



DOULOS

Jurnal Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat

Vol 4 No 1, Jan-Juni 2026

<https://journalpak.org/index.php/doulos/index>

ISSN 2988-4500

Yosua Sibarani et al
Enhancing the Ecotheological Awareness ...

Enhancing the Ecotheological Awareness of the Horisan Ranggigit Village Community through Faith Education and Environmental Action Programs

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ABSTRACT

Environmental problems in rural areas are often related to low public awareness of the importance of environmental conservation. A similar situation is found in Horisan Ranggigit Village, where less sustainable environmental management practices persist. This Community Service activity aims to increase community ecotheological awareness through faith education programs and environmental awareness programs. The method used is a participatory approach with an educational approach, including ecotheological outreach, group discussions, and joint environmental actions with the community. The results of the activity indicate an increase in community understanding of the relationship between Christian faith and ecological responsibility, as well as the emergence of attitudes and commitment to protecting the surrounding environment. This activity demonstrates that an ecotheological approach can be an effective strategy in building environmental awareness and behavior in rural communities

Keywords: *ecotheology, environmental awareness, community service, contextual theology*

INTRODUCTION

Environmental degradation has become one of the serious challenges faced by the global community, including rural societies. Various irresponsible environmental management practices, such as indiscriminate waste disposal and the excessive exploitation of natural resources, have contributed to the decline in environmental quality and community well-being (Sandiata et al., 2025). This issue is not merely technical and economic in nature but is also closely related to human values and ethical awareness toward nature (Ngabalin, 2020). Because environmental management is often not grounded in responsible ethical, moral, and religious-spiritual awareness, humanity is currently facing an environmental crisis. In other words, the ecological crisis confronting humankind essentially stems from a crisis of ethics, morality, and religious spirituality (Cahyono, 2021).

Several studies indicate that ecotheology serves as an important foundation for developing ecological awareness among Christian communities (Corneles & Runtuwene, 2025). Within Christianity, ecological concerns refer to humanity's obligation to care for the Earth for God

and to cooperate with nature in manifesting God's glory (Hina & Katu, 2020). From the perspective of Christian faith, humans are understood as stewards of God's creation who are called to cultivate and preserve the earth (Gen. 2:15). This theological understanding should function as an ethical foundation for human behavior toward the environment (Yuono, 2019). The creation narrative in the Book of Genesis functions not only as an affirmation of God's sovereignty and wisdom (Budiman & Objantoro, 2022) but also as the theological basis for the designation of humans as stewards of creation. From this perspective, humans are called to participate in God's creative work through ethical responsibility manifested in attitudes of love, justice, and respect for the sustainability of all creation (Riska, 2024). However, in everyday practice, these theological values have not been fully internalized. Therefore, an ecotheological approach becomes relevant as an effort to integrate Christian faith with the ecological responsibility of society.

Horisan Ranggitgit Village is one of the rural areas endowed with considerable natural resource potential. However, based on preliminary observations and discussions with community leaders, it was found that public awareness regarding environmental preservation remains relatively low. This condition is reflected in the suboptimal management of environmental cleanliness and the limited community participation in efforts to maintain the sustainability of the surrounding natural environment. This Community Service program was designed to address these issues through contextual faith education and environmental action initiatives.

METHODS

This Community Service activity was implemented using a participatory method that emphasizes the active involvement of the community as the subjects of the program (Mustanir et al., 2019). The target of the activity was the residents of Horisan Ranggitgit Village, particularly church congregations and local community leaders. The implementation of the program was carried out through several stages as follows: (1) Preparation stage. This stage included preliminary observation of the village's environmental conditions, coordination with village officials and community leaders, and the development of ecotheological educational materials. (2) Socialization and education stage. Educational activities were conducted through counseling sessions and interactive discussions on the concept of ecotheology, the theological foundations of environmental concern, and its relevance to the daily lives of rural communities. A

participatory approach was employed to encourage the active involvement of the community as agents of social change (Siswadi & Syaifuddin, 2024), rather than merely as objects of the program (Pangihutan & Jura, 2023).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of this Community Service program demonstrated a positive response from the residents of Horisan Ranggalgit Village. During the socialization and educational stages, participants showed high enthusiasm in engaging in discussions and expressing their views regarding environmental issues in the village. This indicates a genuine interest and need among the community for faith-based understanding that is relevant to their lived context.

The results of the program revealed an increased level of community understanding regarding the relationship between Christian faith and ecological responsibility (Pangihutan & Jura, 2023). Community members began to recognize that caring for the environment is not merely a social obligation but also an integral part of their faith calling as stewards of God's creation. Moreover, the environmental action activities encouraged a shift in community attitudes—from previously passive tendencies toward greater concern and active involvement in maintaining environmental cleanliness.

The ecotheological approach employed in this program proved effective in bridging theological values with the everyday practices of rural communities. Changes in attitude and the growing level of community participation indicate that value- and faith-based approaches have a significant influence on the ecological awareness of rural populations (Sandiata et al., 2025). The integration of faith education and environmental action provided the community with direct experiential learning on how faith can be embodied through concrete actions that positively impact the environment.

The findings of this program further demonstrate that the ecotheological approach is effective in connecting Christian faith values with community ecological practices. The theological awareness fostered through faith education encouraged more responsible environmental behavior (Thomson, 2025). This is consistent with the perspective of

contextual theology, which emphasizes the engagement of faith within the social realities of society (Delahoya, 2025). The results also reaffirm that ecotheology can effectively bridge Christian faith values with ecological practices in the community. The theological awareness developed through faith education promotes more environmentally responsible behavior (Sumule, 2024).

The participatory approach also played a crucial role in the success of this program by providing space for community members to be actively involved in both the planning and implementation processes. In addition, the ecotheological framework serves as a critique of anthropocentric mindsets that position humans as the center of nature's exploitation. Through contextual theological understanding, the community was encouraged to view nature as part of God's creation that must be respected (Maulana et al., 2024). Consequently, the changes observed are not merely temporary but have the potential to be sustained.

This Community Service activity was carried out according to the initially planned stages, namely observation, socialization, and education. The program was implemented collaboratively with the community, the team of lecturers, and students. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the implementation of the activities during the socialization and educational sessions.



Fig. 1 - Socialization of Ecotheological Awareness Enhancement



Fig. 2 - Photograph of Activity Participants

Figure 3 presents a group photograph of all participants from Horisan Ranggitgit Village, Parmonangan District, North Tapanuli Regency.



Fig. 3 - Group Photograph of the Organizing Committee and All Participants

CONCLUSION

This Community Service program demonstrates that the ecotheological approach can serve as an effective strategy for enhancing environmental awareness and concern among rural communities. The faith education program, integrated with environmental action, was able to encourage positive changes in the attitudes and

behaviors of the Horison Ranggitgit Village community toward environmental conservation. This initiative has strong potential to be further developed and replicated in other communities with similar characteristics as an effort to foster faith-based ecological awareness.

Acknowledgment

The authors express their sincere gratitude to all parties who have participated in and supported the implementation of this Community Service program. Special appreciation is extended to:

- The community of Horisan Ranggitgit Village,
- The Village Head and community leaders,
- The Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) of IAKN Tarutung.

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