

WORLD FAITHS DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE

OUTLINE FOR CASE STUDIES

Background

Up to now the “development” process has been focused largely on the importance of economic growth, with Western-trained experts playing a central role. It has been embedded in an understanding of knowledge which gives priority to technology and science and it has been guided by a dualistic view of the world which separates the material from the spiritual. That the former has been granted precedence over the latter is made apparent by the scarcity of any mention in development literature of cultural, let alone spiritual concerns. This has occurred, despite the fact that religious beliefs are a prime source of guidance, motivation and support for most people in the world, especially those who are materially the poorest and especially in the so-called “developing countries”.

However, the crying needs of those who are excluded from a share in the global wealth and from all positions of power or decision-making processes are leading many people from the different faith traditions to re-interpret what “development” is about. For them it is not a question of rejecting western scientific rationality but of combining it with other paths to wisdom which lie at the roots of people’s beliefs and culture.

The religious/spiritual movements involved in this work seldom seek public recognition, being more interested in getting on with their task of individual and social transformation at the grass-roots level. This makes it easy for the mainstream media, the academic world, governments and official development agencies to pass them by. Our aim is to highlight the stories and voices of those who are thinking and working in different ways, with different priorities and different goals.

Content

Our intention with these case studies is not to provide blueprints for development or even examples of projects which could be multiplied or “scaled-up” but rather to illustrate how religious faith/spirituality gives rise to different visions of development and possibilities of realising them in practice. We hope that the studies will be written up in such a way as to bring the work alive, rather than as “programme reports”.

We are deliberately avoiding an over-rigorous academic approach which might squeeze our findings into pre-conceived frameworks or in other ways restrict them. Nevertheless, we shall seek a certain standardisation of the kinds of questions asked and material included in the studies in order to ensure a focus on the religious/spiritual aspects of the movements or programmes studied. We want to ensure too that some generally useful conclusions may be drawn from the studies as a whole.

Material for the case studies will be gathered from printed material, visits and interviews.

Guidelines

The following is meant as a guide for the information to be included but clearly each movement will have its own characteristics:

- a) *A narrative description of what is happening on the ground:*
 - How the work began (leaders, founders) and for what reason (what problems were to be tackled),
 - Who is involved (numbers of people involved, geographical spread, social characteristics of those who benefit from the work)
 - What resources have been available (financial and otherwise)
 - What difficulties have been encountered
 - What success the movement/programme has had in achieving its aims.

- b) *Analysis of issues such as:*
 - How “development” or “progress” is understood by those participating in the movement/programme
 - The values the people involved seek to uphold, to what extent these values are derived from their faith and how they have influenced their practice
 - Other ways in which their faith / spirituality has influenced their work
 - Other factors, such as support from religious institutions and how the work has been planned and evaluated etc.
 - What made for success (e.g. leadership, characteristics of the community/communities involved)

- c) Conclusions and insights and their wider relevance for future policy and practice.

Format

Manuscripts should be not more than 5,000 words in length and presented on disk in Word Format.

Expected Outcomes

- a) Some indications for a different vision of development and different ways of working with materially impoverished communities
- b) A greater understanding of the contribution of religious faith/ spirituality to development in terms of the values and visions, motivation, support and encouragement it brings.
- c) The dissemination of the case studies and the ideas generated by them.

WFDD will commission case studies but is happy to receive unsolicited manuscripts for consideration. Where a case study is proposed but not yet written up a preliminary outline would be a useful basis for discussion.