

Promotio Iustitiae



Reflection

THE CHALLENGE OF 'GOVERNANCE' SOME JESUIT RESPONSES

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EDITORIAL

Developing global and regional networking was proposed by GC 34 as the “framework for the development of many forms of global and regional cooperation” (D 21, nn. 13-14). The term ‘networking’ has been so freely, and, at times, so vacuously used, that it runs the risk of becoming one more cliché. Reading Decree 21 on Inter-Provincial and Supra-Provincial Collaboration a decade later, one is left with a sense of wonder and a feeling of growing disquiet. Wonder at the prophetic grandeur with which GC 34 described the urgency of networking and at the passionate plea to implement it. Uneasiness at the difficulties experienced by many networks in establishing effective linkages and surviving subtle forms of scepticism and indifference.

GC 34 truly grasped and forcefully expressed the urgency to develop the international character of our mission in a world which was already fully experiencing the effects of globalisation. While affirming that “today more than ever, the needs of the world constitute an urgent call to put our Ignatian universalism into practice” (n. 2), GC 34 acknowledged that “a certain kind of provincialism ... [has] prevented us from realizing our global potential” (n. 5). It went as far as saying that “the official structure for the governance of the Society ...constitutes a framework for the development of many forms of global and regional cooperation and networking” (n. 13).

On the specific theme of networking, GC 34 drew up an ambitious plan. First, it boldly emphasized that “additional global and regional networks must be created”; it then stated that these networks “should be capable of addressing global concerns”; it acknowledged that “the potential exists for networks of specialists” and “for cooperation in and through international agencies”; finally, it noted that “the Secretariats of the General Curia must continue to play an important role in establishing them” (n. 14).

With the aim of providing some specific parameters to put into practice the vision of

GC 34, the Social Justice Secretariat published some Guidelines on Jesuit Networking in 2002 and defined networking as a “style of working apostolically” (p. 4). Undoubtedly the last decade has seen considerable progress in developing new forms of international cooperation. The increased cooperation among Provincials within the Conferences of Major Superiors, the recent bilateral encounters among Conferences, the enlarged role of the Moderators Conference to deal with issues confronting the universal Society, the declaration of universal priorities for the Society, are all examples of the Society’s effort to grapple successfully with the challenge of international cooperation.

From the perspective of the Social Apostolate, there are, however, some structural lacunae that have hampered the development of successful international networks. Leaving aside existing peer-group networks, the problem of developing more ambitious international networks lies in the difficulty of rooting them within the governing structure of the Society. Credibility, accountability, some sort of stability and official support depend, to a great extent, on the recognition, the ‘owning’ of a network by a Provincial or a Moderator. A network cannot exist in terms of personnel and finances hanging on the good will and the commendable efforts of individual Jesuits who are already overburdened with other local commitments. As is the case of AJAN and JRS, experience shows the decisive impact of having the support of the governing structures of the Society. The example of the network on governance, that this issue of *Promotio Iustitiae* presents to all our readers, confirms this opinion. Without the concrete and specific support of a Provincial, the development of this network may have remained in the realm of the wished-for and ideal. As the GC noted, the Secretariats may indeed have a role to play in developing networks that can interact with other international agencies, but for these efforts to have ‘credible teeth’ they need to be articulated into the governing structure of the Society.

Fernando Franco SJ

REFLECTION

THE CHALLENGE OF 'GOVERNANCE': SOME JESUIT RESPONSES

A BACKGROUND

Costanza Pagnini

We would like to present this *PJ* issue, which offers our readers some reflections on different aspects and meanings of governance, as something more than a collection of articles with a common focus, but rather as the first, and dare we say, important achievement of a joint initiative by a number of Jesuit Social Centres and their representatives belonging to the newly launched Governance Working Group of the International Jesuit Network for Development (IJND). This Governance Working Group was enlarged with the wholehearted support of the Social Justice Secretariat over these past two years and launched afresh.

It was in May 2003 that the Assistancy Coordinators of the Social Apostolate at their plenary meeting identified the issue of governance as crucially relevant. Governance that is people-centred, democratic and participatory (as opposed to the market-centred "good governance" agenda adopted by multilateral institutions) is one of the major challenges facing the social sector today. Acknowledging the many initiatives in the field undertaken by the Society's different centres and institutions, the Assistancy Coordinators advocated the creation of an international Jesuit network to group some of these initiatives together and entrusted the Social Justice Secretariat (SJS) with the task of facilitating such a network.

Right from the start, Alboan, a Jesuit Social Centre based in Bilbao (Spain), showed some interest in working with other centres on the theme of governance and finally accepted the task of coordinating the Working Group under IJND with the support of SJS. At the next meeting of Coordinators in May 2004, the proposal to develop this network was accepted. Thereafter Alboan, with the support of the Loyola Province, held a seminar to discuss the issue of governance, democracy and participation with potentially interested centres and to come up with a common agenda and a concrete set of activities that the network could put into practice. Assistancy Coordinators on their part helped to indicate the Social Centres that might be interested.

The seminar held in Loyola (Spain) 10-13 November 2004 certainly marked a new point of departure for the network and is an important stepping-stone for future activities. The 16 participating Jesuit centres¹ got to know each other, explored ways of collaborating, shared their experiences, discussed differing interpretations of governance, and settled priorities and ways of working

through an interesting and enriching process. Four concrete projects to be carried out jointly were identified. These are: a systematic organising of grassroots narratives on governance to be launched in time for the Millennium Development Goals evaluation² scheduled for September 2005; a seminar on training methodologies for people's participation based on Ignatian spirituality,³ and a project on budget control and monitoring of state interventions.⁴

This *PJ* issue is meant to be a first contribution to the fourth project identified, that of forming a conceptual framework of governance starting from narratives and best-practices.⁵ It responds to the need felt by network members of deepening and clarifying the meaning of governance, an essential prerequisite for a unified stance on the subject, one that always keeps the people centre stage. Well aware of the difficulties of such a task, our hope today is that these reflections, far from "concluding" our quest, will rather serve as a stimulus or starting point for further debate and action.

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²Coordinator: ICSI, Collaborators: Alboan, CINEP, IBRADES and Social Watch.

³Coordinator: CERAS. Collaborators: Alboan, Istituto Arrupe, CIAS, and CIPCA.

⁴Coordinator: Social Watch. Collaborators: Alboan, CEPAS, CINEP.

⁵Coordinator: Center of Concern and ERIC. Collaborators Edmond Grace SJ, CEFOD and CIPCA.

INTRODUCTION

James Hug SJ

In late 2001, the International Jesuit Network for Development (IJND) launched four working groups to address the central international development challenges facing the human community: debt, trade, governance, and development alternatives. This special issue of *PJ* is one of the fruits of the November, 2004, Governance Working Group Seminar supported and hosted by *Alboan*, the Jesuit social centre in Bilbao, and held at Loyola in the Basque country

Power is the issue for the Governance Working Group: Who has it? How is it being structured and used? Who benefits? Who is excluded? How should it be organized? What is God inviting us to do about it?

At this stage in the contemporary globalization processes, power is increasingly concentrated in Multi-lateral Institutions (MLIs include the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the United Nations, regional development banks, etc.), the wealthiest industrial nations that dominate multi-lateral policy-making and activities, and the transnational corporations who exert vastly more influence on national governments and MLIs than is proportionate to their contribution to society's common good.

*Power is the
issue for the
Governance
Working Group*

In the first article that follows, **Miguel González** explains how "governance" emerged as a critical issue in development policy. The neo-liberal development strategy known as the "Washington Consensus," imposed on poor nations through the structural adjustment programmes of the MLIs, did not achieve the results they promised. Poverty has continued to deepen and the poor nations of the Global South have found themselves trapped in destructive trade relations. The MLIs and the wealthy nations of the Global North blamed the "poor governance" of the Global South for the failure. This charge has been used ever since by the nations of the North to resist calls for further and more generous aid flows or for changes in development strategy.

Gradually, nations of the South have begun to point out that while they are working to root out corruption and improve their governance structures, the MLIs themselves suffer from a serious lack of the key elements of "good governance," transparency, participation and accountability. North-South relations are largely mired down around these issues. How this stand-off is resolved and how the institutions and policies of global governance are developed over the next few years will have immense impact upon the extent and quality of justice – and, therefore, of peace – in tomorrow's world.

At the Loyola seminar, the Governance Working Group of IJND decided to contribute to the global development debate by building a database of the experiences of Jesuits and their colleagues working anywhere in the world to bring about more just governance that is truly transparent,

participatory and accountable to all those affected by it, especially those in poverty, those who are marginal in society and excluded.

The articles in this issue of *PJ* represent a down-payment on that commitment. All the stories and best practices that we gather will eventually be posted on our web site <www.ijnd.org> so that the lessons from successes and failures can help all of us discover paths to authentic human development for all more easily and quickly. We hope you will share your experiences and what you have learned with us so that we can share them, through the network of the Society of Jesus, around the world.

In addition to providing examples and models to learn from, this database of practical experiences should help us to distill a clearer understanding of the nature of true "good governance" at all levels of society. From that we should be able to articulate a set of indicators or criteria for good governance in the service of authentic development.

As you will see in the articles we have gathered here, it is already becoming clear that those indicators will most likely include **Training, Organizing and Networking** for political participation, **Government Monitoring**, and **Development**

of Alternative Proposals – all of which are key steps in promoting effective democratic and participatory processes from the grass-roots all the way to the global level.

Following Miguel González's clear presentation of the two competing models of "good governance" in the development debate today, then, we offer you three articles on different types of **Training, Organizing and Networking** designed to help people at the grassroots participate effectively in the political process.

- **Ismael Moreno** describes the organizing of civil society in Honduras to fight against the privatization of water. While the people's movements "lost" because of the deceptive and manipulative activities of government officials, he points out that they "won" self-confidence and a strong sense of unity.
- **Edmond Grace** addresses the problem of biased government officials. He recounts his discovery of the importance of open and service-oriented public servants that led him to try to develop a public "narrative" or ideology of governance-as-service rooted in the Ignatian meditation on the Two Standards. He hopes prepare government officials for transparent, participatory and accountable service.
- **Pierre Martinot-Lagarde** outlines the principal dimensions of one programme of Christian formation for political involvement grounded in Ignatian spirituality.

In addition to training and organizing for political involvement, the achievement of good governance requires careful **Monitoring** of governments' activities to make sure that they honour their commitments. We offer two

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contributions describing different approaches to monitoring and offering suggestions for tools to use in doing it.

- **Maximiliano Ruiz** details work carried out by CIPCA to monitor the Piura regional government in Peru. They have developed a matrix of variables to use in gathering the relevant information for analysis, comparative evaluation and recommendations.
- **Manu Alphonse** presents the ongoing work of “Social Watch – Tamil Nadu” to challenge the abuse of Tsunami-related relief funds in southern India. Working with other similar organizations, “Social Watch – Tamil Nadu” helped establish a “Citizens’ Forum for the Tsunami-Affected” to monitor the issue nationally and to ensure that the voices of the people most affected by the disaster were heard in shaping the response to it.

When those who are usually excluded or ignored gain their voice in the political process, new ideas and strategies emerge. The next three articles point to what some of these new *Alternatives* might look like.

- **Alejandro Angulo** presents one experience from Colombia, where an ethnic-territorial organization of black and mestizo peasants won support from the international community for a human rights-based approach to development which is enabling them to resist both the attacks of armed segments of the Colombian reality and the intrusion of transnational economic interests.
- **Anna Marie A. Karaos** reports on how the Jesuit social institute ICSI in Manila, by organizing and networking all the stakeholders, succeeded in winning adequate land and resources for providing housing for the urban poor.

Finally, **Ricardo González** narrates the development of a proactive agenda for civil society in the Dominican Republic through a process that involves *Training, Organizing and Networking* (so that negotiations with political candidates are carried out on the basis of priorities determined through the participation of all the affected groups in civil society) and *Monitoring* (using a matrix to evaluate the implementation of the commonly-agreed plan) in order to promote an *Alternative* form of good democratic governance through multi-stakeholder dialogue designed to ensure social continuity and greater justice.

These articles make up what we hope you will find to be a stimulating and inspiring call to action for global good governance. Share with us your experiences and work so that this issue of *PJ* will be just the beginning of a long and fruitful networking exercise serving the spread of God’s Reign.

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GOVERNANCE: A PRO-POOR CONCERN?

Miguel González

Introduction

Over the last decade, the concept of “governance” has been increasingly employed in the discourse and practice of development of southern countries. For instance, the Secretary General of United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan said, “Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development.” The recently launched Commission for Africa Report, too, argues that “The issue of good governance (...) is what we believe lies at the core of all of Africa’s problems.” And the Millennium Project Report, led by Professor Jeffrey Sachs, underscores the importance of governance: “The successful scale-up of investment strategies to achieve the Millennium Development Goals requires a commitment to good governance.”

Indeed, the governance agenda has been growing incessantly, becoming amorphous, without clear limits

Good governance, then, appears to be the missing link in the road to development and poverty eradication. But what exactly does “governance” mean? If you look carefully at all the issues clustered together under the heading of governance, you will find reform proposals for a tremendously heterogeneous range of concerns: judiciary reforms, citizen participation, anticorruption measures, empowerment, bureaucracy effectiveness, legislation protecting private property, accountability, dialogue with the private sector ... everything is governance! Indeed, the governance agenda has been growing incessantly, becoming amorphous, without clear limits.

In this introduction, I hope to shed light on the idea of governance by answering the following questions: (i) who or what promoted the idea? (ii) what should “good governance” include? and (iii) to what extent could this agenda become pro-poor?

Institutions matter: the Washington Consensus revisited

Development economics has devoted the last sixty years to finding an answer to the question of why some countries develop (however we understand “development”) and why other countries don’t. Through the 1980s and into the mid 1990s, the dominant neo-liberal formula for successful development – promoted by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and by the rich countries that control them – was summarized in the so-called “Washington Consensus.” That formula, allegedly *recommended* but so often *imposed* on debtor countries through binding conditionalities, stressed market liberalization. Open markets, it claimed, would create wealth and pull the

countries out of their problems. "Getting prices right" through market-oriented structural adjustment was the motto of that time.

