

RELIGIOUS FAITH AND DEVELOPMENT: EXPLORATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

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“Development is about real people, people in concrete situations; all possess one great asset, their dignity.” Archbishop Diarmuid Martin

Abstract

Though many institutions making up the international aid system engaged quite episodically with faith institutions in the past, this situation is changing. Change is propelled by the resurgence and greater assertiveness of faith institutions on one side and by more intensive engagement among public and civil society institutions and growing appreciation of the importance of community participation in development programs on the other. The World Bank set out in 1998 to engage more proactively with the world of faith; its experience of development policy and on-the-ground engagement and the tense debates around the initiative offer important lessons. The divides separating the worlds of official development agencies and religious and faith based organizations are often artificial. Common tendencies to work in distinct silos and sectors are the obstacles. Separation and segmentation of effort contribute to significant tensions among actors, who, at a fundamental level, share a deep common concern for the welfare of the world's poorest citizens and future global social, political, and environmental systems.

Some maintain that religion and socio economic development belong to different spheres, best cast in separate roles—even separate dramas. However, the wide array of faith institutions and development agencies across the world share a central focus on poor people, a searing disappointment in the face of unfulfilled human potential, and concern about social exclusion. This common ground ties both communities to the global consensus underlying the 2000 Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals—the centerpiece of the 2000 United Nations Summit—and opens opportunities even as it poses practical challenges.²

Appreciation is growing that important common concerns indeed link these seemingly separate and contending worlds. We live in dangerous times, with dangerous roads ahead; such roads are best traveled together by those whose direction and path are essentially the same. Our world offers phenomenal opportunities, and the ancient assumption that “the poor shall always be with us” can and must be disproved. Today’s challenges demand urgent new thinking and action by different partners and cast quite new light on ancient approaches, assumptions and roles. Traditional approaches to development often were confined in separate silos which aggravated gaps in knowledge and obscured awareness of the work, however similar, of others. Nowhere are these gaps more relevant and challenging than where the worlds of religion and development overlap.

This reflection recounts how one institution, the World Bank, has engaged over the past eight years with the world of faith. This journey has not been smooth but it has

¹ Based on a presentation at the Conference on Religious NGOs and Development Institutions in Oslo, Norway on April 7, 2005. Thanks to Bill Leshner, Lucy Keough, Veit Burger, and Marisa van Saanen for thoughtful comments.

² <http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org/ext/MDG/home.do> provides background and many links describing the Millennium Declaration and Goals and their practical significance and status.

involved much learning and new understandings of both development and of partnerships. The experience offers many important lessons. As we build stronger bridges between the paths of faith and development—avoiding dangers, not always as fellows but at least as fellow travelers—we need to deal with our differences with forthright honesty even as we bring to life our shared dream of a world without poverty.

The World Bank and Religion?

Conceptions and perceptions about the World Bank differ widely so there is merit in articulating my vision of the institution's mission and character. This vision explains why we set out to build greater understanding of and stronger ties to faith institutions.

Engraved in marble by the World Bank's main entrance is the phrase "Our dream is a world free of poverty." That mission unites many who work in widely differing areas and disciplines, who may see very different paths and priorities towards a poverty-free world. Today's World Bank is marked by a widening appreciation that the task of working for a more just world must enlist a range of interventions and actors; there is no magic bullet, no single recipe. A kaleidoscope of partnerships and a fundamentally interdisciplinary approach are vital if we are to succeed.

As front-line operational officers and international civil servants in a multilateral institution, we address an extraordinary range of issues: "from AIDS to zebras". Debt, corruption, gender issues, and environmental assessments are our hourly fare. We work with villagers to raise crop yields, build pumps for water, and reduce maternal mortality. We work with urban slum communities on housing, with city administrators on sanitation, and with women's groups to confront the HIV/AIDS pandemic, expand promising microcredit schemes, and improve child nutrition. Education is a central concern, as are jobs and social safety nets. We deal all too often with the impact of economic crises and mismanagement (including corruption, which siphons resources away from social services and development programs). Technology, trade, public institutions, and land rights affect development programs in myriad ways. We aim always to forge long-term visions and solutions that will yield better lives, even as we grapple daily with the practical consequences of strategic choices for countries as different as Bolivia, Mali, Morocco, Turkey, South Africa, and Cambodia. Central to our ethos is the goal of serving as a catalyst to help bring the best of global experience to those who want and need to change. We are pragmatic visionaries and idealistic realists.

