

# WORLD FAITHS DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE

33-37 Stockmore Street, Oxford OX4 1JT, United Kingdom  
Tel/Fax (44) 1865 790011. E-mail wfdd@btinternet.com

*BULLETIN NO.2 - February 1999*

*We are sending you our second bulletin to keep you up to date with what the WFDD has been doing since you heard from us in November. But above all, we hope to involve you in the dialogue about the World Bank's World Development Report 2000/1.*

## **1. WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT (WDR)**

### **First WDR encounter in Rome, December 1998**

Engagement with the WDR has been our main focus. We began with a preliminary meeting, held at the Vatican's Commission for Justice and Peace, and attended by people from the World Bank, WDR team and delegates from seven different faiths.

The meeting clarified some of the main issues we want to raise for the WDR, including values and vision, personal transformation and education, the causes of poverty, particularly in relation to equity and justice issues, and the need for acceptance of diversity.

Considerable time was spent on the definition of poverty. Although there was general agreement that absolute material poverty must remain our first target, the inclusion by the WDR of other elements, such as vulnerability and a loss of dignity, was welcomed by the faiths, as an encouraging sign that poverty is no longer being viewed by the World Bank as a solely economic phenomenon.

### **WDR Consultation on Values, Norms and the Measurement of Poverty, Johannesburg, 12-14 January 1999**

WFDD co-sponsored this Consultation, together with the World Bank, the Swiss and Swedish Governments, Cornell University and the McArthur Foundation. The 40 participants were made up of people from African Civil Society (from many different African countries), academics from the WDR and World Bank, and the WFDD delegation of ten.

Departing from the norm for World Bank Consultations, this one was held in a Lutheran Conference Centre and began by visits to anti-poverty programmes, run by Tikkun, a Jewish organisation and the Rhema Christian Service Foundation.

All part of this propitious start, was the opening key note speech by the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, the Most Rev. Njongonkulu Ndungane, who spoke about poverty as a scourge of our times, but also of the resilience, hope and dignity to be found among the poor. His insistence that global policies harmful to the poor should be tackled was picked up frequently in subsequent debates.

Joseph Stiglitz, Chief Economist of the World Bank, followed on from the Archbishop's plea for a "global community" with his vision of development as a concern of everyone, involving "the fundamental transformation of societies". Stiglitz pointed to the importance of the dialogue with the faiths, precisely because this transformation, at community, household and individual level, lies "far beyond the scope of the Bank alone". He went on to express the hope that the dialogue would not be "just conversation" but would lead to actions to reduce poverty around the world.

In his list of aspects of poverty, which need to supplement the income/consumption approach, Stiglitz included elements close to the heart of the WFDD, such as "lack of hope and a sense of no prospect for the future" and the "breakdown of values leading to a sense that life is without meaning."

### **Different view points, different emphases: Whose reality counts?**

After this stimulating introduction, however, the hard work started. Were the methods of gathering information and measuring poverty, the most important topic? How did the concrete experience of an environmental NGO empowering Ghanaian women fit in? Were the WFDD contributions of any

relevance, with their emphasis on values, spiritual as well as scientific education, development goals which could lead to true "contentment", and the genuine inclusion of marginalised communities?

We were living the question so eloquently posed by Robert Chambers, from the University of Sussex: *Whose reality counts?*

Only on the third day, when the focus turned to the WDR itself, did the discussion flow with more cohesion and a perhaps surprising degree of consensus was reached on some of the main points.

### **WFDD agenda for the WDR 2001**

There is, of course, a connection between all the different approaches and themes raised at the Consultation. The three themes of the WDR, empowerment (to counteract inequality), security (measures to protect the poor from macro-level shocks) and opportunity (to benefit from economic growth), can meet with our general approval. But the faiths would like to hear more about the WDR's vision of development, so that the values behind the priorities it proposes are made explicit.

Individual transformation - a pre-requisite for real social change, the quality as well as the quantity of education, space for diversity of cultures and outlook (also within the religious communities themselves), the promotion of self-reliance, more clarity about the causes of poverty and the recognition of gross inequality as one of these, were among the main points made by the faiths' delegates.

Our task now is to work to find ways in which our agenda for the WDR can be presented in a useful and accessible form to its authors.

*The three presentations made by the WFDD at the Consultation in Johannesburg are available from WFDD as our Occasional Paper No.2. Other papers are also available on request.*

### **WDR Consultation on Exclusion, Berlin, 2-5 February 1999**

The WDR 2000/1 team invited one speaker from the WFDD to a further Consultation in Berlin on the topic of Exclusion. Many of the themes which emerged were similar to those in Johannesburg, but particularly emphasised were the power relations behind economic, social and political exclusion.

Conflicts of interest will inevitably arise over any measures taken in favour of the poor. The need for consistency in government policies, concerning arms sales, for example, was brought up several times. To our satisfaction, values and attitudes as a key contributory factor to the perpetuation as well as the eradication of poverty were highlighted at the end as one of the most important issues discussed.

### **WFDD "Comment"**

One vehicle for presenting our agenda will be the "Comment" we have been invited to make on the WDR, specifically from the faiths. A consultant is writing a first draft for us, integrating faith-based values with the economic issues at the heart of the World Bank.

*We would very much appreciate your comments on this draft, which will be available from WFDD from mid-February.*

## **2. OTHER WFDD NEWS**

### **Engagement Groups**

The Hunger and Food Security Group is gradually getting to its feet. The proposal for the first year is to take Ethiopia, Brazil and Pakistan as the three countries in each of which we shall make comparative studies between the approach to hunger and food security of a faith-based organisation and the World Bank.

The focus countries for the other groups on Culture as an Element of Development, Post-Conflict Reconstruction and the Delivery of Social Services have not yet been chosen. *We would welcome cooperation from our readers.*

### **"Mapping" of faith-based work**

We have commissioned a much-needed mapping exercise from Malcolm Young, a research student at Harvard University. Malcolm is gathering up information about faith-based development work with poor communities and faith-based research on development issues. *Please send any contacts to him at [myoung@hds.harvard.edu](mailto:myoung@hds.harvard.edu)*

### **Intra-faith meetings**

Intra-faith meetings are being planned for the second quarter of the year in New York, India and South-East Asia.