However, serious problems associated with structural adjustment arose from the outset. Not only did it have severe consequences for more vulnerable groups, but it also did not achieve the economic growth rates it promised. Something was going wrong.

By the end of the 1980s, governance issues started to attract attention. The World Bank argued in a report on Sub-Saharan Africa that structural adjustment did not work because of the poor governance prevailing in the area. Gradually, in part through the emergence of neo-institutionalist economics, it was recognised that markets cannot work unless the institutional arrangements underpinning them are fixed. "Institutions matter," it was said, "and we have forgotten them, when not openly ignoring them, for more than a decade." The international governance agenda had taken the stage.

Governance, for the market or for human development?

This origin of the agenda of governance in development circles has strongly influenced its content. Even when the IFIs became aware of the importance of "getting politics right" in addition to "getting prices right," they claimed that they were not permitted by their mandates to intervene in internal political affairs of their "clients."

In fact, they were already intervening in internal politics through the conditionalities they imposed on debtor countries. Now the governance agenda gave them another tool to interfere further. "Good Governance" was treated as a merely technical matter. As a result, the first generation of governance reforms sounds purely technocratic. The most important features of "good governance" presented were in fact strongly market-oriented political policies: protecting private property, reforming the judiciary in order to enforce contracts, fighting corruption and developing an effective bureaucracy. Having protective legislation and honest officials, it was argued, will create a better climate for foreign investment, one of the spurs of growth that was regarded as the main development engine.

An alternative to this market-oriented approach to the governance agenda has emerged from civil society organizations and some UN agencies. It stresses the importance of participation in governance by excluded groups and people in poverty. The focus and goal of this approach is no longer the market or economic growth, but human development. Among its fundamentals are voice, participation and empowerment of excluded groups, and accountability of state and private institutions to them.

These elements have a twofold importance. On the one hand, if we understand development as the process of enlarging human capacities and freedoms, voice and participation are relevant in their own right. They are

essential to development and must be included in its very definition. They are *ends*, goods in themselves. In addition, these elements are *means* by which poor people can reclaim better services or different policies to benefit them. That is to say, they are tools that strengthen the position of the poor and marginal, enabling them to demand policies that enlarge their capacities, be it as workers, consumers, service receivers or citizens.

This alternative approach has reminded us of the real nature of governance issues: governance is about power distribution, and not only about technical solutions. Since political processes and power relations are deeply rooted in specific contexts, a "one size-fits-all" approach to them and to the institutions in which they occur is doomed to failure.

However, acknowledging the particularities in each country does not mean that we can ignore the global processes that impinge on domestic governance institutions and policies. This attention to powerful outside influences is one of the characteristics of the alternative agenda on governance that is usually downplayed by the IFIs. When we look for the sources of bad or poor governance, the IFIs and the wealthy nations stress the national or domestic institutions, cultures, people, society. They do not attend to the roles that big corporations, rich country governments and the IFIs themselves play. They too are part of the problem of poor governance. As in the case of corruption, poor governance is like the *tango*: two are needed to dance it.

Nevertheless, it is fair to acknowledge that some IFIs, especially the World Bank, have taken up some of the features of the alternative agenda, including in their practices and discourse references to participation, accountability and empowerment. As a result, some spaces have been opened to participation by certain civil society groups. This fact, however, should not tempt us to forget that the real focus of the IFIs is still market liberalization as the path to economic growth, not human development.

Political capabilities of the poor

A governance agenda focused on human development must include the full participation of socially excluded groups and must address the issues of power imbalance. In addition, it must be aware of the connection between local realities and global political and economic processes. These latter can reinforce the patterns of exclusion – or they can provide support and opportunities for excluded groups to stand up to such local constraints as corrupt national governments, institutions captured by wealthy elites, or anti-poor bias in legislation, to mention just a few.

We have now reached the point at which we can propose a definition of governance that fits in our discourse.

The real nature of governance issues: governance is about power distribution, and not only about technical solutions

A governance agenda focused on human development must include the full participation of socially excluded groups and must address the issues of power imbalance

According to Goran Hyden *et al.*,

governance refers to the formation and stewardship of the rules (formal and informal) that regulate the public realm, the arena in which state as well as economic and societal actors interact to make decisions.

That is to say, governance is about the formation of policies and how the different stakeholders can, or cannot, engage in that process and influence it.

From our point of view and our option for the poor, governance work aims at two main goals. First, we need to identify and remove institutional and regulatory obstacles that hamper the participation and the agency of excluded groups in the process of formulating policies that affect them. Second, we have to enhance their political capacities and increase the opportunities for them to craft alliances with other social agents for inclusive change in the service of human development.

How can we work on that? The following contributions show us a variety of efforts – some successful, some not. The experiences they recount teach us about the importance of gaining self-esteem and confidence, awareness of rights, organisational capacity, capacity for dialogue and negotiation, discursive and ideological resources to confront exclusion and promote authentic development. They reveal important elements essential to good governance, governance, that is, that holds up universal human development as its ultimate and most treasured goal.

We offer these contributions in the hope that they will be helpful to you in your own work and that they will inspire you to join hands across boundaries to network more effectively for global good governance and justice.

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DEFENDING WATER: THE STRUGGLE STOKING UP POPULAR FLAMES

Ismael Moreno SJ

On the 23rd of August 2003 some thirty thousand people from the north, south, east and west of Honduras took over all parts of the capital to demand the non-privatization of drinking water. From five in the morning the protesters occupied the four main entries and exits of Tegucigalpa, led by the National Coordination of Popular Resistance (CNRP), a movement which brings together trade unions, and social, popular, indigenous and community organisations from all over the country.

The drop which made the cup overflow was the decision of the majority of deputies in the National Congress to approve a Draft Law on Drinking Water and Basic Sanitation, following recommendations from technicians in the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB). It was approved on the 14th of August. The heads of political parties in the National Congress had signed an agreement on March 4th that year with the Honduranian social organizations represented in the CNRP to approve no law on drinking water not based on an agreement between the various sectors of Honduranian society. At the same time, the peoples' organisations had committed themselves to start a consultation process with the aim of presenting on July 1st that same year a proposal for a law on water in place of the proposal drawn up under the guidance of the IADB.

On July 1st the CNRP presented its proposal arguing that the protection, administration and preservation of water was linked to the principle of national sovereignty, and that under no circumstances should the State abdicate its responsibility for managing such a resource. Members of Congress received the proposed law but then buried it in oblivion.

The proposal for the privatization of water promoted by the IADB with full support from the government of the Republic contained a catch which fooled several leaders of the popular movements. The proposed law was not presented as a means to achieve the privatization of water. It was presented as a proposal to "municipalize" water services, thereby contributing to the decentralization of public services, exactly the goal that many social and popular sectors were fighting for.

An important argument in favour of the law proposed by the IADB and the Government was the inefficiency of the State institution responsible for administering the provision of drinking water, caught as it was in a paralysing bureaucracy, politically determined decisions and the corruption of its officials. The IADB and the Government saw here a great opportunity to break with an incompetent administration and move towards empowering municipalities in the matter of water as a strategic resource.

With this trick, the government and IADB officials won the support of most of the 298 mayors in the country. However, clauses in the new Law for Drinking Water and

Basic Sanitation envisaged “service providers”, which meant that municipalities could hand over the administration and maintenance of drinking water to private institutions and organisations which, by charging a fee, would guarantee both the efficiency of the system and a profit for themselves.

The Law on Drinking Water and Basic Sanitation was passed with the support of the majority of mayors and an important group of NGOs who fell into the trap of the law proposed by the IADB and Government, both interested in decentralising and empowering municipalities in the administration of natural resources. The central Government, with the support of the IADB, warned mayors that if they did not approve the Drinking Water Law they would not qualify for loans destined for the environment or the protection of natural resources.

For the first time in many decades, however, representatives of organisations from all over the country met to plan a joint reaction. Copies of the proposed law to be discussed in the National Congress were distributed in all regions of the country and studied by many grass-root organizations. Many saw through the trick and highlighted the clear bias towards privatisation favoured by the law in the 65 articles of the official version. In the same manner, a consultation

process was launched on the peoples’ wishes with respect to a law on water that would protect water basins, ensure the preservation of water, and provide an efficient administration shared by the central Government, municipalities, water authorities, local associations and other organisations.

The struggle against the privatisation of water had achieved a miracle – calling on and uniting in a common campaign regions and organisations hitherto engaged in small localized campaigns. The popular mobilization of the 26th of August 2003 was the expression of a greater unity concentrated on one objective: to defend drinking water. Preparations for the great mobilization are full of anecdotes. In some cities in the north and interior of the country collections were organised to raise money for buses that would carry people to the capital. In others communities radio stations cooperated in organising marathons with the same aim of raising funds.

The Ministry of Security accused the demonstrators of receiving money even from drug-traffickers to finance their popular rally. Other government civil servants accused international development organisations of making funds available to agitate against and destabilize the Government of the Republic. The Government managed to stir people up through infiltrators, and when the march reached the National Congress, a group of demonstrators besieged the police guarding the building to

the point of provoking violence, which finally ended the mobilization programme.

The Government accused the leaders of the mobilization of making the Drinking Water Law an excuse to create a situation of chaos and political destabilisation. Both the IADB and the Government launched a strong publicity campaign to discredit the movement that opposed to the water law and to pressurise mayors and a sector of NGOs to give their support to the official law.

Finally, the Law on Drinking Water was approved and ratified by the President of the Republic. Two years after the struggle, municipalities are busy seeking those “providers” best able to buy the right of administering the service of drinking water. The approval of this law was an anteroom for the approval of the Free Trade Area with the United States with its corresponding process of privatization of various public services.

Together with the struggle for the non-privatization of water however, the country has taken on a direct struggle for the defence of Honduranian forests, marching hundreds of kilometres from communities far in the interior to the capital in what has been called “The March for Life.” The IADB and the Government may have achieved the immediate objective of approving the Law of Drinking Water and taken the necessary measures for its implementation; in balance, the outcome of the campaign was one of victory for the IADB and the Government and of defeat for the social resistance movement. But what they did not succeed in repressing is the growing conscience of citizens in their struggle to defend natural resources and the environment. At the present moment, several communities in the interior of the country are preparing to resist implementation of the Law on Drinking Water. And they are also preparing themselves to resist the indiscriminate cutting down of their forests, and the use of land and natural resources in projects that almost exclusively benefit the multinationals. These multinationals are keenly interested in the region but not so much in its biodiversity. The inference is inevitable: the protection and preservation of this biodiversity, which the Central American region still enjoys, depend on the immediate future of the resistance struggle waged by the popular social classes. And ultimately on this struggle depends the very future of life itself in Central America.

Translation by Michael Campbell-Johnston SJ

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UNHEARD VOICES – A CHALLENGE TO DEMOCRACY

Edmond Grace SJ

The origins of the Dialogue on Democracy Seminar lie in the anti-drugs movement in Dublin in the mid 1990s. In the autumn of 1995, as a curate in the Jesuit parish of St. Francis Xavier, Gardiner St., I took part in a series of public meetings, which led to the founding of a network of community groups, voluntary organisations and trade unions attempting to influence public policy on matters relating to drug addiction. A year later I was asked to chair a local residents committee. This latter experience was particularly instructive because it gave me the opportunity to compare notes with my fellow Jesuit, Jim Smyth, who had been treasurer to a similar group in the same neighbourhood more than ten years previously.

The Hardwicke St. experiences

In the early 1980s the neighbourhood had become one of Dublin's major drug-dealing centres and neither the police nor the local authorities were doing very much about it. The Hardwicke St. committee marked the beginning of a community-based movement that attracted international media attention. The Irish media by contrast were quite hostile and, in this, they were reflecting the hostility of the public authorities. Jim was referred to in certain circles as 'the Provo priest' – the term 'Provo' referring to the IRA. At this time, the troubles in Northern Ireland were in full swing. Within six months of being founded, the committee had ceased to function, and soon afterwards, things were as bad as ever. In the coming years they would get very much worse.

The second Hardwicke St. committee was formed in 1995, when the residents called a public meeting. After the meeting, a delegation, backed up by hundreds of angry people, went around to the homes of the various drug dealers to tell them they were no longer welcome. It was a very dramatic moment which could have ended in serious violence, but the police had accepted an assurance that the crowd would be adequately stewarded. The fact that the police did not intervene was a very important signal of their trust in the local population – probably the first ever. Within a few weeks the committee had the use of one of the apartments as an office, along with finance to employ a local person to staff it.

Lessons to build on

The contrast of official attitudes to those in the early 1980s was startling and reflected the fact that, by the mid 1990s the peace process in Northern Ireland was well

underway, even if the first IRA ceasefire had broken down. There was also another factor at work which was more directly relevant to the drugs issue. A month before the setting up of the Hardwicke St. committee in 1995 there had been a public outcry at the murder of Veronica Guerin, a journalist who had been investigating organised crime and drug dealing. Hardwicke St. was fortunate enough to find itself on the crest of a wave of determination to 'do something' and something was done. Today, almost ten years later, it is a transformed place. In 1995 half of the residents were applying to move out, but in recent years there is a healthy waiting list to move in.

Things would not have gone so well in Hardwicke St. were it not for the goodwill of some very dedicated and enlightened public servants who were ready to respond to the shift in public attitude and to make resources available. They had the active support of all the elected representatives, both local and national. These individuals all contributed to a shift of attitude, which was quite discernible, particularly in the local authority and the police. As in any large organisation there was no sudden transformation, but a refreshing respect for local communities began to make itself felt.

One of the public representatives providing his support happened to be Ireland's prime minister. On one occasion I remember being part of a group from Hardwicke St. to which he gave considerable time. As a shrewd politician he would have known that that particular morning's work would have precious little effect on his electoral support, because people in Hardwicke St., with few exceptions, don't vote. Other elected representatives were also generous with their time. They were all genuinely concerned people and they would all agree that Hardwicke St. had had a particularly raw deal. This experience of dealing with both public servants and elected representatives convinced me that there was no lack of goodwill towards the issue of poverty in the 'Celtic tiger.' Yet that same Celtic tiger has the biggest gap between rich and poor in any OECD country.