Though this listing of development topics is familiar ground for any faith-based NGO, pastor, or imam working in a poor community, the World Bank, over its 60+ year history, had remarkably little professional contact at either global or local levels with the world of faith and the people who work in it. Faith perspectives—including the active roles of religious institutions that own land, run schools, assist poor people, and care for orphans and disabled people—were often invisible to development teams. That oversight often resulted from preconceptions about differing roles; sometimes it reflected suspicions that faith institutions stood against development goals. Project analysis and documentation, institutional vocabulary, research agendas, dialogue with countries,

public speeches, and internal staff training rarely included glimpses of the world of faith. Even today the World Bank website hardly mentions faith. Encounters with churches, temples, and mosques did occur, but these patchy interactions were driven by specific individuals and proved ephemeral.

A similar portrait could be drawn of how many faith-based institutions saw their development counterparts. The former often paint a rather dismal picture of the latter as large, difficult to understand, arrogant, driven by an agenda to create—and even concentrate—wealth, and removed from daily concerns. Faith groups can portray development institutions as contributing to social and economic problems because of their advice to curtail subsidies, introduce or enforce taxation regimes, constrain civil service employment, focus on efficiency in expenditures on schools and health, and reduce barriers that protect crop production or local industry.³ The area of greatest tensions has surrounded the World Bank’s advice to governments in handling their finances, including large debt, economic crises, and extensive and often poorly managed public sectors. As an example, faith groups often portray privatization of water systems as detrimental to the poor; World Bank teams, in contrast, have regarded such measures as the best—if not the only—way to attract investment and provide clean water at reasonable cost.

The initiative to bridge gulfs with faith communities did not focus on finance (notwithstanding common misconceptions). Indeed, the World Bank has virtually no instruments for direct financing of civil society groups including faith institutions. The effort was squarely directed to the policy arena and visions and strategies that underlie development programs. The primary goal of development work is not to transfer funds. Putting funding at the forefront overstates its role both in the concerns of faith institutions about multilateral development policies and in the World Bank’s array of instruments for fighting poverty. Most faith institutions are not seeking direct financing from development institutions. The scope for dialogue, partnership, alliances, and mutual support and exchange lies largely beyond the confines of a focus on direct finance.

The World Bank’s engagement with faith institutions forms part of a broader, continuing transformation in relationships with a wide gamut of non-governmental organizations. The Bank is profoundly respectful of its relations with the governments that are its shareholders; we work in a partnership with them to determine how to structure loans, credits, and grants and who will implement programs. The primacy of the World Bank’s relationships with governments attracts considerable attention, particularly in countries where democratic institutions and traditions are not well developed, but even in countries with vibrant public debate. The World Bank of the past felt highly constrained in its relations with most entities outside governments, relating to them through the lens of government guidance. In some countries, meetings with civil society were rare and often stilted. This situation has changed markedly. Today, the World Bank has a myriad of partnerships and relationships with an extraordinary range of

³ See for example the World Council of Churches publication entitled *Lead us not into Temptation* (Geneva: WCC, 2002), prepared in preparation for a dialogue with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

institutions. Among the most dynamic are those with civil society organizations. What remains true, though, is that financing relationships for normal Bank business are the province of governments which decide when and for what purpose they will borrow or accept grants and how the programs will be executed.

