

WORLD FAITHS DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE

Elmfield House, Birmingham University, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6LQ, United Kingdom

Tel. ++44 (0)121 415 2220/2370: Fax ++44 (0)121 415 2453

E-mail wfdd@btinternet.com Website <http://www.wfdd.org.uk>

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My qualifications for taking on this job are a long-standing interest in relating my (Christian) faith to social issues and my involvement in development and poverty reduction through a faith-based agency (Christian Aid in the UK) and the Jubilee 2000 campaign, both of which set out to work with people of all faiths. I am also strongly committed to an honest and constructive dialogue between religious communities working with the poor and agencies like the World Bank. So I hope I have something to contribute; but I have much to learn not least from those of you with far more experience of inter-faith co-operation and from the networks and insights already built up, under Wendy Tyndale's leadership, through WFDD. I am very anxious, as I am sure you are, to make good progress. As a result we have rapidly agreed with the Trustees a Programme of Work. You are welcome to have it in full but the main items are set out below. We look forward to your comments but above all your co-operation as we get our 25-country team up and running and concentrate on some key interfaces between religious communities and multi-lateral agencies in developing strategies for poverty reduction and achieving the International Development Targets.

Michael Taylor

New postal address

The WFDD office has moved from Oxford to Birmingham, in the United Kingdom.

PLEASE NOTE THE NEW ADDRESS ABOVE!

Work programme for 2002

1. Aim

To foster local, national and international co-operation on development policy and practice between world faith/religious communities (especially at the grass-roots and among the materially poorest) and multilateral development agencies.

2. Some working principles

- The WFDD recognises the importance of dialogue and greater understanding, but its primary goal is poverty reduction, through improved policies and practices, not words and papers.
- We will continue to network with individuals and organisations, but the focus will be on the agenda as set out in this plan.
- We will welcome and build on agreement, but we will continue to look for opportunities to deepen discussion.
- We will try to avoid duplicating inter-faith work already being done, by sticking closely to our mandate which relates to faith and development.

3. Core Programme: in-country

The work will focus on the contribution of religious communities to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). The PRSPs set out the strategy which a country will adopt in the use of either debt relief or new loans from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

An essential feature of the papers is that they are drawn up by governments together with civil society. This provides a unique opportunity for religious communities to contribute to essential policy debates,

bringing in their experience of grass-roots work as well as their views on values and the need for holistic development etc.

The WFDD plans to commission some initial qualitative research on health and education, looking at the existing involvement of faith communities, but especially their views on the quality and character of the provision of these services and how they should be paid for. This research will include information on how the faith communities relate to civil society and the PRSP process and how their capacity to make their own distinctive contribution might be strengthened.

The next step will be in-country interfaith discussions of the papers, leading to participation in the negotiations and actions on the PRSP.

4. Method of working

WFDD will designate representatives in up to 25 countries, chosen according to an agreed profile. The representatives will either produce or commission the initial position papers for their countries.

5. Core Programme: international

a) There will be a series of case studies entitled “Values in development – contribution of religious communities” which will highlight the ideals and practice of specific religious communities who work with impoverished people.

b) A piece of research, leading to a publication, will be commissioned on “Religious attitudes to co-operation and competition”. It will consist of a comparative study of attitudes and practices in the economic, social and religious sectors.

c) We will produce a series of educational booklets on the teachings of the various religious traditions about poverty and development.

6. Other Activities

Networking

The news bulletins and the web site will continue as our main means of communication. In addition, we shall produce periodical “Briefing Papers” on current issues.

Religious leaders’ conference

In September 2002 a third meeting for religious leaders will be held, this time in Canterbury, United Kingdom. It will be chaired by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the President of the World Bank, who initiated the Dialogue together in 1998.

The underlying issue of the conference will be the International Development Targets, which have been agreed by almost every country in the world, through the United Nations. These targets include such things as halving the number of people living in poverty, and primary education for all children, by the year 2015. The discussion will focus on examples of co-operation between the World Bank and faith communities.

Country programmes

The work which the WFDD has been promoting in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Guatemala will, we hope, be integrated into the core programmes.

Organisation

The WFDD will increase its staff to about six people linked to the central office. The main team (of up to 25) will consist of the representatives appointed in the countries involved in the work with the PRSP.

The trustees (Rev. Canon Richard Marsh, Katherine Marshall, Rabbi David Sapperstein, Professor Akbar Ahmed and Dr. Kamla Chowdhry) will play an advisory role and oversee policy and finance. In addition to them, there will be “advisory groups” on programmes of work.