The wave of public interest in the drugs issue, following on the murder of Veronica Guerin, ebbed, however, as waves do, and Ireland's drug problem no longer claims the kind of urgent public attention it enjoyed in the mid 1990s. At that time there was a great sense of hope among community groups in Dublin's poorer areas that their difficulties would at last get a fair hearing. But with the dip – and it was only a dip! – in the economy in the early 2000s, they suddenly realised how little real clout they had.

The media's response, or lack of it, to the events of the summer of 1995 in Dublin's north inner city was instructive. Crowds were on the streets, not just once but on a regular basis, and they were angry about one of the country's major social problems. It was by any measure a dramatic moment, and it took place only a few hundred yards from where Ireland's two main daily newspapers are published. Nor was this movement confined to the inner city; it rapidly spread throughout the poorer suburbs. It was

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a popular outpouring of grief and anger, but for the two main broadsheets, the Irish Times and the Irish Independent, it did not register. The tabloids did consider these events to be somewhat newsworthy but these are the papers bought by the poor. The difference in coverage between the 'serious' broadsheets and the 'trivial' tabloids was quite remarkable.

This experience of the anti-drugs movement in Dublin made me very conscious of how justice can only be effectively pursued by being able to command public attention on a sustained basis until political change begins to happen. To achieve that, there must be public servants and media leaders who not only understand that openness and responsiveness to the complaints of the victims of injustice are essential parts of their role in society but also have the skills to carry them out.

In Ireland today the realities of commercial competition among media outlets, and of electoral competition between political parties, ensures that the stories which most need to be heard, the stories of poverty, are kept on the margins. There is genuine goodwill among those in positions of leadership, both elected representatives and public servants, but the reigning political "narrative" guiding their responses stresses the fact that people in marginalised areas are too demoralised to vote and therefore do not need to be listened to. This guarantees that the concerns of the poor and marginal get crowded out and their specific needs are not clearly articulated. The political process is not doing them justice.

Meanwhile, on the wider national arena, the Irish electorate rejected the Nice Treaty [one of the basic legal texts on which the European Union and the European Communities are founded]. It was an unprecedented rejection by the people of the leadership of the political parties they themselves had elected. The event gave rise to genuine questions about the democratic process and this, combined with my own experience of politics at ground level, gave rise to a series of conversations which resulted in setting up the Dialogue on Democracy Seminar.

A new political narrative

The objective of the seminar is to develop a new narrative of the democratic process which will address contemporary realities more adequately by evoking self-critical awareness in public figures and openness to the needs and concerns of all in society. Membership includes five members of the national parliament, four prominent public servants and eight experienced civil society activists. It is chaired by a former MEP. Each session is based on a paper prepared and circulated by me in advance and takes the form of a round table discussion.

The first session of the seminar was held in June 2003. At that meeting I submitted a general discussion paper examining the underlying philosophy of the democratic process and it was agreed that four follow up sessions

would be worthwhile on the following topics – (i) the role of opposition, (ii) the elected representative, (iii) the public servant and (iv) the global context. At this stage five papers have been presented and discussed and they are now in the process of being revised.

When that is done, the next stage is a general review by the seminar. The plan is to publish the final product and, after that, to develop a programme to popularise the ideas among civil society groups. There may also be a possibility of developing reflective tools for public servants and politicians.

Finally, the international dimension cannot be ignored. This process of reflection on democracy is incomplete because, under today's conditions, democracy itself is incomplete when confined to the framework of the nation-state.

The new narrative, which is being developed by the Dialogue on Democracy Seminar, proceeds from the premise that governing elites will only secure lasting stability if they are open to the voice of opposition and, in particular, to being criticised about their relationship to wealth, about their own pre-occupation with public-image and about their determination to be right.

This theme reflects the Meditation of the Two Standards with its warning on the danger of riches, honours and pride. I believe that the mission of the Society of Jesus could benefit if we were to develop a shared understanding of the democratic process, taking the political implications of the Two Standards as a starting point. It would fill one significant lacuna in Catholic social teaching, which seems at present to have no theory of sovereign power.

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POLITICS: GOOD NEWS ?

Pierre Martinot-Lagarde SJ

What might be the principal dimensions of a political formation that draws on Ignatian Spirituality for Christians? This is not so much a matter of discussing sources as taking account of a certain style of formation that began in France in the form of a summer school “Politics: that’s good news.” The session takes place every alternate year, for about a hundred young people between the ages of 18 and 30, all linked to movements that are close to *Action Catholique* or the Society of Jesus. We have noted strong participation from *Réseau Jeunesse Ignatien* (the French Ignatian Youth Network), the Christian Life Communities, MCC (the Movement of Christian Business Leaders), the JOC (Young Christian Workers), and MRJC (Christian Rural Youth Movement, formerly Young Christians in Agriculture). These young people have the desire to work for the benefit of others. Some of them are considering active involvement in political parties or solidarity groups. The path proposed recognises possible forms of political involvement, and offers certain “paths” for discernment in a given situation. By reflecting on the Ignatian roots, it is possible to read the situation theologically, with Christ as the centre of gravity of all involvement in the world.

Different forms of involvement

Clearly, the first step on a path of formation is to identify the different forms of political affiliation. In many countries, marked by a plurality of values, it is no longer possible to identify a party or a form of political engagement that one can immediately call Christian or Catholic. Young people are confronted first and foremost with this pluralism. Today, in the United States, one finds Catholics as much among the Republicans as among the Democrats. In France, this has been true since the end of the First World War. Despite the fact that adherence to a faith or confession risks being seen as a threat to national cohesion, Christians have participated in French politics since 1945, and helped the unity of the country and its openness to Europe.

Since the end of the 1970s, this situation has no longer been disputed amongst Christians and does not threaten ecclesial communion. In fact, since 1972, the bishops have clearly taken a stand and recognised pluralism. They remain distant from the parties of the Extreme Right, but mingle more easily with other political currents. Among Christians as a whole, some have been strongly attracted by the ideas, the charisma, and the authoritarian assurance of a rightwing leader like Jean-Marie Le Pen, but they are a very small minority. A few assiduously frequent the Communist Party. But between these extremes, Christians nowadays lean more to the right, than to the left, and

probably many of them oscillate around the centre of the political pendulum.

The young people who participate in our programme reflect this diversity and differentiate themselves from their generation by not being indifferent to political involvement. Few of them however are truly committed to parties or affiliated to political groups. Some of them already exercise responsibilities at local level. The majority have some empathy with politics. They can be attracted by, or implicated in a “cause,” or take part in a youth movement that reflects on non-political issues. Culturally, they belong to their generation; their outlook is not sustained by a unified vision of society; they are often curious and ready to invest themselves in one direction or another.

Some transitions

There are many who return after one or other programme telling us of the “foundational” character of the experience

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which has been for them something of a “crossing.” At the end of the days spent together, for some a source has doubtless been revealed and blockages released. For others, the road has only begun and we continue to accompany them afterwards. I would simply like to note some “Ways of proceeding” that permit these displacements and give them the freedom to live them out.

- Put political traditions in dialogue. The work of formation is to re-open the forum of debate which respects each and every one and allows an open exchanges of ideas. The media often oppose ideas instead of linking or confronting them. We insist on this through a mixture of historical lectures, debates and meetings with the political players.
- To bring together all the dimensions of the life of a community: exchanges in large and small groups; personal accompaniment; the Eucharist and prayer; meals; celebrations; individual and group work; mutual service. This involves forming, for the period of transition, a group that is not doomed to disappear in the future and which can become a community of the Church in the future.
- Make space for invention and creativity. In the face of difficult situations, it is necessary to reinvent, to move, to open other paths; the pedagogy used is not passive. Instead, we try to use role-play, teaching, group work, debate and discussion.
- To widen the outlook and to help cross frontiers. In the workshops we propose a reflection on the situations of people in difficulty, on International Relations, on the place of Islam in our country.

The centrality of Christ

The theological vision underlying our programme is Christological. Ultimately, the organisers want to make possible a personal relationship with Christ which respects human and ecclesial intermediaries. At the same time, we

do not want to propose a “retreat,” in which the “one-to-one” relationship is privileged, where the retreatant discovers, sometimes through a long struggle, that he can stand in truth before God and receive from him. Rather, it is more a range of Exercises which bring into play many dimensions of the imagination, so that behind the obvious is revealed the force of him who is ‘the Way, the Truth and the Life’— the play of the Exercises which are, above all, a path of formation.

Even if the preparatory team has not always made it explicit, the figure of Christ is for us clearly associated with the messianic figure of Isaiah 61: ‘The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to

bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favour’. Clearly, in this movement, to be on the side of, or beside Christ, is to be on the side of, or beside those who benefit from the messianic promise. From there, in the programme, we confront the participants with the place of the voiceless and the poorest through role-play and eyewitness accounts.

To bring them to this side in a spiritual path is to invite them to position themselves on the side of the heart, but a heart that is not “without understanding”; a heart which knows how to make connections between memories of the gospel, the common experiences of any engagement, and political and ecclesial communities; the heart which knows how to untie the “obvious,” the oversimplifications of passionately held ideologies. To do that it is necessary to show how to love. This happens through meeting people, men and women whose engagement is not always without ambivalence and who hold different levels of responsibility. The diversity of exchanges and the demands of truth in this path permit a dialogue that allows one to move forward. This also happens through prayer and meditation on the Gospels, which allow one to see Christ in the midst of his people – Christ who loves, heals, and is attentive to every person. Through the Liturgy which gives a space for each person to go together with others towards Him who is at the heart of the world. Through the stories and teachings which allow one to remember the way in which humans have chosen their place in the world. Thus, for example, the re-reading of Social Teaching may be foundational when carried by the Christian memory of all the social involvement of our predecessors faced with the Industrial Revolution, the challenge of Development or of Peace.

In all these spaces, we need to dare to make a Church-inspired proposition in the terms used in the Eucharistic Prayer: “Lord make your Church a place of truth and liberty, of justice and peace, so that we may find in her the reason still to hope.” In the political world, liberty is a

place of great vulnerability: relationships of power are everywhere, the individual often feels threatened, powerless, or manipulated. All programmes of formation, it seems to me, must hold together this uncertain Alliance between truth and liberty so as to allow each to advance beside the poorest or the voiceless, because it is by their side that the Lord of Justice will appear. “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

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WITH EYES AND HEART ON PUBLIC MANAGEMENT: CITIZENS' VIGILANCE IN PIURA-PERU

Maximiliano Ruiz

In 2001, a disturbed Peru learned that its President Alberto Fujimori, a Peruvian by birth, had fled the country to settle in land of his ancestors, Japan. The collapse of an authoritarian, centralised and corrupt regime opened ways for new initiatives in civil society. It is in this context that CIPCA develops regional programmes seeking to influence relations between the State and civil society,¹ and undertakes initiatives of citizens' vigilance (*Project Vigila Perú* in collaboration with other NGOs² in various regions of the country. The new political atmosphere enabled a long-delayed reform to be put in place. With decentralization and the consequent election of local governments towards the end of 2002, the new authorities had been barely installed when we set up in CIPCA a small team called **Vigila Perú-Piura** to monitor the public management of the regional Government of Piura. Its tasks were to obtain information, determine standards, draw up reports, and

organise discussions.

The collapse of an authoritarian, centralised and corrupt regime opened ways for new initiatives in civil society

Little by little our work has grown and gained recognition in society as well as from communications media and civil servants and authorities.

At the same time, the Project **Vigila Perú** operates in 15 of the 25 regional governments in the country, and this allows us to

share and compare results in a national workshop, and to have a clear vision of the successes and obstacles of decentralization and transfer of skills from central to local government units.

How we proceed

The **Vigila Perú-Piura** team has the institutional support of CIPCA, and especially of CEDIR. It took part in the identification and definition of the module of variables, and in ensuring a follow-up; it also provides a programme for processing data and a method for storing and verifying information.

The promulgation of the law of "Access to and openness of Information" by the new democratic government in 2002, obliging public sector authorities to provide information to whoever requests it, has, doubtless, been a support to our activities, but we still need measures for "Citizens' Vigilance." These, with their corresponding follow-up and spread, have been crucial in ascertaining whether this norm is being applied by the public authorities and whether society is in fact assessing its rights.

From the outset of the project, we made an effort to publicize the initiative and make it known to public and

private organisations and institutions, especially those which showed interest in the issue. This has led to the forming of alliances and results on a larger scale.

We have produced six reports (at first quarterly, and in 2004 every four months) in which we give an account of the operation of the Module of variables, and also analyse and publicise it so that citizens are helped to observe and check the following: regional administration, especially with regard to Budget and spending; transparency and access to information; participation in civil society, inclusion and exclusion. The two key sectors of health and education receive special attention in the analysis.

As well as analysing the information collected, comparisons are made with the previous period, and assessments and recommendations drawn up. This forms the content of the **Report** which is shown to local government civil servants for their approval before being published; then presented to the communication media, and finally to the general public. Concurrently, a discussion on Radio Cutivalú is organised. The results are thus widely publicised and also published on the web site: www.piuraonline.org.

Some results

In the beginning, the road was hard even though people were calling for more and better analysed information. As mentioned above, the Law for Access to Information and Transparency was already promulgated but, for many reasons, ordinary citizens had

no means of benefiting from its application. In Peru, as in other parts of Latin America and the world, civil servants and authorities were not accustomed to this and didn't want to share information. It was important to begin developing a conscience about what the application of this law meant, its importance and its beneficial effects for everyone. Gradually, the work done began to bring about positive changes.

At first civil servants and authorities gave it little importance and didn't attend the meetings held for assessing the reports. Now there is a clear desire on their part not only for the information to be shared at the right time but also for it to be fully understood. To achieve this end, they try to provide the data necessary for drawing it up, and top civil servants and authorities attend the meetings, including the public presentation of the Report.

Much of this has been due to the social mobilization effected by the publication of the first Report and the

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¹CIPCA (Centre for Rural Investigation and Promotion) is an NGO which belongs to the social sector of the Peruvian Province of the Society of Jesus. Together with its promotional work, it has a Regional Documentation and Information Centre (CEDIR) and a radio station that covers the region, Radio Cutivalu.

