

WORLD FAITHS DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE

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WFDD is primarily a network and we appreciate hearing from you either in response to the bulletin or about other issues you may wish to raise.

May 16th found me 'at home' in Birmingham UK with hundreds of others to mark the 5th anniversary of the 1998 G8 summit when 70,000 campaigners formed a human chain all round the city centre and demanded the cancellation of the debts of the poorest countries.

The anniversary was called 'A Day to Remember'. We remembered what has been achieved and what remains to be done to put an end to the needless suffering of millions.

International debt has not been a major topic on WFDD's agenda, but I was very glad to find myself chairing a session during the afternoon of the 'Day to Remember' which brought together Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jews, Hindus, Christians and others and demonstrated that these different faith traditions have much to say to each other and to say together about debt and poverty; and that they have seized on many opportunities to co-operate and are committed to go on doing so.

It seemed like one small but not insignificant example of what WFDD is all about.

Michael Taylor

World Development Report (WDR) 2004

The theme of the WDR for 2004, due officially to be launched at the end of September this year, is 'Making Services

Work for Poor People'. WFDD responded to the World Bank's request for input from civil society in various ways.

First we sent out a discussion paper, based on the first draft of the WDR, to all the members of our network for their comment. Nearly forty replies came back. While this was going on, we sent Dr. Emma Tomalin (UK), Dr. Hanumappa Sudarshan (India) and Remigius Munyonyo (Uganda) to consultations held by the World Bank in London, Dhaka and Kampala. These three people then joined about 10 others at the end of February for a WFDD workshop in Canterbury, UK. All the participants were people who work in social services in close connection with their faith tradition. The comments we had received by e-mail were circulated and incorporated into the discussion.

Emma Tomalin then wrote a draft WFDD comment on the WDR which, after amendments by contributors, was submitted to the World Bank at the end of March. Finally, a WFDD staff member attended a World Bank meeting in London at the beginning of April to discuss the penultimate draft of the WDR 2004, which had just come out.

The WFDD contribution to the WDR can be found on our web site <http://www.wfdd.org.uk/documents.html#publications>.

When drafting WFDD's paper, one of the first issues discussed was the type of contribution which faith communities can make towards service provision.

Faith-based organisations can contribute towards service provision in five main ways: policy making; delivery; monitoring; lobbying policy makers and/or providers on behalf of the poor; and empowering the poor to participate in the development process. Their close relationship to the poor enables them to represent their interests.

The religious dimension to the concept of service was also highlighted.

The very word 'service' has deeply religious connotations. A spiritual understanding of the worth of each human being leads to services being provided with warmth and care and a sense of companionship not always to be found where people are merely 'doing their job'.

But the main issues which arose were participation,

The issue of **participation** is fundamental to a faith perspective on social service delivery. Short time limits given by donors for the completion of programmes, and 'experts' from outside who fail adequately to consult the poor are detrimental to participatory processes. A key question is: who is participating with whom? Is the World Bank participating in programmes owned by the poor?

privatisation,

The **private sector** may help to improve the provision of social services, especially by providing expertise to the state. However, the faith communities react strongly against opening up services to the free market where there are no checks and balances other than organising business to maximise profit.

and good governance.

Without **good governance** the provision of services is unlikely to improve. At the root of good governance is the absence of corruption and increased accountability. It also means giving priority to the interests of the most vulnerable people in the state.

Case studies

Our latest case studies are from Tokombéré, Cameroon: *Projet de Promotion Humaine* (Human Promotion Project), run by Catholics, and from Karnataka, India: *Vivekananda Girijana Kalyana Kendra (VGKK)* (Vivekananda Tribal Welfare Centre), inspired by Hindu philosophy as well as by tribal nature worship.

You can find them on our web site: http://www.wfdd.org.uk/programmes/case_studies/tokombere.pdf (accessible in French and English) and http://www.wfdd.org.uk/programmes/case_studies/vgkk.pdf

Both began as health projects among tribal people but now, as a result of the leadership and insights of the tribal people themselves, they have both become integrated development programmes. The central role of the "beneficiaries" as actors in the work is emphasised in both programmes.