Many forces other than funding have shaped the jarring perceptions and realities that divide faith and development institutions. Among the most important is a tendency to work in distinct silos and sectors. Thus faith institutions often do not find a “fit” in consultative processes, because such processes tend to center on government entities which may not instinctively or deliberately include faith voices. Development institutions have few vehicles that help them navigate among faith institutions and learn from them; they organize their work and their discourse in a quite different fashion and may be ignorant of the faith worlds. This segmentation has heightened tensions among players who share a deep concern for the welfare of the world’s poorest citizens and their social, political, and environmental systems. It would be naïve not to recognize that some segmentation is fueled by a human tendency towards competition and a focus on one’s own institution, even in ventures whose aims are profoundly altruistic and cooperative. But differing histories, organization, approach and language have played a far greater part.

The long-standing tendency by the World Bank to employ dry, technical economics-speak contributes to an aura of exclusiveness. The Bank recognizes that accessible language is critical for the public engagement that underlies development success, but does not always put that precept into practice. World Bank circles also rarely use the language of ethics and values—of spirituality and the soul, which faith institutions quite understandably expect to hear. This exacerbates misperceptions: development institutions are profoundly ethical in their origins, the passion of their staffs, and the rules governing financial management, procurement and project evaluation, among other aspects of their work. But that is difficult to divine from institutional prose, which tends to be data-laden and “preachy” in the certainty of tone and tendency to prescribe.

Finally, the perception and the reality of “balance of power” among institutions play a role. Faith institutions often describe a David-and-Goliath situation, wherein the mighty World Bank evinces little regard for poor governments facing the Damocles sword of acute fiscal crisis with limited resources and voice, and for smaller institutions and actors (although the reverse might occur with a powerful institution such as the Vatican). Such perceptions have shaped relationships between faith and development groups.

Jim Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank from 1995 to 2005, set out to bridge such divides. His outreach drew in civil society, business, and cultural institutions, but the attempt to build links with faith communities was among the most ambitious. High-level meetings among faith and development leaders aimed to build a global alliance buttressed by policy consultations, HIV/AIDS was a driving focus, and country level pilots tested the waters for joint approaches to leading development issues.

The World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD), a small, autonomous institution dedicated to dialogue and action on poverty, cultural diversity, services to the poor, and equity, emerged from the faith initiative.⁴ WFDD has, for example, examined the view and involvement of faith institutions in the Poverty Reduction Strategy process (PRSP), which links debt relief to strategies for alleviating poverty. It piloted interfaith explorations of pragmatic development problems in Ethiopia, Guatemala, and Tanzania, and engaged faith groups in programs to combat HIV/AIDS and preserve the environment. A small team in the Bank has complemented WFDD with a work program focused on building partnerships.

Four global meetings between faith and development leaders helped shape the agenda for action. At the first such meeting, held at Lambeth Palace in London in February 1998, leaders from the major world faiths met under the leadership of Jim Wolfensohn and George Carey, then Archbishop of Canterbury, with His Highness the Aga Khan also present. Participants concluded that shared concerns about poverty were far more important than their evident differences. A second meeting, in Washington, DC, in November 1999, elaborated an action plan for creating the WFDD. A larger group of leaders then met at Canterbury in October 2002 to link their dialogue to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).⁵ A fourth meeting at Dublin Castle in January 2005, chaired again by Jim Wolfensohn and Lord Carey with Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, reaffirmed the vital importance of faith-development dialogue and action for the MDG agenda, and, beyond, for global equity.⁶

A growing network of supporters believe that this work offers significant potential to enhance development work. In 2000, however, Jim Wolfensohn's initiative encountered serious opposition from the World Bank's executive directors—representatives of its 184 member countries. These objections prompted the Bank to curtail its efforts; its engagement thereafter was more cautious, more muted, and more qualified than originally foreseen.

Dialogue within the World Bank and discussions with member governments since 2000 have underscored why the faith development dialogue makes eminent sense and addressed many concerns that were raised. And September 11, 2001, shone a spotlight on the importance of religion in global affairs, removing a veil from realities that had been present all along. Still, the Bank has yet to resolve its internal tensions which impeded the WFDD's development, though modest work has continued and today faith organizations participate in the work of the World Bank at many levels, including a newly launched Civil Society Forum, HIV/AIDS programs, and community approaches to the environment. Awareness of the importance of faith roles is embedded in some

⁴ www.wfdd.org.uk.

