

WORLD FAITHS DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE

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Our third Bulletin brings with it the final version of our Comment on the first draft of the World Bank's World Development Report 2000. The drawing up of the Comment has been a very rich process to which we have dedicated the first year of the WFDD. This was partly because of the June deadline for consultative papers on the WDR 2000, but mainly because we realised that, as a foundation for any future work, we needed a clearer vision of what an inter-faith perspective on poverty and development might mean. The result is in your hands – a light, we hope, illuminating ways forward to a different kind of development for the world we live in. We involved as many people as our limited resources allowed, but we are aware that, although this marks the end of one phase of our inter-faith dialogue, it must also be the beginning of another, in which we cast our nets much wider.

In March it became clear that one coordinator could not carry out the agenda set for the WFDD. We have therefore appointed Kishore Shah, a Kenyan Indian Jain, with long experience of development work in India, as our Coordinator for the Engagement Groups. We hope now to decentralise the work and build on the incipient networks we have formed. If the WFDD is to involve inter-faith engagement at all levels, we shall need a great deal of active help from all of you, our readers and supporters.

*Wendy Tyndale
Coordinator for the Faiths*

COMMENT ON THE WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2000

Gathering up views and visions

We followed up the conferences to which WFDD was invited by the WDR team at the beginning of the year by asking Roger Riddell, a Roman Catholic development consultant in Zambia, to write the first draft of the WFDD Comment on the WDR 2000. This was then widely circulated for consultation.

Apart from the many written contributions we received, the WFDD Steering Group discussed the draft, and seminars, attended mainly by Christians, were held in Brussels (convened by Br. Jean-Claude Lavigne from the Dominicans) and London (convened by WFDD). These were followed by two inter-faith conferences in Sri Lanka (convened by Professor P.D. Premasiri from Peradeniya and Rev. Freddy de Alwis from the National Council of Churches in Colombo).

Then in India conferences were held in Bhubaneswar (convened by Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb) and in Delhi (convened by Dr. Kamla Chowdry and Swami Agnivesh, with the help of Dr. Mohinder Singh). These conferences gave us some rich insights into different aspects of spirituality and development. They were attended by Bahá'ís, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Jains and Sikhs.

The people who contributed orally or in writing to the deepening of the debate are all engaged in work with materially poor communities and are motivated by their religious beliefs. We hope that they will find their views and visions faithfully reflected in the final version.

Presentation of the Comment at the World Bank in Washington, June 1999

The Comment was presented to the World Bank by a delegation made up of Br. Lalith Abeyasinghe, from Satyodaya, an interfaith monastic centre in Sri Lanka, Swami Agnivesh, from Ayra Samaj and the interfaith movement

"Religions for Social Justice", Javier Iguñiz, a Peruvian economist from the Catholic University in Lima, Rev. Canon Richard Marsh, representing the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Kishore Shah and Wendy Tyndale (WFDD).

The President of the Bank, James Wolfensohn, opened the meeting, at which forty members of staff were present. Executive Director Shengman Zhang gave an introduction which, after presentations by the WFDD delegation, was followed by some detailed observations on the Comment from Prof. Ravi Kanbur, the Director of the *WDR 2000*. Although the *WDR* team have some difficulty in accepting some of the faiths' positions, there are several parts of the document they will incorporate into the report.

Subsequent meetings with staff from the Africa, Latin America, South Asia and Education Departments of the Bank, from their Rural and Human Development sections and their Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit, as well as with the "Friday Morning Group" which discusses ethical questions, confirmed that the Comment had been very well received. It is the first time that an inter-faith perspective has been presented on the Bank's work, and people there are experiencing it as an inspiration as well as a challenge.

Future agenda with the Comment

We have been encouraged now to publish this "Different Perspective on Development and Poverty" in its own right, taking out references to the *WDR*, and to translate it into as many languages as possible. We hope that it will provide vision and hope, provoke wider discussion, and be used as a yardstick to help faith communities to measure to what extent their own work with poor communities lives up to the principles and visions they proclaim.

ENGAGEMENT GROUPS

Action-oriented research

A pilot initiative, involving Christians and Muslims, is being planned on **Hunger and Food Security** in Ethiopia. Through action-orientated research, the aim is to analyse how far faith

communities are able to fulfil the aspirations of the poor. A particular focus will be on the unique contribution that faith-based programmes have to offer. The results of the research will feed into discussions with the Ethiopian government, Ethiopian society and the World Bank on a rural development policy for that country.

A similar exercise will be carried out with two faith-based **education** programmes in Tanzania. Then a workshop will be held, bringing people from the four pilot programmes, but also from other East African countries together. The aims will be to learn from each other's experience, to identify possibilities for closer cooperation among the organisations present, and particularly to analyse how their work fits in with national and international development policies, some of which, at least, will be promoted by the World Bank. *We would very much welcome contacts with faith-based organisations working in East Africa.*

Education as a solution to the situation of Indian children working in stone quarries will be the subject of further case study on the **Delivery of Social Services** by faith communities.

Data base

Another aspect of the work on these Engagement Groups will be a data base of faith-based organisations working on anti-poverty programmes. *If anyone knows of any such existing data bases, please let us know.*

The focus of the third Engagement Group on **Post-Conflict Reconstruction**, is on indigenous reconciliation processes, and their relationship to the religious beliefs of the communities concerned. We hope to gather insights which can be widely shared the world over and influence policies for peace processes supported both by religious organisations and the World Bank. It has not yet been decided on which countries we should focus, but suggestions have been made which include Guatemala, Cambodia, Sri Lanka and several countries in Africa. *We would appreciate any specific suggestions and contacts with people engaged in such processes.*