No development project can give signs of hope if it has not regarded people as the agents of their own development. Human beings must be considered from every aspect, with all their capacities and deficiencies. This poses the problem of Faith: faith in humankind (because human beings have capacities which must not be neglected, since they are created in the image of God) and faith in God (the principal source of all positive inspiration). (Tokombéré)

In each case, too, it is notable how deeply the doctors who head up the programmes have been influenced by the natural religiosity of the tribal people which, along with Catholic and Hindu (Vedantic/Upanishadic) inspiration, has continued to flourish as the root of the work.

At some point in time, the VGKK workers realised that they had imbibed much from their 'beneficiaries' and that many of the strengths of the Soligas (tribal people) had gone unconsciously into building the organisation. A partnership based on mutual respect had evolved, where the workers had learnt to value their work and build relationships on give and take.

The team spirit, which is the backbone of the VGKK's success, owes much to and is perhaps a reflection of the communitarian spirit of the Soligas. While the 'unworldliness' of the Soligas can still exasperate the VGKK workers, it has made many workers reflect on their own attitudes and their life and needs have been simplified as a result.

Most case studies have, so far, been commissioned by WFDD, but we are very open to considering others if anyone would like to make a proposal (or to suggest other people who might want to do so). The Outline, or guide for authors, is on the web site (also available in French and Spanish):

http://www.wfdd.org.uk/programmes/case_studies/outline.pdf

WFDD aims to collect as wide-ranging a body of case studies as possible and then, as well as publicising them through the web site, to gather them into a book. We should emphasise that we are not looking for academic studies but rather ones which, though careful and accurate, are written up in a journalistic way. Our aim is to inform (and inspire) people from other faith communities as well as to make better known the important contributions which faith groups from different traditions are making to development work.

Workshops

In the autumn of 2003 WFDD will be co-hosting three regional workshops: 2 in Africa (in Ghana and Tanzania) and one in Asia (Thailand).

Faith communities contribute to poverty reduction strategies in a number of ways. They deliver services such as education and healthcare. They join the fight against HIV/AIDS. They legitimately speak up for some of the poorest people. They monitor whether government commitments are kept.

Equally important, if not more so, is the contribution they make to policy: what are the priorities when it comes to poverty reduction; what should human development look like and how should it be brought about?

Faith communities contribute to these discussions out of common sense like everyone else, and out of their knowledge and experience of what life is like for people on the ground. It can be argued however that their most distinctive contribution arises out of what they believe as, for example, Muslims and Christians (the special focus of the African workshops) and Buddhists (the focus of the Asian workshop). What difference does our faith make to our opinions on poverty and development?

Some faith communities are more confident about the answers than others, but there is widespread agreement that they need exploring further if important insights are not to be lost and the development debate, which touches on some of the deepest realities of human life, is not to be reduced to a rather thin diet of economic and pragmatic arguments: absolutely necessary but not sufficient.

These three workshops will be quite small (about 25 people are being invited to each) and experimental in nature. Other small workshops looking at other faith traditions and some larger consultations may well follow. One aim is to increase the confidence of local leaders of faith communities, maybe through training and formation, in helping their people to understand how faith inspires and informs their struggles against poverty and for a better quality of life.

In Ghana (October 28-29) we are co-hosting the workshop with the Religious Bodies Forum of Ghana and participants are being invited from Burkina Faso, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo. In Tanzania (November 11-13) we are working with the Tanzania Inter-Faith Forum and participants are being invited from, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia. The Religions Department of the University of Ghana is preparing two background papers for these workshops.

The workshop in Thailand (December 5-7) is co-hosted with Spirit in Education Movement and participants are being invited from several other countries including Burma, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, India, Japan, Korea, Taiwan. A general briefing paper: Workshops on Faith and Development, can be found on WFDD's website: www.wfdd.org.uk, together with the report of the Canterbury meeting of July 2002 which encouraged WFDD to arrange them.