⁵ See Katherine Marshall and Richard Marsh, *Millennium Challenges for Faith and Development Leaders* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2003).

⁶ Katherine Marshall and Lucy Keough, *Finding Global Balance: Common Ground between the Worlds of Development and Faith* (Washington, DC: World Bank, June 2005).

Bank operations. Nevertheless, the reach and depth of understanding is still patchy and fragile and uncertainties regarding future directions persist.

Why Engage with Faith Institutions? Arguments against and Lessons Learned

No-one argues that if a government chooses to engage with faith institutions, the World Bank and other development institutions cannot appropriately follow suit. Development institutions see faith groups as legitimate and important players in civil society forums on the full gamut of development issues. However, criticisms have focused on programs which involve faith institutions directly and even dialogue that takes place at the global or regional level. Concerns fall into three categories: the politics surrounding religion; views of some religious institutions about development and their influence on it; and questions about the priority and relevance of systematic dialogue with faith institutions. In a simple if somewhat caricatured summary, some development critics see religions as divisive, dangerous, and defunct.

Religion is divisive: The World Bank operates under a strict injunction to avoid political interference in the affairs of member countries. Some argued that engagement with global interfaith and faith organizations might run up against that injunction given the many tensions that have characterized relationships among faith groups over history. Bank engagement with leading faith figures and in global debates involving faith communities was seen to threaten an age-old and often hard-won separation between church and state (the *laïcité* which is a central public policy issue in France, for example). Some were concerned that working with faith groups might draw the World Bank into tensions around fundamentalist movements. Where religion contributes to civic tensions and conflicts, Bank involvement might accentuate these tensions and even promote violence.

Religious politics can be ferociously complex and often ferocious. Competition between faith systems seems hard-wired, given the ultimate stakes (who is saved) and shorter-term stakes (like financial survival). Veils of polite rhetoric and solemn ritual merely mask intolerance in many instances. The vast majority of people of faith, however, live in harmony and the array of interfaith initiatives and institutions in today's world is extraordinary. Legal and social norms guiding church state relations reflect wisdom, history, and hard politics. Yet the development world often holds highly simplified views of how religions work, and rarely appreciate fully the enormous differences among faith institutions and practices. In short, a simplistic view that "church" and "state" are separate is often impractical, unrealistic, unnecessary, and unwise. It reflects poorly today's complex debates on appropriate church state relations in diverse contemporary societies.

Religion is dangerous: Dialogue about faith-development relationships has brought into stark relief the fact that deep down if often unspoken many development actors see many religions as working toward a fundamentally different agenda, one driven by tradition and immutable theological approaches. These, they argue, lead faith leaders and institutions to stand against modernization and social change in general, and

to oppose change and flexibility in the roles of women and men in particular, especially where reproductive health is concerned. Many development workers are concerned that faith institutions—even if they focus on health and education—serve a limited segment of the community to the exclusion of non-followers, and are primarily motivated by a desire to gain converts.

Culture and motivation are complicating factors. Many cultural practices have a religious veneer, and vice versa; disentangling the strands of culture and religion is difficult, the more so as both strands (culture and faith) change—often at different tempos. Female genital mutilation is a striking example of a tightly knotted set of issues but there are countless others. There is also suspicion (often going many ways) turning on motives for action. Some development actors have been reluctant to engage with faith institutions even in the area of classic social services like health and education where they are large and important players and programs overlap, because they fear that the work of faith institutions, however effective, is primarily motivated by a desire to gain converts or to serve a only part of the community. That faith groups often serve the whole community without quid pro quos is either not known or brushed aside. Concerns about motives and exclusion are exacerbated by real frictions linked to the evangelizing or proselytizing activities of some faiths, with which development actors wish not to be associated in any fashion.