²Through the National Consortium of Citizens' Projects of which CIPCA is a founder member.

corresponding social pressure that ensued once the disturbing results were known – for instance, the high level of running costs compared with expenditure, slowness of performance in a region with so many unmet needs, delays in transferring from central to regional sectors, the slant towards more urban zones, concentrating on a few areas to the virtual abandonment of others, together with legal delays, lack of willingness in representatives, and so on.

It is significant that the Reports of **Vigila Perú-Piura** have become an important reference source for civil society, for citizens following up and monitoring the behaviour and performance of regional governments; they are also used as working documents in cases of citizens' participation, such as in the Assembly of Civil Society's Delegates and their representatives in the Council of Regional Coordination or *CCR* – (an agency for sharing, coordinating and advising in local Assembly of Delegates of Civil Society Government).

Information on the education and health sectors is beginning to be used by the regional councils in these areas to reformulate some of the sector policies; and since these are delicate issues, the communications media, which play a very important part in bringing information to the people, are giving them greater coverage and attention than before.

There is also a change in attitude among journalists who earlier gave importance to the Report only on matters of controversy with local governments, but now join the campaign for transparency and access to information, inclusion and exclusion, sharing and social sectors.

Authorities and civil servants are more aware of, and disposed to attend to, requests for information not only from the project but also from ordinary citizens. We have proved this through promoting requests made by citizens in the region and we note that have been attended promptly in the time limit set by the law.

Another tangible result of this initiative is the fact that in the recent Regional Sessions for the presentation of Accounts in 2003 held by the Regional Government, executive summaries were handed out, developing or explaining issues on which the Report **Vigila Perú-Piura** had aroused interest among the people.

Lessons and conclusions

A first conclusion to be drawn from the experience has to do with the situation in which it started, one of acute concern among citizens about the use of public funds and information after the "Mafias" of the previous regime were unmasked, awareness of the struggle against widespread and institutionalised corruption in the country, and the need to improve the use of the scarce resources available.

We have managed to maintain intense interest and expectations among the people through the regularity and

frequency of the Reports, and through efforts to fulfil commitments undertaken; this enables one to see tendencies and changes, both positive and negative.

The image citizens have of the seriousness and responsibility of the Institution responsible for implementing this initiative has been won, modesty apart, after 32 years of work at the local level. In future, if we are to attend to requests for maintaining this initiative it will be essential to broaden cooperation.

As a result, the Project Team has assumed responsibility for sharing its experience (tools and methodology) with institutions undertaking the defence and observance of citizens' rights, such as the Defensoría del Pueblo³ in Piura, which has the job of following and monitoring budget expenditure in the regional health sector. This is a good example of how, from a wider perspective such as the regional government of Piura, one can make specific observations in sectors such as health, education, transport, and agriculture.

The authorities in particular are beginning to understand more and more that citizens' vigilance is a source that can contribute to the best use of resources and promote their participation in the government so as to confront together the challenges of development.

The experience is another opportunity to promote the objective of democracy becoming a reality in our Latin American countries and to understand that it depends on how we can all become involved, so that civil society can work along with a very discredited political class in the country. Civil society too must assume shared responsibility in the search for development on the basis of dialogue, of proposals honoured, and of the exercise of civil rights, equity and justice.

Translation by Michael Campbell-Johnston SJ

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³This corresponds to the *ombudsman* in other countries.

TSUNAMI, GOVERNANCE AND “SOCIAL WATCH – TAMIL NADU”

Fault-Lines Unearthed by Tsunami

Manuel Alphonse SJ

Earthquakes and Tsunamis reveal the constantly shifting geological fault-lines beneath the earth's surface. More important, they also expose sharply the socio-political fault-lines in a community and society – socio-cultural perversions and exclusions like caste, unacceptably unequal distribution of economic resources and political power, governance that is corrupt, non-transparent and unaccountable....

The 2004 December Tsunami that hit the Asian coasts was surely a messenger of much destruction – hundreds of thousands of human lives lost; thousands of livelihoods, attained over decades of struggles, shattered; numberless families and communities torn asunder....

But like all natural disasters, its effects are disproportionately felt on the more marginalized sections of the society – the poor, indigenous people, women, children.... And, as often as not, the disaster and the trends of responses following it, are geared to increase the inequalities and injustices prevalent in our societies more than ever.

The Tsunami did evoke an avalanche of sympathy from all over the world. Much monetary aid flowed and is still flowing in. The initial stage of immediate relief has been muddled through, and the more challenging issues of permanent habitations and sustainable livelihoods face the coastal communities affected by the Tsunami.

The marginalized are the most resilient of all human communities. They have the stamina and strength to withstand even the worst disasters and start all over again on the painful path towards greater humanity and empowerment. It has been no different with the experience of Tsunami. While much of the outside world tends to look at these affected coastal communities as victims, they have surely, though slowly, begun the painful process of reconstructing their dislocated lives and livelihoods.

Tsunami and Governance

As the communities dare to reconstruct their lives, massive challenges in the sphere of governance – local, national and global – confront them. These challenges threaten to replace the natural Tsunami with the man-made Tsunamis of corruption, oppression and exclusion, which add to the mental agony and uncertainties of the already uprooted communities. As of today, in the process of relief and rehabilitation, the local communities and locally elected government representatives have been largely sidelined by national and global forces from above. The picture that emerges is one in which the affected communities are seen as dependent and at the

receiving end rather than as participative subjects in a process of reconstruction. Accountability and transparency on the part of Governments and global private agencies have been conspicuous by their absence.

Even though the economically weaker sections – small boat owners, small traders, wage labourers, etc. – have been the most affected, much of the government assistance has been grabbed by the more powerful elements – trawler owners, political parties, and contractors. Women have been the major sustaining forces of life in the communities after the disaster, but they have been systematically kept away from any decision-making processes by both the male-dominated traditional local governments and all levels of government machinery. Dalits (the erstwhile ‘untouchables’) and other marginal communities that have been equally affected by the Tsunami have been openly discriminated against on matters of government assistance and share in rehabilitation.

Civil society and non-governmental organisations have played creative and supportive roles. But here again issues of rivalry and duplication, and the imposing of outside perceptions with no regard for native wisdom and experience have left the affected communities confused as to their prospects for a sustainable future.

“Social Watch – Tamil Nadu”, a Governance Initiative

In such a situation, “Social Watch – Tamil Nadu” has struggled since the 26th of December 2004, to respond, chiefly to the serious governance issues that confront the affected communities, and to search, along with local communities, for meaningful answers. “Social Watch – Tamil Nadu” is a State-level Research-cum-Resource Centre in Chennai, the Capital of Tamil Nadu, the southernmost state of India and the worst Tsunami-affected state in India. “Social watch – Tamil Nadu” is the result of 9 long years of experience in the Tamil Nadu Peoples’ Forum for Social Development.¹

Over the last 9 years (1995-2004), the Tamil Nadu Peoples’ Forum for Social Development, started by 19 state-level networks of mass organizations, movements and NGOs, has established itself as a credible initiative in the field of Public Policy Monitoring in the State and in the country.

The Forum had taken up a series of initiatives to ensure that the basic concerns of the marginalised of the state – dalits, tribals, women, children, small fisher folk and unorganised labour – are made the focal points of the social policy framework of the Tamil Nadu Government.

Government budgets are a mirror to the policies and

The picture that emerges is one in which the affected communities are seen as dependent and at the receiving end rather than as participative subjects in a process of reconstruction

¹“Social Watch – Tamil Nadu” is a secular initiative. Fr. Manu Alphonse SJ has been a Founder-cum-Convener of the Tamil Nadu Peoples’ Forum for Social Development. Another Jesuit, Fr. John Kumar SJ, has also been closely associated with the Forum from the beginning and is now on the Research Staff of “Social Watch – Tamil Nadu.”

priorities of a government as well as to the hidden agenda of the forces that control the government. Very early in its life, the Tamil Nadu Forum identified budget analysis and advocacy as central tools in monitoring public policy perspectives of the Government. Its various budget critiques (especially dalit budgeting, gender budgeting and child budgeting), as well as its campaigns on specific budgetary processes and content, have established the Forum as the premier initiative in the state in the field of budget advocacy and public policy monitoring. Its research papers, including “Tamil Nadu Social Development Report 2000,” “White Papers & Black Truths,” have been well received in different quarters: civil society, media and policy makers.

Interfacing between the disparate fields of grassroots struggles, social research and the making of public policy, the Forum has played key roles, ranging from equipping select legislators and local government representatives for advocacy and evolving alternate budget formulations in collaboration with chosen civil servants and bureaucrats to adding value to mass movements in their campaigns and protests and helping the academic community and university students move towards socially relevant research. In collaboration with similar initiatives in other states across the country, the Forum helped to establish, at the national level, the Centre for Budgetary and Governance Accountability (CBGA) at Delhi. The Centre monitors the pillars of democracy in India – the Parliament, the Executive, the Judiciary and local governments.

Socio-economic and livelihood rights of the marginalised (Right to Public Health, Right to Primary Education, Right to Water and Food Security, Right to Work...) remain the focal point of all budget advocacy and social monitoring efforts of “Social Watch – Tamil Nadu,” which is today a founder and integral part of the National Social Watch Coalition of India.

Response to Governance Issues of Tsunami

The 2004 Tsunami and the governance issues that have been the fallout of the disaster present a great challenge to “Social Watch – Tamil Nadu.”

1. “To whom do the Coasts Belong?”

One of its earliest and key concerns was to ensure that in the cacophony of voices emerging from all over, the voice of the affected do not get drowned. Hence, as soon as the disaster took place, “Social watch – Tamil Nadu,” along with like-minded organizations, evolved a “Citizens’ Forum for Tsunami-Affected.” It was an effort to bring together lawyers, academics and civil society personnel, all of whom were convinced that the best answers lie with the affected. A series of press conferences at which the fisher folk and affected coastal communities (including, especially, women) were enabled to interact directly with the mainstream media helped to make sure that the voices of the people were recorded and remembered.

This is a time when commercial interests are pressuring the Government to evict coastal communities from the coast, using the Tsunami as an excuse and playing on the fears and uncertainties of the affected. The motive, of course, is the appropriation of the coast for ecologically unsound exploitation. At this juncture, the Citizens’ Forum has highlighted the customary and primary rights of the coastal communities to the coast.

2. “Where does the Money Go?”

Much money – grants and loans – has flowed, and continues to flow, into the country in the aftermath of the Tsunami. Too much, really! International funding agencies, overwhelmed by the positive response of people in rich countries, have been compelled to force their local partners to spend huge amounts of money within a short time, without taking into consideration the capacity of groups to spend such huge amounts of money meaningfully at such short notice! And now, international financial institutions like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank are jumping into the arena in the name of reconstruction efforts. And government – both central and state – with their own funds as well as the funds contributed to them by the public, have a lot of money to throw around.

In the heavy flow of money, accountability, transparency and participation by the affected have been the biggest casualties. And, in the midst of it all, while contractors and political parties and even some private agencies have successfully diverted many of the funds away from the truly needy, the affected communities, with their own meagre community resources and funds, have been running from pillar to post to get the relief and rehabilitation money legally due to them.

In the initial days of the Tsunami, “Social Watch – Tamil Nadu” worked with many organisations to ensure the legal entitlements of the affected for relief and compensation by helping file petitions before local tribunals and courts, by collective mobilising, and other similar efforts.

At the moment, based on requests from many quarters, “Social Watch – Tamil Nadu” is busy evolving mechanisms to independently monitor the whole field of financing for Tsunami from both Government and private funds. Mechanisms such as “Social Equity Audits,” “Peoples’ Tribunals” and “Public Hearings” are being explored and will soon be set up, becoming operational in the near future.

3. “Who is responsible for Tsunami?”

God? Nature?... No natural disaster is altogether free of human factors. The differential impacts of the Tsunami have revealed to us that even a natural disaster like the Tsunami is accentuated by human causes. Leaving aside global links with under-sea nuclear tests in the area, areas where there have been illegal sand mining, destruction of mangroves and bio-shields along the coast, and a pattern of development pushing fisher folk perilously close to the sea have been identified as the areas worst affected by the Tsunami.

Disaster preparedness was inadequate and the initial lethargy of the Government departments was indeed shocking. In areas where people had so little as an hour's warning from other sources, many lives have been saved. "Social Watch – Tamil Nadu" is now in a process of serious interaction with civil society groups from the States of Gujarat (Earthquake, 2001) and Orissa (Super Cyclone, 1999), with the intention of establishing an independent "Disaster Watch" in the country. Meanwhile efforts are underway to prepare a model "Relief Code" and a "Disaster Management Act" for public debate and lobbying with the State Government.

Building governance issues into the overall struggle of the affected communities to reconstruct their lives and livelihoods is crucial

issues into the overall struggle of the affected communities to reconstruct their lives and livelihoods is crucial. That has been the search of "Social Watch – Tamil Nadu" in Tsunami-related work. In this it continues the Forum's tradition of the past 9 years, during which it struggled and lobbied to building good governance into the overall development process. Successes are few and far in between, it is true, but these few successes and the increasing pressure from various sections of civil society keep us moving forward.

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THE SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVE PEACEFUL STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

The Association of Community Councils and Organizations of Bajo Atrato – Ascoba – Chocó, Colombia
Alejandro Angulo SJ

The Association of Community Councils and Organizations of Bajo Atrato (ASCOBA) is an organization of black and mestizo peasants whose prime objective is to raise the quality of life for ethnic groups in their own territory. ASCOBA, which represents a total of 54 community councils of seven different valleys, is developing plans that will, when implemented, address the economic social, cultural and political needs of specific ethnic populations.

ASCOBA is the result of a cumulative organized struggle for land, a 20 year old struggle, that intensified in 1997 when the situation deteriorated into armed conflict in the region. Historically, the region of Chocó, and within it Bajo Atrato in particular, has suffered social and economic exclusion at the hands of the Colombian government. The national government has long favored the consolidation of illegal armed groups who fight for social control of the territory in pursuit of their own political and economic goals. The consequence was that Public Security Forces and paramilitary groups were pitted against the guerrillas of FARC, and this armed violence served as the detonator for the largest forced displacement documented in the history of the country. Between December 1996 and March 1997 more than 6,000 black and mestizo peasants were driven to the municipality of Pavarandó.