Scaling Up

In the December Bulletin we commented at some length on the challenge put to leaders of faith communities by James D Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, when they met in Canterbury in October last year.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 will depend on a whole range of factors, but they certainly won't be reached unless all relevant actors, including faith communities, maximise their contributions.

Enlarging existing programmes in, for example, education, health care, gender and HIV/AIDS – or 'scaling-up' - has its problems, as we and others have pointed out. Despite that, some are rising to the challenge and WFDD on its travels has been involved in interesting and promising conversations with faith-based organisations and country-based staff of the World Bank to see how their different resources can be mutually supportive.

We'd be glad to hear from any of you in the network if you are involved in scaling-up or even prepared to contemplate it.

Obviously a key factor is attracting the necessary funding support! This is where World Bank staff can give helpful advice and open up possibilities here and there, even though Bank support is primarily to governments.

WFDD has just been involved in an interesting workshop in Addis Ababa, organised by the Bank, for faith communities, to see how best to strengthen their programmes dealing with HIV/AIDS.

The so-called development 'Gateway' might also be of help. In essence it is a vast website (see: <http://gateway-dev.worldbank.org>) of information about development programmes all over the world. Governments and other donors turn to it to

find out what exactly is being done in any particular country or region and what might be worth supporting. So there is something to be said for faith communities supplying information about their programmes along with everyone else.

'Supplying information' can however be quite technical and complicated in itself and, where professional staff who are well used to this kind of thing are in short supply, can soon appear to be far more trouble than it is worth.

WFDD has been in touch with the Gateway on this issue and will take part in a workshop in Paris during June. The hope is that a very straightforward, uncomplicated pro-forma can be designed (accompanied perhaps by a 'guide') which faith communities can complete without too much effort so that a great deal more information about their programmes is made available.

This could lead to useful inter-faith links and networking, exchange of experiences and increased co-operation. It could also help to attract the funding required to maximise the huge potential of faith communities to contribute to poverty reduction.

Faith in the Global Economic System

Vineeta Shanker, joined WFDD in March as the project co-ordinator of 'Faith in the Global Economic System' – a participative project to find out how people from different faiths view the prevailing economic system and, if they are discontented with it, what alternatives might be more in line with their religious commitments.

Vineeta obtained a PhD in economics from the University of Paris then returned to her native country, India, to teach at the Jawahar Lal Nehru University in Delhi. Since 1995 she has been working from the Philippines as a freelance consultant for international organisations.

Vineeta is doing some preliminary reading and planning the course of her work but she will soon be travelling to different countries to talk with both religious leaders and people who work with grassroots faith communities.

Trustees

The Trustees of WFDD met in Washington on April 9-10. All were present. They welcomed Lord Carey of Clifton PC (formerly Archbishop of Canterbury, UK) as Chairman in succession to Canon Richard Marsh. After receiving a full report from the Director, the programme of work for 2003, with one or two adjustments, was endorsed (an updated version appears on our website). There was lengthy discussion about the future. Wendy Tyndale will be leaving at the end of 2003 and Michael Taylor at the end of July 2004. The budget for 2003 is adequately funded but further funding will be required after that in addition to the welcome and generous commitments already made. A brochure is being prepared to help explain and promote the work of WFDD.

Web site

WFDD's web site is being updated as often as time allows, thanks to our volunteer IT expert, Sarah Boys. The sections which need to be renewed at the moment are 'Articles' and 'Recent Publications' (both under the heading 'Of Interest to You'). If you have written an article concerning some aspect of faith and development, or know of any such articles, we would be grateful if you could send them to us (in Word format). Likewise if you have reviewed or would like to recommend a recently published book on the same topic.

Our 'Links' section is restricted to faith-based organisations which work on development. We would be glad to add any organisations known to you which fall into this category.