The upshot of this complex of issues and concerns is that some argue for a cautious course of not engaging at all with institutions whose agendas were so fundamentally opposed to important areas of consensus and priority in the development community and where the issues at stake (role of women, ancient traditions and rituals, sexuality) are so profoundly sensitive and difficult to discuss.

Religion is defunct. An often unspoken assumption among development specialists is that adherence to religion declines with modernization and economic growth. As society becomes increasingly modern and secular, religion is thought to take a more peripheral and even retrograde role. Engagement with faith institutions seems unnecessary and a low priority.

Each area of doubt highlights important questions and risks. Dialogue on their implications has proved both sobering and enlightening. Some preliminary conclusions and “lessons” follow:

* Norms for church and state roles deserve respect grounded in knowledge of history and socio-political debates, country by country and even community by community. Presuppositions and “models” are problematic as very different formulas are emerging today; one size does not fit all. In France, for example, centuries of religious wars shape contemporary approaches to immigrant communities and religious symbolism in schools. Debates about accountability, governance and change in many Muslim societies are colored by national and society narratives of historical evolution and distinct community character. India’s creative models of building on social and faith traditions and institutions in the domain of personal law, within the bounds of basic rights, appear

to work well. Morocco's path-breaking new family code brings ancient faith traditions, modern realities, and concepts of rights together in creative new patterns.

* Debates about evolving boundaries between church and state, that can rage both in villages and in the United Nations, have implications for development programs from the macro level (whose voice determines national and transnational politics?) to the most micro level (village political structure and voice, approaches to civic and religious education in schools).

* These profoundly complex and sensitive issues, with their deep historic roots, enjoin us to care and humility. A practical challenge is to determine whose voice to listen to; who, among a host of possible choices, should be invited to the table? It is patently impossible to hear *all* voices, and there should be no pretence of doing so. Groups such as Religions for Peace and the World Parliament of the Religions have invested decades in developing the understanding and consensus that enables them to aspire to inclusiveness and representativity (as they term it). Development actors are wisest not to claim inclusiveness and to be ready always to hear new voices.

* We need to engage (with open eyes and appropriate caution) even with controversial groups; the objective must be to listen, not to judge, to understand, not to preach. It is important to stretch beyond the circles of the "converted", who form part of global networks and institutions in the interfaith world, to those who are at the boundaries of tensions and conflicts. We need to appreciate their perspectives; herein lies potential for helping to advance dialogue and work towards solutions. That said, development practitioners must avoid associating with advocates of violence or bitter critics of other faiths.

* Interfaith institutions and events offer good platforms for engagement. Their core goals (world peace and harmonious relations among peoples) could scarcely be more important or admirable. They aim not for superficial harmony but for genuine transformation in attitudes and practices springing from new understandings of interfaith realities and potential avenues for living and working together with respect and understanding. They play vital roles in our globalized, increasingly plural society. Interfaith dialogue offers practical ground for exchange and action and increasingly addresses development issues (witness the World Parliament of the Religions core agenda in 2004: debt, water, refugees, and religiously-motivated violence; the Community of Sant'Egidio's focus on HIV/AIDS).

* The development world can learn from religions in many ways. First, while deep and ancient theological traditions that underlie differences should never be minimized, myriad efforts today work to build respect for differences and bridge them. This is a very dynamic area. Sulak Sivaraksa, wise Buddhist leader, commented recently that today's theologians are increasingly open and flexible, while economists now are least flexible and least understanding of other realities. Unexpected synergies and alliances are emerging. Recent alliances among very different faith traditions in the United States to fight trafficking of women and advocate for sharply increased support

for HIV/AIDS programs illustrate common ground among unlikely allies. Second, most religious communities live side by side in harmony and respect. India, for example, is marked by extraordinary religious coexistence despite outbreaks of violence. Africa, too, is a profoundly religiously pluralistic continent largely marked by amicable relations among communities. "Faith literacy" should move beyond stereotypes and a veneer of passing reference to faith to more sophisticated understanding.