Since then, these communities have been searching for solutions to the critical regional situation. In the process of organizing themselves they have been accompanied by the Church and various international organizations that defend human rights and cooperation. The result of this organizing process was the creation in 1998 of the Communities of Peace, the best strategy at that time, to ensure the return of the population of Bajo Atrato and to secure the attention of the State regarding the various problems that afflicted the region. They succeeded in their demands that the State and armed groups respect their human rights and adopt policies guaranteeing their economic, social and cultural rights. They enjoyed great support from friendly embassies and countries that committed themselves to the communities in their search for solutions to the armed social conflict in the region and for implementation of policies to improve their living conditions. Thanks to such support, the Communities of Peace process achieved wide recognition at the

international level, while the response of the State, paradoxically, came grudgingly.

Starting with the organizational experience of the Communities of Peace, the black and mestizo populations of Bajo Atrato not only confronted the interests of the armed agents who tried to involve the civil population in the logic of war, but also reaffirmed the rights they possess as ethnic blacks. The communities have recognized that strengthening their organizational process is a necessary strategy not only for resisting the attacks by armed agents, but also for defending their territories from

The black and mestizo populations of Bajo Atrato reaffirmed the rights they possess as ethnic blacks

the various interests and economic mega-projects that threaten the region. This will enable them to achieve the full exercise of their rights, economic, social and cultural.

In the midst of this complex panorama, the communities of Bajo Atrato have organized themselves into a strong and cohesive social movement based on the political principles contained in Law 70 of 1993, the most solid juridical tool that the black communities have to count on. These principles recognize the right to collective title to their ancestral territories. By constituting themselves as an ethnic-territorial organization and seeking protection within the framework of the law of Black Communities, ASCOBA and the various Community Councils have begun to confront social conflict and the vested interests with which large-scale capital approaches their territories.

Large-scale capital interests have already begun to implement economic mega-projects based on foreign models of development that put the cultural identity and autonomy of black people at risk. Some of the projects in the making are the grand scale cultivation of palm oil, the indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources such as wood and *arracacho*, the implicit threat of the inter-oceanic Atrato-Truandó canal which is to be constructed, and the investigation and exploitation of biodiversity that are part of the globalization policies of into free trade treaties by the U.S.

ASCOBA, then, represents a different type of collaboration between communities, institutions, the State and other social actors present in the zone. It seeks to integrate the Community Councils and stimulate the active participation of the communities. To achieve its goals, it has defined four strategic axes of work: the defence of life, the defence of territory, respect for their autonomy, and the exercise of their cultural identity.

As part of this work, ASCOBA has begun to develop its own plans for ethno-development, making progress in self-diagnosis to identify not only what it needs but, above all, its potential. These plans will set them on the road to a

viable development process that is in harmony with their cultural distinctiveness and environmental possibilities.

Today the communities of Bajo Atrato, through ASCOBA, are not only resisting the war and arbitrary actions of armed agents. They are also, as an ethnic group, resisting the economic forces that try to make these territories into means of production to enrich large-scale capital. They are resisting the people of bad faith who seek to take their land. And they are fighting any policy that ignores their cultural, social and economic distinctiveness.

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The communities of Bajo Atrato are not only resisting the war. They are also, as an ethnic group, resisting the economic forces

OFFERING ALTERNATIVES TO ENABLE INSTITUTIONS TO WORK FOR THE POOR

Multi-stakeholder networking

Anna Marie A. Karaos

The governance of cities is one of the most pressing challenges facing many poor and developing countries today. As the competition for resources intensifies, many of the poor in the world's cities find themselves marginalized and deprived of access to the most basic need for survival – land for housing. Governance entails balancing social and economic needs and making sure that the weaker sections of the population, which in poor countries comprise the majority, have access to the resources available. The organized, informed mobilization of poor people, supported by professional and middle class groups and international networks, could help put pressure on governments to accomplish this.

In many poor countries, the urban population is growing so rapidly that a large number of city dwellers live illegally on either state-owned land or private estates. This unplanned and unregulated movement of people, mostly poor families who migrate to the cities in pursuit of employment, has given rise to many urban informal settlements whose residents have no legal tenure. Being illegal, the people of these communities are entitled to hardly any of the government infrastructure and services; worse, they have to contend with the constant threat of eviction.

Urban informal settlers thus constitute one of the largest categories of poor people in a country like the Philippines. Today they number roughly 14 million out of the country's 80 million people – that is, about a third of the total urban population. High national unemployment rates imply that many of the urban poor are casual workers or self-employed and therefore highly dependent on their proximity to urban business centres for their livelihoods. Given their lack of assets, poor education and limited skills, they hardly earn enough to meet their basic needs.

The struggle for land

Metro Manila, the largest urban centre in the Philippines, was home to some three million squatters or informal settlers when the people's uprising of 1986 erupted to pave the way for the country's transition from dictatorship to democracy. The "People Power" revolt, as it was called, was largely an urban phenomenon and triggered the invasion of unused and unoccupied tracts of land in the metropolis by large numbers of poor families. They expected the new government installed by the revolution

would issue a decree for some form of land redistribution.

Confronting a government openly committed to democracy and testing the limits of the new democratic space created by the change of regime, popular movements actively mobilized on many issues affecting the marginalized sections of Philippine society. The first important social legislation under the new democratic order was an agrarian reform law enacted in 1987. The law directed the redistribution of agricultural lands to qualified tenant-farmers and set ceilings on the ownership of agricultural land in the country.

Although the law itself fell short of what the peasant federations wanted, its passage signalled a recognition of the need for some form of social redistribution in Philippine society; this was seen as an imperative of democratization.

Inevitably, with the passage of an agrarian reform law, the distribution of land ownership became a central theme in the mobilization of popular movements at the time, including that of the urban poor.

Encouraged by the passage of the agrarian reform law, organized communities and federated urban poor organizations, began to intensify their clamour for land reform in the cities. The idea of urban land redistribution, or urban land reform, thus rapidly became a rallying point and a basis of unity for these groups. Increasingly, discussions were undertaken on the topic by different groups, some of which engaged in their own lobbying to influence legislators to pass an urban land reform law.

The inhumanity of forced evictions

In the beginning, the largely uncoordinated and dispersed lobby efforts did not put enough pressure on the lawmakers to make them give the issue their serious attention. Then in September 1990, a particularly violent eviction happened involving a poor urban community occupying a privately owned piece of land in the vicinity of the national legislative building. About a hundred families were rendered homeless and two lives were lost after a 200-man demolition team, sent by the mayor and backed by military men, descended on the community without prior notice or a proper court order. The demolition crew mercilessly tore down the people's homes, ignored their pleas for dialogue, and carted away their belongings. The people took refuge in a nearby church where a Jesuit, Fr. Joel Tabora SJ, was priest-in-charge.

Fr. Tabora who was then with the Institute on Church and Social Issues (ICSI), a Jesuit social centre which had been undertaking research on housing for the urban poor, immediately met the politically outspoken Archbishop of Manila, Jaime Cardinal Sin and the Bishops-Businessmen's Conference Committee on Urban Land Reform. A pastoral exhortation from the Cardinal came out afterwards, enjoining the lawmakers to pass the urban land reform bill.

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Social centres and advocacy coalitions

As Church support for the urban poor lobby was mobilized, the Jesuit social centre ICSI worked on the consolidation of the people's urban land reform lobby. Gathering the different urban poor organizations interested in the issue and linking them up with sympathetic NGO allies and middle class supporters, ICSI catalyzed the formation of the advocacy coalition Urban Land Reform Task Force (ULR-TF). The ULR-TF, formalized in April 1991, constituted a technical committee in ICSI together with other NGO workers; this committee then coordinated the coalition's activities and drafted in legal language the provisions to be lobbied for by the coalition.

An unprecedented mobilization of urban poor groups, supported by numerous professional and middle class groups and the Church, emerged and lobbied the Congress and the Senate. So strong was the social movement brought together in this lobby effort spearheaded by the ULR-TF, that in less than a year from the coalition's formation, the Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA) was signed into law in March, 1992.

What did the law change?

As with the agrarian reform law, the law that came out of the urban land reform lobby was not the ideal legislation that the urban poor had hoped for. For one thing, it did not directly legislate the redistribution of urban land. Nevertheless, there was substantial progress achieved in terms of providing the urban poor access to land, housing, secure tenure and protection against demolitions.

The law mandated the conduct of an inventory and the allocation of land by local governments aimed at ensuring that there was adequate land where the urban poor could build their homes. Private subdivision developers were also required to set aside twenty percent of either the land covered by their projects or of the total project cost for socialized housing. Socialized housing is a category of housing the cost of which has a ceiling set by the government and whose beneficiaries are poor informal settlers.

Equally important was the provision which protected informal settlers from arbitrary and inhumane evictions and demolitions. After all, it was a tragic demolition which triggered the intensification of the urban poor lobby for a land reform law. The UDHA decreed that no demolition could be carried out without a proper court order, consultations with the community, 30-days notice and most important, without provision of relocation for the displaced families. For the first time, there was legal protection accorded to urban informal settlers.

Multi-stakeholder support in getting the law implemented

As difficult and trying as the lobby for the passage of UDHA had been, it was still the easier part. Getting it implemented has proved to be the more challenging and protracted stage of the struggle. Until the present time, thirteen years after the law was enacted, ICSI continues to advocate for the full and faithful implementation of certain provisions of the law.

Among these are those concerning eviction and relocation. Although the law requires the provision of relocation for displaced families, this is not observed in all cases. Nevertheless it can be rightfully claimed that there are today fewer cases of demolition without relocation, particularly in the case of government-sponsored infrastructure projects, which usually result in massive displacement of informal settlers.

In this regard, the role of international organizations in raising the standards of relocation assistance and making sure that government observes these standards has been particularly crucial. Aside from advocating directly with housing agencies implementing relocation projects, ICSI has been negotiating with, and urging the foreign donor institutions that finance infrastructure projects to be mindful of the quality of relocation assistance given to displaced families. The Institute has also been monitoring and evaluating resettlement projects to determine the impact of resettlement on affected families. The findings are given to government implementing agencies and foreign donor institutions. These studies have shown that distant relocation caused long-term impoverishment for some particularly vulnerable families, even though the majority are able to cope after a few years.

For this reason, ICSI has adopted a two-pronged advocacy strategy supporting in-city relocation: first, by helping local governments find ways of making this possible; and second, working with urban poor organizations that assist communities in high-risk areas to acquire land through saving and accessing development funds. ICSI is a part of a network of NGOs that has also been involved in facilitating the implementation of slum-upgrading projects in different cities of the country by urban poor communities. This is done with the help of NGOs and local governments, with funding support from multilateral agencies. This multi-stakeholder approach is being documented, studied and refined through pilot projects for eventual replication.

Brokering partnerships and building capacities

Given the magnitude of the problem of urban homelessness, it is important to involve various players and institutions in the common agenda of providing the poor access to land, housing and secure tenure. There are today many models

Given the magnitude of the problem of urban homelessness, it is important to involve various players and institutions

derived from various countries of institutional arrangements for housing the poor involving partnerships among communities, NGOs, local governments, professionals and funding institutions. Needless to say, most important is the continuous organization and mobilization of the poor themselves so that they can play an active role in steering the development of their own communities. But what is also needed is the dissemination of knowledge of these arrangements, and building the capacities of the different actors so that they have the needed competencies to assume their respective roles. ICSI is continuing its advocacy work along these lines. Networking has been a crucial competence needed in such work.

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RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE STATE AND THE CIVIL SOCIETY

Ricardo González

The “Civil Society’s Agenda of Proposals” has been drawn up by a group of organizations that together constitute the Citizenship Forum,¹ whose priority is to strengthen relationships between the State and civil society. The goal of the Forum is to ensure a democratic governing process that promises both to fight poverty and work for a balanced and fair socio-economic development.

The Citizenship Forum, which has its eye firmly on what is actually happening, has been deeply concerned about governance after a splinter group of the ruling Revolutionary Party of S. Domingo, succeeded in modifying the Constitution so as enable the re-election of the President. By imposing their own presidential candidate for the office of President, they effectively divided the party, which has been in power from 2000-2004, into two. A majority of surveys and polls showed that their candidate secured only 28% of the vote and ranked second. This led to an aggressive and permanent rift between these two political forces fighting for control of the party and its candidature. His stronger competitor, the actual President of the Republic, Dr. Leonel Fernández, from the Dominican Liberation Party, comfortably held the first place in the surveys, with 63% of the vote of the electors.

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If this party were to win the elections a situation would arise in which governability would be impossible as it has only one out of a total of 32 Senators, six MPs out of 150, and holds only 15 of the 148 Town Councils. Its support comes from the peoples’ widespread rejection of the corruption and the economic policies of the re-elected government.

The Citizenship Forum, conscious of the political environment and the processes leading up to it, introduced the “Civil Society’s Agenda of Proposals” where some main ideas are put forward for the solution of macro-economic problems. Besides, it discusses social politics, education, health, public services, gender, environment, social security, transparency and the struggle against corruption, the relationship between the State and the civil society, and institutional and economic reforms. In so doing it becomes a mechanism by which to reach a consensus and initiate dialogue between the public parties, the National Congress, the city councils, the Executive Power and civil society.

¹The Citizenship Forum is the largest civil society network of the country; with which more than two hundred organizations from different sectors of national life are affiliated.

For the third consecutive time civil society has appealed to the presidential candidates to lay their programmes of government before the people and their organisations and discuss what they will do, how they will do it and with whom. Given our political culture, which is characterized by a high degree of centralization in the Executive Power and paternalistic client practices, peoples' organisations have tried to gradually develop processes that will strengthen democratic institutions through increased participation. They hope in this way to transform the existing stalemate.

It is true that in two previous elections the proposals of the candidates had been discussed in national forums with organisations of civil society. This time the Citizenship Forum and the Coalition for Transparency and Institutionalization (CTI) proposed a methodological change in which, as a form of participation, civil society drew up this "Agenda of Proposals" with the purpose of entering into dialogue with the political parties and their candidates.

