found an imbalance towards environmental care theology; there has been less of a focus regarding the economy. We need forthcoming research to aim for more of a **balance** between these two key elements.
- This research is not to be exhaustive. Rather, it is to reflect key thinking/narratives/themes from significant voices⁴ in the region. It should also reflect the diversity of theological thought in the Global North in terms of theological perspective and should seek to draw from a diversity of sources in terms of gender, ethnicity, age groups.

Output/Deliverables

1. A **written research report** compiled by consultant on EES Theology from a Global North perspective.
 - a. Include an **executive summary** of no more than 4 pages.
 - b. Bibliography of key influential or noteworthy literature from the region.
 - c. This paper can be up to **30 pages maximum**, excluding the bibliography.
 - d. Paper to be written in English.

Research Questions

- What does the **existing Global North Christian theological literature** say in regards to EES?
- What are the **traditional and indigenous Christian Global North narratives** around Environmental & Economic Sustainability?
- What are the **prominent Christian themes and narratives** in present theological discussions around economic development and environmental/creation care? Wherever possible or relevant, note the ways in which these prominent themes and narratives are distinctive of the Global North.
- What are the **remaining gaps** in the Christian theological discussion around environmental and economic sustainability in the Global North?
- What are the **key biblical texts** in EES theology in the Global North?
- Who are the **thought leaders** in EES in the region, and what are the **key literature pieces (books/journals etc)** in EES theology in the region?

Methodology

We would like the consultant to propose the methodology for achieving the above aims and researching the above questions. However, we would like to ensure that this research necessarily includes:

- **a desk/literature review of the key literature.**⁵ This research would need to engage to a degree with the content in the literature, but also to 'map' out the 'theological landscape' of EES in the Global North.
- engaging in a meaningful way with at **least 3 key thought leaders**⁶ in EES Theology in the Global North. This might include:
 - Engaging with the existing literature from key thought leaders.
 - virtual interviews or online workshops with thought leaders.
- **Online meetings** with key Tearfund staff to discuss and engage with key Tearfund stakeholders.⁷

³ In the research completed so far, we have found an imbalance towards environmental care theology; there has been less of a focus regarding the economy. We need forthcoming research to aim for more of a balance between these two key elements.

⁴ Significant here is not necessarily the loudest or most influential, but rather the voices that are most beneficial for including into these conversations, including voices who have historically been excluded.

⁵ A previous EES work package has already created an initial annotated bibliography for the Global North.

⁶ Thought leaders might be specific people, or traditions, or organisations.

⁷ See [Engaging Key Tearfund Stakeholders](#) below.

Middle East regional theological research paper

Key Objectives

- Identify and explore key theological themes, questions, arguments and narratives around EES theology⁸ from Middle East authors, thinkers, speakers, and practitioners.
 - In the research completed so far, we have found an imbalance towards environmental care theology; there has been less of a focus regarding the economy. We need forthcoming research to aim for more of a **balance** between these two key elements.
- This research is not to be exhaustive. Rather, it is to reflect key thinking/narratives/themes from significant voices⁹ in the region. It should also reflect the diversity of theological thought in the Middle East in terms of theological perspectives and should seek to draw from a diversity of sources in terms of gender, ethnicity, age groups.

Output/Deliverables

2. A **written research report** compiled by consultant on EES Theology from a Middle Eastern perspective.
 - a. Include an **executive summary** of no more than 3 pages.
 - b. Bibliography of key influential or noteworthy literature from the region.
 - c. This paper can be up to **20 pages maximum**, excluding the bibliography.
 - d. Paper to be written in English.
3. **Online meetings** with key Tearfund staff to discuss and engage with key Tearfund stakeholders.¹⁰

Research Questions

- What does the **existing Middle Eastern Christian theological literature** say in regards to EES?
- What are the **traditional and indigenous Christian Middle Eastern narratives** around Environmental & Economic Sustainability?
- What are the **prominent Christian themes and narratives** in present theological discussions around economic development and environmental/creation care? Wherever possible or relevant, note the ways in which these prominent themes and narratives are distinctive of the Middle East.
- What are the **key biblical texts** in EES theology in the Middle East?
- Who are the **thought leaders** in EES in the region, and what are the **key literature pieces (books/journals etc)** in EES theology in the region?

Methodology

We would like the consultant to propose the methodology for achieving the above aims and researching the above questions. However, we would like to ensure that this research necessarily includes:

- a **desk/literature review of the key literature**.¹¹ This research would need to engage to a degree with the content in the literature, but also to 'map' out the 'theological landscape' of EES in the Middle East.
- engaging in a meaningful way with at **least 2 key thought leaders**¹² in EES Theology in the Middle East. This might include:
 - Engaging with the existing literature from key thought leaders.
 - virtual interviews or online workshops with thought leaders.

⁸ In the research completed so far, we have found an imbalance towards environmental care theology; there has been less of a focus regarding the economy. We need forthcoming research, including this Asia research, to aim for more of a balance between these two key elements.

⁹ Significant here is not necessarily the loudest or most influential, but rather the voices that are most beneficial for including into these conversations, including voices who have historically been excluded.

¹⁰ See [Engaging Key Tearfund Stakeholders](#) below.

¹¹ A previous EES work package has already created an initial annotated bibliography for the Middle East

¹² Thought leaders might be specific people, or traditions, or organisations.