* Despite large areas of common ground, the "religious agenda" is not the same as the "development agenda." Religions are not, as Archbishop Anastasios of Albania reminded us⁷, "just other NGOs." It is often important to recognize differences and "agree to disagree".

* Different agendas, different visions, different vocabulary and different fields of action offer a wealth of possible insight that can directly benefit development programs. We need willingness to learn, to accept difference, and to avoid "easy paths", focusing on "easy issues" and rather facile and superficial agreements. The "search for common ground" has come a long way, with much consensus on principles of a global ethic and practical examples of collaboration among religions. However, apparent differences also need attention - how is globalization experienced? Why the focus on water? Why such different views on roles of men and women? What avenues are suggested on both national and personal indebtedness? What do faith perspectives suggest on equity in the future? Reaching beyond the universally accepted to the boundaries of tensions and conflicts is important.

* The "liberal assumption" that religion declines as incomes rise is a gross oversimplification; religion is patently not dying out. Defeating this assumption requires data and evidence. Individuals and institutional assumptions about faith groups often reflect personal experience: someone with a personal atheist code, or with bitter personal experience with the Catholic or Muslim faith, may approach religion very differently from a colleague who finds insight and consolation in a faith-based congregation.

* The dynamics of change in religions reflect increasingly pluralistic societies and the potential for more personal religious practice ("bricolage," or combining beliefs in personal ways). Attention to the changing religious geography and demography can shed light on perceptions of development and, at a much deeper level, help in understanding how societies change and modernize or fail to do so. Religion and human behavior are tightly associated in most societies.

* Case studies of instructive partnerships can help address questions about priorities and operational impact. Closer bonds between development agencies and religious communities must be adapted to specific religious and cultural situations.

Varying agendas, visions, vocabulary, and fields of action among faith groups offer insights that can benefit development programs. Pertinent issues emerge especially from parallels and discordance in faith and development institution agendas and

⁷ Canterbury meeting, October 2002

priorities. Examples include differing perspectives on globalization, various faith perspectives on equity, investment and debt, views on roles of men and women, and approaches to reaching those excluded from the benefits of modernization. Religious media also offer vast and powerful channels of communication; we have much to learn from how they communicate.

Making Faith-Development Partnerships a Priority

The rationale for development institutions to engage more actively on faith (and vice versa) has five major pillars:

Presence and trust. Faith organizations play major roles in communities and together constitute the world's largest distribution system. Poor communities around the world trust faith leaders and institutions more than many other entities,⁸ in part because their engagement in many dimensions of people's lives is robust and long term. Development groups need to hear the views of faith-based groups and draw lessons from their experience. Religions give hope and bring meaning to the lives of millions of people; religious teachings on core values are an essential ingredient in many human relationships and incentives.

Active engagement in development. Some see faith as primarily about Sunday, Friday, Saturday—days set aside for worship—or funerals, marriage, baptism, and other rituals. The practical roles of religions, however, extend far beyond these pastoral activities, important as they are. We do not know precisely how many hospitals and schools faith institutions operate, how many hectares of forests and watersheds they protect, or how many orphans they care for. However, the numbers are large; some estimates put the share of faith run hospitals in Africa at over 50 percent. Given the primary focus of the MDGs and development agendas on health and education, dialogue and common engagement seem critical in all these areas. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has particular importance. Faith institutions, leaders, and communities play major roles in both accentuating and defeating stigma—a primary vector of the disease—and are vital to devising viable strategies to combat it.

Conflict resolution, prevention, and humanitarian support. In conflict-affected countries and regions, faith institutions are often the only surviving institutions. They run schools and hospitals even when bullets are flying and when all that is left is rubble. They rebuild after calamities; witness their key role after the December 2004 tsunami and in New Orleans post-Katrina. Whether individually or as part of interfaith alliances, faith communities constantly engage in peace-making activities, and their voice, consolation, and moral leadership promote healing.