In this process more than 120 organizations of civil society participated, representing a broad and diverse spectrum: neighbourhood associations, the social trusts, the environmental groups, women, trade unions, NGOs, associations of professionals, managers and employees. This diversity sometimes introduces contradictions into the "Agenda," despite our best efforts to state the points that unite us in our diversity.

The Agenda was built up in three stages: first, the identification of its themes in consultation with experts from civil society and political parties; second, negotiation with the candidates and consensus on participatory management; and third, follow up of the implementation of the government programme. For this a coordinating team was set up with members drawn from seven highly prestigious national-level institutions under the direction, in its first stage, of the Centre of Social Studies, 'Fr. Juan Montalvo.'

Once the methodology was agreed upon, a consultant was hired who could collect the proposals made by civil society during the last few years. With this input, consultations took place, distributed in various working-groups, each working on the theme or sector entrusted to it. First, social organisations established their priorities, then these priorities were submitted to the experts from the parties, and finally, there was a plan for an encounter with the presidential candidates. Of the eight candidates, five confirmed their participation, but at the last moment this encounter was cancelled. This forced us to change the methodology that was initially planned.

When this happened, a commission of civil society visited each one of the candidates before the election to discover their degree of commitment to the Agenda and their readiness to work in collaboration with civil society in implementing the Agenda if elected in the national elections. An agreement was reached with them that the

Citizenship Forum and the CTI would call for an extended encounter between the winning candidate and civil society to bring the Proposed Agenda of the Civil Society in line with the programme of the winning party. A record would be kept by experts from both sides to monitor and follow the commitments and the acts executed by the new government.

At present, work is being carried out on the second and the third phases.

One of civil society's greatest concerns is the lack of knowledge regarding the policies and programmes implemented when a change of government takes place. The new party in power goes in for changes and transformations that make continuity impossible, and the society has to face many crises in a variety of public services, the massive dismissal of public employees and substantial changes in the social programmes.

Efforts have been made to try to avoid such a situation, because it damages the institutionalization and the principle of continuity of the State. This is all the more urgently required because reforms and democratic processes in the country are of recent origin and lack the elements that can guarantee their sustainability. This effort aims at improving the relationships between political society and the State. This effort has also been supported for over a decade by various networks which have tried to enhance social participation, drawing up proposals and proposing solutions to national issues, and improving relations between and through the elaboration of proposals or solutions to national problems. It is for this reason that we have stressed continuity in this agenda, believing as we do that democratic governance is necessary if we are to engage in the struggle against poverty and work for the socio-economic development of our country.

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One of civil society's greatest concerns is the lack of knowledge regarding the policies and programmes implemented when a change of government takes place

DEBATE:

POVERTY AND SUFFERING: AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST POVERTY: SLOGAN OR ALIBI?

Max Kupelesa Ilunga SJ

Introduction

Development has been replaced by globalization; and we are careful to point out that people continue to believe in it, with less fervour than before no doubt, but with the secret hope that all is not really lost. Is the need to believe perhaps stronger than the content of belief in our world? True, a number of researchers, even those who ‘militantly’ supported the cause, today experience a growing disaffection with development, but the fact is that the development cause in the course of the last fifty years legitimized enormous bureaucracies, notably those of the U.N. These tend more and more to reproduce to assure their own survival; in order not to disappear, they must support situations that justify their presence. At this precise moment it is logical that they take up service again on the forefront of development. How? By banding together to “combat” poverty. (UNDP report, 2000: *Conquering Poverty*)

The theme of poverty is at once ancient and serious. The world is made in such a way that the existence of poor people has accompanied – and sometimes disturbed – the existence of all societies; but till today none has conceived the project of eradicating it. In this age of no faults, war with no casualties, we also envisage a world with no poor people! However sympathetic one may be to such a project, it is worth asking seriously why these U.N. and international institutions would have us believe that it is achievable. (World Bank report 2000/2001: *Attacking Poverty*)

The Problematic of Poverty

To enter into the problematic of poverty it is advisable to take a short detour into history – not to make it history (Sassier, *Du Bon Usage des pauvres. Histoire d’un thème politique XVIè – XXè siècle*, Fayard, 1990), but simply to recall that we have constantly oscillated around three poles, trying to accommodate them. The first is “charity or philanthropy,” which rests on compassion, often confronted by a sense of religious obligation. The rich person is expected to be generous and to give alms, or an institution (the Church) is entrusted with amassing donations for their distribution.

The second solution is political and arises from the maintenance of order: poor people are a disturbance,

hence they must be banished from society along with criminals and the insane. Such was the practice which France generalized, starting 1662, when more than 30,000 poor people were interned in the General Hospice of Paris. Even in 1949, President Truman considered poverty a “handicap and a threat.” In 1990, Aminata Sow Fall proposed an African version of this policy in her novel *La grève des battus*, an illustration of the temptation to purge the capital city of beggars and the poor... In a way, this was prefigured by the fears which associated the working classes with the dangerous classes.

The third way consists in obliging the poor to make themselves useful so as to deserve the help which society accords them – whence the creation of domestic work, where the poor are put to work. To be sure, these three approaches to poverty only concern the poor who are near us, in the same country; they do not constitute “poverty eradication strategies” on a global scale. They merely aim at keeping poverty within acceptable limits, taking into account the political context.

This threefold typology of poverty reduction is not without interest for our reflection.

As regards “development” policies, the subject of poverty had already appeared in the 1970s, when the president of the World Bank at the time wrote dramatically about the condition of those who lived in “extreme poverty,” and proposed to satisfy their “basic needs” in order to include them more and more in the economic system. In 1972 Robert McNamara presented the struggle against poverty in a philanthropic manner: “We are not asking the rich countries to reduce their prosperity to help the poor countries, but simply to ‘share’ with them a tiny fraction of their wealth.” The futile debate on the “satisfaction of needs” finally petered out, and attention quickly turned to “structural adjustment programs,” the harbingers of globalization.

Who can deny that the increase in the numbers of the poor is a serious problem? How can we tolerate the fact that 1.2 billion people live today on less than one dollar a day? How can one not subscribe to the Millennium Declaration, proclaimed by the General Assembly of the U.N., to “reduce poverty by half by 2015”?

This is why most international organizations recently committed themselves with such “unanimity” to a “strategy of struggle against poverty.” What one should must think of this new “slogan,”¹ remains to be seen. To return to our debate, we prefer to wonder about some points.

¹Etymologically, “slogan” means “war cry.”

Where is the problem?

In the language of international organizations one must attack the “problem” of poverty. Poverty is thus a problem. Just as before there was the “black problem,” the “Indian problem,” and today the “problem of violence against women,” the “problem of child soldiers,” the “problem of education for girls,” the “immigrant problem,” the “AIDS problem,” etc.

But for such problems to arise, there must be at least two terms: there are no poor people without rich people, etc. The process has two advantages: first, that of putting responsibility for the “problem” on the weaker party; and second, that of removing from the “problem” the one who assumes the power to state it. This discursive sleight of hand allows one, by glossing over social relations, to create a new, apparently objective reality, in this case “poverty.” From here one can talk about it, quantify it, attack it and seek to eradicate it.

Now things are not as simple as that, for *poverty develops in a social relationship*, which separates and unites the rich and the poor at one and the same time. International organizations obviously cannot completely ignore that. Thus, the UNDP has calculated that the 225 greatest personal fortunes in the world equal the annual earnings of 2.5 billion poor people (*Report on Human Development*, 1998, p.33). But what can such a comparison mean? Must one advise the rich to distribute their fortunes to the poor? The UNDP does not go that far. On the other hand, it lists minutely the disparities, international and internal, and deplores their increase, but without really asking about their origin. The latter however are not at all mysterious; from the point of view of a rational capitalist system, disparities are in no way a “defect” which one must get rid of, but on the contrary a “sign of good health.”

There is therefore something absurd about international organizations which “feel sorry about poverty and claim to combat it,” while at the same time recommending ways to make the markets work better for the advantage of the poor.

The question to ask therefore is whether one can speak about poverty without speaking about wealth, and in this precise case, whether one can fight against poverty without fighting equally against wealth. This idea is not, and never will be envisaged; and when the World Bank mawkishly asserts that “poverty in the midst of abundance is the greatest challenge given to the world,” it betrays itself in two ways: first, in stating an untruth (this is the contrary of what it should have asserted, for at the global level, abundance is but a tiny island in a sea of poverty); and secondly, by making poverty a “challenge” (given by whom?) it makes poverty a thing in itself, devoid of any context. There is more wisdom in this proverb: “Where there is no wealth, there is no more poverty.”

Who is a poor person?

In an ordinary sense, a poor person is one who “lacks the necessities of life or has only what is strictly necessary, who has not got enough money, or means, to meet his needs.” Poverty thus seems linked to indigence, the absence of economic resources.

But it was not always so. Without speaking of numerous traditions that value poverty (the Mendicant Orders and other religious congregations, the Sufis, Buddhist monks, etc.), there are numerous ways of defining poverty: medieval poverty was opposed to power, not to wealth; a rich person could just as well pass for affectively poor, and in traditional Africa, the poor person was not one who lacked material goods, but who had no one to turn to and passed as a kind of “social orphan.” (Seyni Ndioune, 1987)

Besides, since poverty is a “social construction,” it is to be expected that its definition varies according to the position of the one who formulates it. Westerners, or better, developers who visit South African villages, frequently assert that “these people have nothing; they are poor,” for the simple reason that they themselves are “blind” to the forms of wealth which are not part of their conceptual and material universe. Without a doubt the people in question would protest if they knew that others considered them poor!

Collective frugality cannot be confused with poverty. This is not a matter, of course, of a Rousseau-like elegy of poverty, but of not confusing the simplicity of certain ways of life with “modernized poverty,” created by the spread of the market system.

That said, we cannot reproach international organizations for “reducing poverty” to its economic dimension, nor for ignoring the point of view of the poor. They recognize that “poverty is not limited to income, and has many dimensions” (UNDP Report on Poverty, 2000, p.8), and that the situation of the poor is linked to a low level of education, to precarious health conditions, to a lack of power and to a general situation of social vulnerability. (*Report on Human Development*, 2000/2001) Besides, the World Bank questioned more than 60,000 poor people in over 60 countries to know how they saw their own situation. Thus, all seems ready to “attack” poverty globally and do justice to its multiple interpretations.

However, in their conclusions, these inquiries yield “measures which are far from deviating from the accepted doctrine.” The reasons for the rich getting richer are obviously not invoked. The only question is “how the poor can become new rich people,” for that is the ultimate objective. To the three historical ways of approaching the question of poverty, which were recalled above (charitable action, repression, and obliging the poor to be socially useful), the international organizations have now added a fourth: the injunction to get rich. How can poverty be eradicated once for all if not by inciting the poor to join the rich or the not-so-rich? (Corten, 1998)

The question to ask therefore is whether one can speak about poverty without speaking about wealth, and in this precise case, whether one can fight against poverty without fighting equally against wealth

To Intervene Everywhere

The strategies adopted are at least as multidimensional as the diverse aspects of poverty we have identified. In any case, international organizations always flatter themselves that they favour “global approaches.” Thus, for the UNDP, it is necessary to stop “targeting the poor,” and to “multiply social spending in their favour,” but to rely more in “the effects of good governance”, that is, to “help states to develop strategies to combat poverty.” This implies not only favouring infrastructure (roads, sanitation, schools) in poor areas, but above all giving poor people access to employment in agriculture, construction and small businesses. As for the World Bank, it seeks first to “make the markets work better for the poor,” which means in practice to “better integrate the poor into the market system”, by inciting public administrations to take the demands of the poor more seriously, while the poor are invited to “mobilize to make their voice heard.” By what means? There is no answer.

The numerous measures containing these diverse “strategies” hardly facilitate a brief presentation, and U.N. rhetoric, characterized by the search for consensus at the cost of “saying the least,” does not contribute to clarity.

What the World Bank calls the “complexity of development” justifies the international organizations extending their action (we know not how) into every domain of social life: economic growth, social services, environment, gender issues, public administration, decentralization, social capital, mobilization of the poor, international aid, debt reduction, governance, etc. To be sure, for the authors of these reports, all these policies, to have any chance of success, must be applied simultaneously and together, taking into account the specific context. Even if different reports list a considerable number of cases in which a given measure, linked to this or that other measure, reduced poverty, one cannot fail to be struck by the huge number of prerequisites for the action, by the very many obstacles to be overcome, and by the repeated warnings of possible perverse effects of the recommended measures.

We might also wonder about this *frenetic activism* and this will to interfere henceforth in the whole of social life. After the *liberal certitudes* of the World Bank in the *decade of structural adjustment*, moderated by the disastrous effects, and the first global reports on human development from the UNDP dedicated to specific themes, why this sudden profusion of recommendations, counsels and orders intended to overcome poverty? Would interest in the poor have the virtue of making for a more complex and more human world?

The time of alibis?

In the name of the struggle against poverty – whose emotional and moral connotations suffice to form a broad international consensus – are we not justifying a serious takeover of development policies, or simply of “policies” by international organizations? Behind the good intentions, and especially behind the multitude of measures presented as necessary for their realization, is there a more basic message, a kind of “red thread” which would permit the priorities to be organized into a hierarchy?

In trying to disentangle the strands, we shall rely on the two reports published by the World Bank and the UNDP.

The World Bank identifies three priorities: to give the poor better access to employment, the market and education; to strengthen the means of action of the poor; to ensure security for the poor when confronted with illness, natural disasters, violence and economic

shocks. How could you not approve of such a plan? But why this scheme of prioritizing? First, one must justify the will to “stimulate economic growth and make the markets function better” for the benefit of the poor and increase their assets. Then one must watch over the functioning of public institutions. Finally, calamities that affect the poor aggravate and weaken their negotiating position.

The UNDP considers offering a “targeted” aid, essentially aimed at helping poor countries improve the development of national policies and to reform the institutions of governance. Bad governance often breaks the link between efforts against poverty and the reduction of poverty. That is why one entire chapter is devoted to governance.

What does this mean? If the World Bank is concerned with the functioning of the market, it shares with the UNDP the placing of public institutions which are supposed to be ineffective, at least as far as the poor are concerned. Apart from the complexity of development, two themes seem of one accord: on the one hand, make the markets more effective and give everyone access to them to buy and sell; and on the other hand, assure “good governance”, which gives power to “civil society”, and which, thanks to decentralizing measures, limits the “arbitrary” power of the state.