Global EES theology framework

Key Objectives

- Development of a global theological framework for EES that is informed by both the content and “spirit”¹³ of the regional research.
- ‘Framework’ here denotes a collection of ideas, arguments and narratives that is cohesive enough to ‘stand’ on its own. This framework is not, however, meant to be the last word on the topic and should have space for continued conversation and development of thinking on the topic.
- This global EES theology framework functions as the foundation to guide our work with policymakers, civil society movements, programmes, churches, theological institutions, Tearfund staff and supporter education in our EES work. This paper should be written with this in mind.
 - It will thus be used to represent Tearfund’s thinking and approach to EES, and thus has a normative aspect to it. The regional work packages have been more of a survey and exploration of existing theological thinking and ideas in the various regions; this Global EES framework is not only to observe existing EES theologies, but to propose Tearfund’s approach to EES theology.
- In the research completed so far, we have found an imbalance towards environmental care theology; there has been less of a focus regarding the economy. We need forthcoming research to aim for more of a **balance** between these two key elements.

Output/Deliverables

1. A **written research report** compiled by consultant on a Global EES Theology framework.
 - a. Provide a cohesive theological framework of EES Theology to form the basis of Tearfund’s theological thinking on this topic. What theological narratives, frameworks or ideas incorporate *both* economic *and* environmental sustainability?
 - b. Compare and contrast regional EES theology papers. Identify the theological narratives/ideas/Bible texts that feature consistently and significantly across the regions. Note the theological aspects that are particularly significant and relevant to Tearfund’s development and advocacy work on EES. If appropriate material arises, the research report can include proposals for Tearfund in terms of changes Tearfund should make to its work or messaging.
 - c. Include an **executive summary** of no more than 5 pages.
 - d. Bibliography of key influential or noteworthy literature from the region.
 - e. This paper can be up to **50 pages maximum**, excluding the bibliography.
 - f. Paper to be written in English.

Research Questions

- What are the **prominent themes and narratives** in present theological discussions around economic development and environmental/creation care? What theological narratives, frameworks or ideas incorporate *both* economic *and* environmental sustainability?
- What are some of the **unhelpful theologies** around EES, globally?
- When comparing the various regional research work packages, what stands out? What is common across the regions? What are the interesting differences? Are there any notable gaps?
- What are the **key biblical texts** in EES theology?
- What are some of the ways in which EES theology has traditionally been shared (narratives, academic discourse, liturgical acts, art, etc.)? What can Tearfund learn from that in order to communicate its EES theology effectively?

¹³ See note on this in the [Background](#) section above.

Methodology

We would like the consultant to propose the methodology for achieving the above aims and researching the above questions. However, we would like to ensure that this research necessarily includes:

- **a desk/literature review of the regional research papers and key literature.** This research would need to engage to a degree with the content in the literature, but also to 'map' out the 'theological landscape' of EES globally.
- **Online meetings** with key Tearfund staff to discuss and engage with key Tearfund stakeholders.¹⁴

Secondary Literature

The consultant will start with access to the existing completed research that relates to this work:

- Tearfund's Theory of Poverty
- Tearfund's Theology of Mission
- LAC Regional EES Report (including Executive summary)
- Africa Regional EES Report (including Executive summary)
- Notes on Theology and Bibliography: Asia, Middle East, Europe & North America
- [The World Rebooted](#) (drawn from the Restorative Economy)
- Abundant Africa (draft)
- The Restorative Economy -Completing our unfinished Millennium Jubilee (a discussion paper)
- A Just & Sustainable Economy - Theological Background papers

Note: Asia regional paper due for completion in December.

Engaging Key Stakeholders/Reference Group

We want to create opportunity for the consultant to engage with key Tearfund staff at various stages in this work. This will include 4(probably online) sessions as outlined below. The aim will be to present updates on where the research has got to and to hear thoughts, questions and concerns from the Key Stakeholders. These conversations with key stakeholders within Tearfund seeks to promote an intentional collective discernment process around our EES theology but also aims at equipping theologically Tearfund's staff on this topic (being part of this process can be more effective than just reading a paper).

1. February meeting: drawing existing learning and theological understandings and approaches from Tearfund staff.
2. March meeting: Discuss, update and discern regarding Global EES Framework.
3. April meeting: Discuss, update and discern regarding Global EES Framework.
4. May meeting: Presentation and discussion of Global EES Framework.

¹⁴ See [Engaging Key Tearfund Stakeholders](#) below.

Timeline

	2020		2021				
	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Global North regional theological research paper			Jan 10 (draft)	Feb 10 (final)			
Middle East regional theological research paper			Jan 10 (draft)	Feb 10 (final)			
Global EES theology framework						April 10 (draft 1)	May 10 (draft 2) May 31 FINAL

Budget

- **Applicants to bid on price (in GBP). Please include your quotation for the consultancy fee in your application.**
- **Maximum** for total consultancy (including all three work packages in this Terms of Reference): £14,000.
 - This is for all three work packages together.
 - This excludes expenses for expenses and resource acquisition (which can be up to £400 in addition to the consultancy fee).

Application Process

To apply for this consultancy research, please submit your **CV** and a **methodology proposal** via email to clark.buys@tearfund.org. For the methodology proposal, please draft your proposal for how you envisage doing this consultancy work. Please also indicate why your experience, training, and/or cultural context positions you well for this work. Please keep this at a high level overview - **2 pages max**. Describing proposed steps, contacts, and existing resources available to you, demonstrate how you aim to achieve the objectives outlined in the Terms of Reference above. Please also include within this document your quotation for this work in GBP.

Please submit these two documents by **15th November 2020**. Depending on the applicants, we may request interviews at this point.

Please don't hesitate to contact our team on clark.buys@tearfund.org if you have any questions.