Ethics and values. Faith institutions and leaders often stand as courageous leaders who “speak truth to power” and help with difficult moral transitions. Witness the role of Archbishop Desmond Tutu in fighting apartheid in South Africa, and of faith groups in

⁸ A series of surveys led by the World Bank affirmed these high levels of trust. See Deepa Narayan, *Voices of the Poor* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2000–2003).

confronting child soldiers, trafficked girls, female genital cutting, persecution of witches, oppression of excluded groups, and fighting corruption. Thinking deeply about such issues is part of the calling of religious leaders, and they rely on centuries-old traditions to do so. Faith institutions can spur people to grapple with ethical issues ranging from corruption to equity.

Global support for development agendas. Through alliances with faith communities, development leaders stand to benefit from faith leadership, communication skills, and commitment to fighting poverty. Faith leadership drove the Jubilee 2000 campaign, which relied on an ancient Biblical concept to mobilize a coalition of mothers, students, unions, business, and congregations to reorient a highly technical debate about poor country debt toward social justice. Such moral and conceptual leadership will be essential in implementing the MDGs and a broader social justice agenda.

Dialogue and alliance are never easy. Development circles often confuse dialogue with debate, which involves marshalling and explaining facts and hypotheses, scoring points, and even preaching. We can learn from ancient processes engrained in faith traditions, where dialogue means remaining open to learning and transformation. These traditions and that spirit will be especially important in addressing contentious areas such as gender roles, sexual ethics, contrasting visions of globalization, and approaches to global warming.

Critiques by religious leaders and institutions of the World Bank and other development institutions have helped awaken them to new ways of seeing problems and programs. The Internet and burgeoning civil society facilitate extraordinary exchanges. We are, nonetheless, at an early stage of dialogue and common engagement. While the Jubilee campaign helped change policy and approach to poor countries, questions about how much debt to reschedule and forgive, and the implications of such adjustments for future financing remain. Faith institutions have also promoted negative images of structural adjustment, globalization and free markets, privatization, user fees, and cash crop projects, among other knotty topics. Participants in faith-development dialogue are advancing beyond mutual condemnation and misunderstanding to an emerging appreciation of why such different understandings of these policies and approaches have taken hold.

The core argument for active dialogue between institutions of faith and development is that there are enormous areas of overlap, convergence, shared concern and knowledge, and a core common purpose. Faith and development institutions seek to work WITH poor communities to improve their lives and ensure them a better future. The critical challenges at the global level demand our common alliance and efforts. Among our common passions and challenges is the determination to focus on Africa and recommit to this remarkable continent. At the broadest level, and with the metaphor of a common journey in mind, we face a complex and dangerous road ahead in world affairs, and we need to travel it, where we can, together.

Strategies for Change

Most faith and development institutions readily agree that humanity's most critical challenge is to end acute poverty and fight for social justice. From ancient times, wise religious leaders have inspired compassion and support for the poor. Faith institutions have a wealth of experience, an array of instruments, and communities of believers. For perhaps the first time in human history a powerful consensus unites the global community that we can and must ensure all people, everywhere a minimally decent standard of living. As Jim Wolfensohn, former World Bank president, is fond of saying "There is no place to hide": everyone agrees.

Recently forged, unconventional partnerships build on this common ground. There are many exciting examples of creative work, often involving institutions that barely knew of each other in the past or were outright opponents. Their experiences offer many lessons and ideas.⁹ A new kaleidoscope of alliances and partnerships with faith-based organizations is a central plank in revitalizing the global effort. But not all progress is so encouraging. Reports from the U.N. Secretary General, the World Bank, Jeffrey Sachs, head of Columbia University's Earth Institute, and others paint a tenuous picture on MDG progress.

So, much more needs to be done and the future path needs the combined experience and strengths of both development and faith worlds. As we work to create new faith-development alliances, we need a rich array of approaches and means. Temples are not only about heart and soul; development institutions are not only about mind and brawn. With so much in common, there is much to share.

⁹ See *Mind, Heart, and Soul in the Fight against Poverty* Katherine Marshall and Lucy Keough (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2004)