These two preoccupations, which appear between the lines, are obviously legitimate for the struggle against poverty. But they also fix fundamental policies, which can then be translated into all sorts of prompt measures, linked to others – all equally difficult to put into practice – which promise an uncertain success. In the end what remains are two principal requirements: growth tied to the market, and the setting aside of the State, in favour of “community associations” which are supposed to be closer to the needs of the population. (UNDP report on poverty, 2000, p.5)

At the end of the report, one notices that the famous “struggle against poverty” is wholly written into the project of the “globalizing the economy.” It adds a supplementary

The reasons for the rich getting richer are obviously not invoked.

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soul, needed to appease all those who, through many spectacular demonstrations or individual protests, try to oppose it.

Here we find the principle of using indisputable values to justify programmes or strategies that result in the exact opposite of what they claim to achieve. (Perrot et al, 1992)

One notices that the famous "struggle against poverty" is wholly written into the project of "globalizing the economy"

The struggle against poverty claims to solve the problem by getting rid of it, so that the poor become as rich or less poor.

Just as those who foretell the future never say they lose when their remedy does not work but quickly blame the sick person for not complying with the prohibitions, so the

international institutions multiply ineffective plans and then condemn the poor for not being rigorous, for not respecting the rules of the game... this is fetishism. Soothsayers, like international institutions, play on the naïveté of the poor in order to profit from them with plans effective on paper and inside air-conditioned offices.

Conclusion

If the West still tries hard to make the poor useful and obliges them to earn the help which society brings them, the usefulness of the poor in poor countries is from now on of a different order: they serve above all today to justify a grand project which surpasses them--globalization, even if it brings them only suffering. Indeed, looking back at the way the Belgian colonizers justified their colony and involved all the colonized, we see an effective strategy, different from what is proposed to us today: alongside the large companies and industries there were many small and medium enterprises which employed people even in the remotest villages. Thus the standard of living rose quickly because the majority of the colonized had a certain purchasing power.

Criticism of new development proposals is more than ever criticism of the actual, and must be carried out first of all at the level of economic theory – not in a cosmetic manner, to adapt it to care of the environment or to the famous struggle against poverty, but seriously to re-examine the fundamentals, and especially the hidden presuppositions of the specialists in such projects.

Obviously the market economy must continue to play its role, which is not negligible, but it cannot be the only idea or the only economy. Human motivations are too diverse to be channelled into a one-track rationality. There are social practices beyond the reach of economic theory, which however claims to explain all patterns of human behaviour. This theory is desperately blind because well-known practices are still in search of a theory that can take explain them.

If the idea of development still persists today, it is because it symbolizes for some people an ideal of justice

and equity. But this has nothing to do with the struggle against poverty. From now on it is not a question of avoiding humanitarian disasters, but of the triumph of globalization.

Translation by Joseph P. Newman SJ

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A REFLECTION ON MEL GIBSON'S FILM "THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST"

Jean Luc Enyegue SJ

Points for Reflection

Mel Gibson's film, "The Passion of the Christ," has provoked some positive, and far negative reviews all over the world. The most bitter of the critics point out the excess of violence on Christ's person. Many people have made interesting links between this film and tragic events in human history. The film has even been labelled "anti-Semitic." Without wishing to enter such a polemic, and somewhat disappointed by the way the debate has evolved, I cannot help but make a link between the film and certain historical, actual realities of our world.

Jesus' arrest, in a garden once reserved for peaceful contemplation, makes me think of all persons torn away from their natural surroundings, dragged out of their place of meditation by the forces of evil. The heavy chains that dangle from his arms and neck and that he drags along his path obviously remind me of an Africa emptied of her precious sons for hundreds of years. The disciples, in a state of panic, are running as hard as they can no matter where. Snatched from their rest like the inhabitants of Walungu in the Democratic

Republic of Congo, they are forced to hide in the fields all night to escape the enemy. In their hiding places, the sound of boots and the rattle of firearms terrify them. Rudely awakened from their sleep, the lucky ones manage to reach the refugee camps, while the unlucky, mainly women and children, raise cries unheeded in the night. There is no one to help them but themselves: their aggressor thinks of nothing but jumping on his prey. Like wild beasts caught in a human trap, the women howl under the blows of bloodthirsty and vulgar violators, carriers of AIDS and begetters of unwanted children. The cross that such inconsolable mothers must carry is that of bringing forth the fruit of an aggression, the child of a rapist who will continue to remind them of the face of its father. Far from evoking the uniqueness of a Jewish world, the setting of the initial scenes could just as well be a corner of Africa where the discovery of a treasure turns the locals into homeless people. A marginalised world where Pygmies, Batwa, Aborigines are confined in reserves, far from the gaze of opulent society

The chains of slavery have been exchanged for the chains of neo-colonialism, famine, war and AIDS to the point at which Jesus' arrest and all the cruelty that accompanies it have nothing surprising or astonishing to say to those who know such suffering. They live through this daily.

Then comes the flogging. A terrible physical suffering that lasts till the moment of death on the cross. The fact that a person has been able to conceive and produce such scenes justifies their reality, even though people who have

little experience of suffering may think otherwise. Morality teaches us that humans are responsible for the evil they commit. The history of the last two centuries demonstrates that such evil may be so terrible as to cross the limits of human understanding, whether the point of view be that of the perpetrator, or the victim or even the spectator or TV viewer.

It happens in fact that a person who commits evil does not come to understand how, though not under the effect of drugs or alcohol, he actually perpetrated such acts. Anyone who has been to Rwanda knows that the atrocity of the genocide, the way it was carried out was a piece of human folly. But when such men, crowded together in prisons where they meditate those "hundred days," finally come to terms with what they have done, they lie silent, they stop recounting the events; words can no longer explain what happened to them for the spell of a season. When fear surpasses human understanding and when it produces horrors that humans themselves cannot take in, we may of

course raise once again the question of the origin and nature of such an evil, but we will only find that this is an evil that is too much for the human understanding.

As much as their tormentors, the victims remain immersed in the same sorrowful mystery of evil. They ask themselves ceaselessly what they did to deserve such a fate or how a person can do such things. They cannot understand even the silence of a repentant persecutor. Nero and Hitler are real historical figures. The

suicides and the horrors of September 11th are real historical facts. Having known such cases and still others from the news, we cannot deny that the evil of our age can be sometimes justified only as human folly. It is an evil that knows no race and its liability devolves on all humanity.

Spectators or TV viewers of the Darfur conflict, or visitors to the genocide memorial in Kigali or

Auschwitz are often startled in front of certain scenes. Nevertheless, when they look with a truly loving and compassionate gaze, they realise that they themselves would have been capable of such evil and that they too are jointly responsible for other evils happening hundreds of miles away. I have just said "loving gaze." This and

this alone may allow us, as the GC 34(n. 36) says, to discover the harmony of a human world so evil that at times one finds it hard to believe that God is good or that a good God exists. I think it is important that humans, and especially Christians, learn to ask themselves how it is we can stay alive, how it is we manage to keep standing on our two feet while bearing the burden of crime, torture or genocide. Must one not be somewhat more than human to carry an evil that surpasses the human? Who but Christ himself could do such a thing? "Does that not suffice? Look at him!" I think that this question which Pontius Pilate poses to the crowd is one of great consequence. It calls out for commitment. This is where I find the worth of Mel Gibson's

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film.

In the *Exercises*, St. Ignatius asks us to take a look at the world. When I do so, it often happens that I place myself on a hill overlooking Jerusalem and note Jesus weeping. And I wonder: "Why do you weep, Lord? What do you see that makes you suffer so?" Sometimes I also place myself with the disciples on the way of Emmaus and ask them: "You who have lived with this Man, you who have known all the glory of the three years of his service, how is that in three days you expect nothing more than a hypothetical past? What have you seen that made you forget all that your eyes had seen?" That was the Passion, nothing but the Passion! "Does that not suffice?" That is a question of justice. A Roman officer, faced with Jesus' third fall, sensibly exclaims: "Do you not see?" and then adds "Help him!" Our world has reached the peak of violence, of death handed down to innocent people. This film says, in truth, that the time has come for all this to end. The world can be better if humans will it and act to achieve it. Jesus tells us: "I was hungry, I was sick, I was naked, I was in prison..." He continues telling us so in the person of those who are marginalised in today's world, those who are victims of our injustice and our violence. Fr Arrupe used to say that as long as there are people dying of hunger, the Eucharist would not be celebrated in all its fullness. The place that Gibson gives to the Bread of Life in his film is truly remarkable. One of the critiques that have been made to the film is that it insists more on the passion than on the resurrection. That is true. We cannot however deny that for thousands of people in the world, Christ's passion lives on and is a daily life experience.

Nevertheless, this film finishes with an image. It is not the image of a dead man but one of the living Christ about to set out on a journey. This image is in itself an opening that extends beyond the limiting framework of the passion. Thus, after seeing the film, we have only to seek, not just how to preach the cross with its folly to those unacquainted with it, or how to preach the resurrection to those who find themselves immersed in a daily abyss of war, sickness or torture, but also how to announce Christ's mystery in its wholeness while stressing the need of this or that aspect. How can we understand today the *salvifici doloris* of John Paul II. "Today," says the psalm, "let us not harden our hearts. Let us rather listen to the voice of the Lord," to the plea of his children.

Translation by René Mario Micallef SJ

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EXPERIENCES:

WITH AND FOR FRIENDS IN THE LORD

Claudiu Ciubotariu SJ

In early June of last year I was invited, together with my regency companion (Scholastic Edoardo Prandi SJ), to take part in a course given by Fr Fernando Fernandez SJ and his co-worker, the scholastic Daniele Frigeri SJ, in the Genova novitiate. The course, which could be called 'a sharing and reflection meeting' given the fact that it lasted only two days, was a good opportunity for me to see my experiences of the last ten years alongside the poor in a new light. It is a pleasure to share this with you. I will present these in chronological order.

Christmas of 1994. Some time earlier I had transferred from a Catholic secondary school to one geared towards languages in my native town of Satu Mare in the north-west of Romania. At this point I had known the Society for more than two years and was happy to work in this new context with one of her members, Fr Jean Mangan SJ.

At that time Fr Mangan was guiding a not especially large group of young people who used to meet every Friday evening on the premises of a Byzantine Rite Catholic parish church. Songs and group sharing directed towards a chosen theme, and plenty of time at the end of the evening for a period of sincere and meaningful prayer Taizé-style, characterised the life of this group. Some months later the group moved to a new house, which later on would become the headquarters of the Association *Frères-Romania*. Most of the young people would meet on Sunday morning to share the Eucharist, at the end of which they went to offer their services in local orphanages. We were asked simply to be with the children and young people and to spend a time of joy, smiles, stories, activities with them.

Yes, the orphanages... Five years had passed since the fall of communism in Romania but the symbols of the last forty years could be seen and felt. Tens, hundreds, or perhaps thousands of these structures scattered throughout the country, orphanages which from the outside looked more like schools or crèches, but which inside were actually places of great suffering. The children who lived there gradually became non-human. And then, access to visitors was frowned on if you did not leave a tip for the right person... During the summer and Christmas vacation French and Italian youngsters joined our Friday group and offered to spend their free time with these practically forgotten children... Contact with this harsh reality inspired Fr Jean to make a particular commitment. Thanks be to God, this commitment was fulfilled with the opening of a few 'family-houses' to receive some of those who, having grown a little older, had left the orphanages.

Then, after this experience of service, prayer and sharing, having finished secondary school, I decided to enter the

Novitiate of the Society of Jesus at Cluj. It was the end of September 1996.

As apostolate, Father Novice Master entrusted me with a group of young people who formed part of the Movement *Foi et lumière*, the movement inspired by Jean Vanier. It was in that group in particular that I had an experience that was an enrichment and a torture at one and the same time: I felt naked, empty, in the face of my neighbours' infirmity, but happy to be able to share my time with them, above all joking and talking.

Another very powerful experience for me was the vacation experiment in Bucharest with *Concordia*, an association begun and still co-ordinated by Fr Georg Sposchill SJ and his co-workers. This association devotes itself to the re-education of street children. The five weeks spent between a re-education house and the streets of the capital were for me another opportunity to get to know the world of those on the margins, of those (partially) forgotten by society. And you would say that Jesus was right: "In fact, you always have the poor with you" (*Mt* 26,11).

Days were much the same: morning and early afternoon activity with these children who not so long ago had been subjected to a full taste of life ... the street, and in the case of most, exploitation. Games, walks, songs, homework (for those who were going to school). In the afternoon we used to visit the bigger boys who "were living" in the vicinity of the central station, that is, in the capitals' sewers!!! One day, heart in mouth, I received an invitation from one of the tenants of these subterranean 'palaces'. Another world... If you had to describe it you would be taken back to the application of the senses St Ignatius invites the exercitant to experience when he presents the contemplation on hell. Everything is there: the smell, hardly any light, promiscuity, mice and stray dogs, 'the perfume' of chemical substances often used by the young people so as to forget who knows what! Perhaps the most touching experience was when one of these friends of ours, whilst telling me amongst the rubbish bins about his day behind the railway station, all of a sudden in quite a calm way, took out of his trouser pocket a sort of penknife and started to cut the veins of his arm... "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (*Mk* 5:3).

At the end of the novitiate, during the vacation pilgrimage experiment, I had occasion to put Providence to the test in many ways. One evening, I arrived with my travelling companion in a little village at the foot of the mountains; asking a number of people for hospitality, we received a polite but not particularly kind refusal. Coming to the furthest limits of the village we dared to knock on the door of a very modest dwelling. It was opened by a lady in her eighties, bent over, but with a smile on her lips. She invited us inside and offered us hospitality. She shared what she had for dinner with us: a piece of polenta from some days ago and a piece of fresh cheese... "but this woman in her poverty has given all that she had to live on" (*Luke* 21:3).

I was in Padua for my philosophy studies, and in the first two years of regency worked mostly with young university students, whether in sharing or prayer groups, in the library or in the cineforum of the Centro Culturale di Iași. During the second year of regency I felt something lacking, an emptiness: I had got to know THE MAN, that is the one for whom the Lord has called me to work in His vineyard, very little. Father Provincial and I were looking for a place and a community adapted to fulfilling that need. The parishes of Beirut, the Aids victims in Kenya, the 'zingari' of Miskolc (Hungary), the street children in Manila, and finally Trent. Everything was more or less ready for the beginning of this year of regency in the social sector, when on the morning of Pentecost 2003 an e-mail of Father Provincial advised me of my final destination: the Association of St Marcellinus in Genoa.

And so, at the end of September that year I began in a great spirit of availability and joy the third year of regency. A member of a small and fine community, that is the *Residentia Pastoralis Genuensi*, I became one of the staff of the Association of St Marcellinus, engaged chiefly in the reception and reinsertion in the community of 'homeless' persons. After a short period of 'full-immersion' I was placed in the reception area: a listening centre, a day centre, a mess of a dormitory, a food shop. Through these various services I was able to put my listening skills to the test in my dealings with the different people to whom we offered hospitality: listening to their experiences, amid smiles and tears, sharing lives, etc. All this within a lively environment but also with a *cura personalis* which the Association had made its own style of work. Contact with the suffering and poverty of so many people inevitably put me in touch with my own poverty. I was able to offer them so little: simply being there, or speaking. But from them I received so much: from my closeness to these friends of the Lord, I got to know His friends in our own times in this city of Genoa, which had been chosen as the European cultural capital for the year 2004. Yes, friends, because that is what they had become, these people who had been sharing their stories, from the very depths of their hearts, between a shower and a hot drink at the Day Centre. And it's only with such friends that you discover yourself to be, deep within yourself, truly poor!

One month after my arrival, my local Superior, Fr Nicola Gay SJ, asked me to take part as a spiritual director in an MEG group based in the neighbourhood where our religious community was situated – a terrific group of fifty or so adolescents of "Genova bene." It was not easy for me to find the balance between these two different things – the Association of St Marcellinus and youth ministry); and, returning to an expression used by Fr General, I had been keen to become revive my acquaintance with the Jesuit who works every day **for** the poor and, perhaps, less with the Jesuit who works full-time **with** the poor.

In fact, after eight years of life in the Society and starting my theology studies, and having had these rich experiences which the Society granted me in my formation as a whole, I dare to say that I feel myself drawn rather more towards an

intellectual apostolate than one in youth ministry. Nevertheless, the experience of encounter with suffering and poverty in people whom I have met through different experiences in the social apostolate has helped me to see clearly the importance of seeing those on the margins. I understand now how the preferential option for the poor ought to inspire all the apostolates of the Society. There comes to mind a letter in which St Ignatius makes the suggestion to some learned Jesuits teaching at the famous University in Barcelona to take a day off from professorial duties and spend the morning in the holds of boats full of coloured men being carted off from their countries to work as slaves in Europe: in this way their philosophy and theology would be enhanced with real human and spiritual material.

I am aware that our hands-on work with those on the margins, with these friends of the Lord, is not enough. Our work also requires us to influence the great people of our cities, of our countries, to look towards those brothers of ours with whom, perhaps without realizing our responsibility towards them. We may share our morning bus journey with them when we go to work or to school, or when we shop in the local supermarket, but little do we realize that they live out their day thanking the Creator for the few possessions they have and the little dignity they retain.

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HOW DO I FIND MYSELF AS A JESUIT AND ASIAN IN MY MINISTRY?

A. Joseph Xavier SJ

This sharing is based on my experience of three years as Secretary of Social Apostolate in the South Asian Assistancy, an assignment that opened up for me a new rhythm of life – made up of in part of a comfortable life in the national capital, in part of being in the appalling situation of rural India; and in part of long, often silent, hours of journey in the Indian Railways. Meeting academicians, activists, tribals, minority communities, victims, Jesuit superiors, government officials; having direct experience of the faith-justice experience of the social ministry; participating in international fora – all these have contributed to an expanding horizon in which questions and doubts jostle with comfort, joy and pain.

Thanks to the variety of vocations within the Society of Jesus, our Jesuit companions are making indelible marks in places to which others dare not to go. Immersion in the life of the people makes me proud to say that I am a Jesuit. I am aware of the other side of the Jesuits too; after all, I belong to the same pool. Growing individualism and lack of commitment to teamwork are real blocks in this ministry. But overall, I have felt that both the charism and the institutional power of the Society of Jesus endow me with massive capacities to go beyond my limited individual capabilities. On some occasions I have realised that the Society of Jesus trusts me more than I trust myself. The Social Justice Secretariat, Rome, recently conducted a study on Jesuit Social centres. The analysis shows that nearly one third of social centres in the Society of Jesus are in South Asia and the hallmark of Social Action in South Asia is ‘being with the poor’. I feel great to be in this company.

Having said this, let me turn your attention to a dialogue exchanged a few months ago between a member of the Sangh Parivar¹ and an associate of ISI. The Sangh Parivar man confronted our collaborator saying, “Why do you go to Indian Social Institute? It is a Christian Institute.” In response, our friend countered him, “Tell me on which occasion ISI has exhibited itself as a Christian Institute.” This dialogue to me is an indication of a growing dichotomy, at least in the way people perceive between being Christian and human. I have experienced this dichotomy within myself. Is it because I am scared of my Christian identity in the context of growing fundamentalism in our country? I must acknowledge that I do not feel free to say that I am Christian, especially if I am not sure of the context. This was not the case some years ago.

The same is true of my Jesuit identity too. When the perceptions are different and sometimes negative, it is a problem for me to identify myself as a Jesuit, particularly to identify myself in a secular forum. Am I in the process of

¹The Sangh Parivar is the name given to the conglomeration of Hindu fundamentalist groups and political parties espousing Hindutva or Hindu-ness

redefining my 'Jesuit' identity? What seems to make sense to me these days more than identity is 'solidarity'. Can I define Jesuit-ness in terms of solidarity?

Last April when we had SAPI follow up meeting in Delhi consciously it was decided that we would not include the Eucharist in the schedule as SAPI is a secular platform. We decided instead to go for common prayer service which many felt as a need. Doing this was not at all easy. Our intentions were good but the language was not adequate. Dalits speak of Buddhist spirituality and the poor speak of subaltern spirituality. Amidst this rich diversity, the challenge for me is how to articulate myself as an 'Indian Jesuit'. The SAPI delegates very clearly said, "We need Jesuits, not as leaders who would shepherd us, but as animators, inspirers, companions and who would be willing to work with us under our leadership." This, I feel, is yet another indication what I ought to be.

Another reason for feeling discomfort is my own reading of the future. The future of the Asian reality is increasingly clear. It is primarily the material deprivation of the poor – the struggle for survival. Will I, as a 'Jesuit', be able to contribute anything at this level? Already I see that social action intervention is shrinking in some provinces for want of adequate resources and qualified personnel (this despite the growing number of vocations). In the questionnaire sent from SJS, Rome, about 40% of the social centres had mentioned lack of resources as one of their major weaknesses in the ministry. On this count, I clearly see that in the days to come our concrete manifestation of being with the poor will only decline. Possibly, we will stop some of our interventions on grounds of high costs.

Finally, I understand that I live with multiple identities. My 'Jesuit' identity, I feel right now, is loaded with non-Indian, non-Asian, one-sided and dominant symbols and realities. As I become more conscious of myself, I feel that my Jesuit identity should emanate from Indian-ness and Asian-ness, spiritually and materially. This, and not the reverse, will have potency to partake in global solidarity.

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LETTERS:

More on GMOs

Piero Morandini¹

Allow me to comment on the article 'The Geopolitics of GMOs' by Peter Henriot SJ which appeared in *Promotio Iustitiae* two years ago (*PJ79*, 2003/3). I feel it is important to clarify for your readership and the Catholic community that the views expressed in that article in no way reflect the scientific consensus or the Vatican's position on the topic.

The antecedents to this letter are as follows. The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) from Zambia produced in the Summer of 2002 a document about GMOs in which they opposed the introduction of GMOs into the country, even in form of food aid.²

Famine started to bite Zambia and other countries in the region. A group of scientists (I was one of them) assembled a document³ in response to the original JCTR paper. The document was sent to the JCTR and to a few other people involved and then released to the public in October 2002. It contained a detailed criticism, loaded with data and facts, reaching the conclusion that the JCTR position could not stand scientifically; nor, in our view, could it stand morally.

To my knowledge, we never received any direct response to our commentary. An indirect response was given in a single paragraph of a contribution written by Fr. Henriot in the same issue *PJ79* (2003/3). I reproduce the entire paragraph:

"The position taken by the study [published by the JCTR] was scientifically, politically and ethically controversial, but surely arguable on decent lines of respectful dialogue. The report was posted on the JCTR web site and widely circulated to church officials, NGOs, the diplomatic community and other interested parties. Compliments came from some international groups (e.g., Food First, Friends of the Earth) and complaints from others (e.g., some agro scientists who had worked for Monsanto) – all to be expected."

Is it possible to dismiss the whole content of our document on these grounds? Does Fr. Henriot mean that anybody who has worked for Monsanto is unable to provide rationally valid arguments on agricultural biotechnology? Is Fr Henriot providing the statement reported above as an example of how to argue "on decent lines of respectful dialogue"? Can he confidently define our document as a "complaint"?

Even if one may consider it to be true that people who worked for Monsanto are unreliable critics, I hereby state that I have never been employed by Monsanto or any other industry, and I am sure that this true of many of the co-authors, if not all. I do not even mind asking all the co-authors about this, because I believe rational arguments must be answered with rational arguments, not gratuitous allegations. I would expect an apology for stating a fact

about me that is not true. But more importantly, I would also expect a response to our document. Failure to do so could give the impression that no 'decent line' of argument to defend their position is possible.⁴

Very interestingly, two contributions in the same issue of *Promotio Iustitiae* expressed a positive attitude towards the technology. These two articles came from two Jesuits: Frs Leo D'Souza and Savarimuthu Ignacimuthu. Both have a scientific background enabling them to understand the science behind GMO crops. Why not trust them? I could provide other ample examples of a lack of understanding of the technology by the other contributors to the same discussion. Anybody discussing the details of the technology without a proper background can be easily mistaken and is in great danger of harming other people. I therefore urge great caution to all those involved in the debate. I am available at any time to provide the evidence that the scientific consensus is overwhelmingly in favour of the GMO crops approved so far and that the benefits for developing countries are already tangible.

The document "*To Die or Not to Die*" explained substantial benefits that would protect the people of Zambia during a time of famine from the use of foods produced from transgenic crops. The authors of the document took seriously the moral challenge to use agricultural biotechnology to feed the hungry expressed by the Pontifical Academy of Science (as expressed by President Nicola Cabibbo):

"The developments [in biotechnology] we have discussed here constitute an important part of human innovation, and they clearly offer substantial benefits for the improvement of the human condition worldwide. They are essential elements in the development of sustainable agricultural systems capable of feeding not only the eighth of the world's population that is now hungry, but also meeting the future needs of the growing world population. To make the best use of these new technologies and the agricultural management opportunities they create is a moral challenge for scientists and governments throughout the world."

Kindly accept my best regards and the assurance of my prayers for the people of Zambia coupled with actions for the protection of their human dignity.

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Peter Henriot SJ

The scientific, political and ethical debate about the acceptability of GMOs as an answer to the problem of feeding the world's hungry is by no means finished. On reliable grounds the Government of Zambia has continued to resist outside pressure to accept GMOs and the country has been able, with good agricultural practices and adequate rainfall, to feed its people. It is important to note that to date the Vatican has not taken any official position in this debate. It was not my intention to identify Dr. Morandini as an employee of Monsanto but simply to indicate in the paragraph that he cites that there is a wide range of opinion, including that expressed in the document that he co-authored. While the debate continues, those of us working in on the ground in Zambia will continue to support the Government's position against introducing GMOs.

Peter Henriot SJ
Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection
ZAMBIA

Thank you for the rich and challenging issue of PJ (No.86:2005/1). I share the political passion of Ambrose and some of his perceptions, but not his analysis of the issues. Perhaps from the South Asian Assistancy perspective, it is becoming increasingly evident that our social analysis needs to be further sharpened, as implied in Lisbert's response. If there is a failure in intellectual rigour it is most evident in the social analysis tools used for the South Asian situation. The contribution of Mardones is very valuable in this context. As he rightly points out, we need to worry about the process of de-linking cultural and moral issues from economic problems. The depoliticising trend seems to be strong among the young members of the Assistancy and I surmise that one of the reasons, among others, is the 'weak socio-cultural' analysis'. It would be of enormously helpful for us to bring this debate among Mardones, Guillebaud and Zizek forward in the coming years.

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¹I want to thank Fr. Samir Khalil SJ for suggesting to write this letter.

²The document is available at the JCTR site:

<http://www.jctr.org.zm/downloads/GMOreport.pdf>

³It is available at:

http://www.agbioworld.org/pdf/To_Die_or_not_to_Die.pdf

⁴I have attempted on several different occasions for two years to begin a dialogue with Fr Henriot and Fr. Lesseps, but did not receive a response either on their allegations or on the points raised in our document.

JOHN PAUL II : IN MEMORIAM

We joined in the sorrow of all the very many people paying tribute to the extraordinary figure of Pope Wojtyla, the man who reminded us every New Year of the need for peace and freedom, and the conditions for that peace and freedom in the world today.

"Today more than ever, a decisive condition for bringing peace to the world is an acknowledgement of the interdependence between wealthy and poor countries, such that 'development either becomes shared in common by every part of the world or it undergoes a process of regression even in zones marked by constant progress' (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, 17: AAS 80 (1988) 532)."

(Message for the celebration of the World Day Of Peace, 1 January 2005)



BENEDICT XVI: WE ASK FOR BLESSINGS

As Fr. General reminded all of us,

"Owing to the affective and effective link which binds the Society to the successor of Peter, which is so decisive and distinctive for our mission, an ardent prayer rises spontaneously that He who dwells in the midst of His Church may bless this new Pontificate and accompany His new Vicar in his weighty responsibility."

(Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, Rome, 22 April 2005).