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FOR JCTR'S ACTIVITIES

! But what keeps us going, and will it keep us going for another

You know what we try to be about . read our vision and our mission statements, but particularly read our story, our history.

But let me share with you here what I would call the four pillars of the mission and activities of the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR). These are the foundation, goal, process and community of what we have been about for the past twenty years.

Foundation: "Faith Promoting Justice"

The JCTR is a programme of the Zambia-Malawi Province of the Society of Jesus. As such, we fit into the global mission of the Jesuits, a mission described several years ago as the service of faith and the promotion of justice. We are similar to the social centres sponsored by the Jesuits in many countries of Africa, Latin America, Asia, Europe and North America. These centres see the task of evangelisation as sharing good news in a way that brings life to the full (see John 10:10) to all our sisters and brothers, especially the poor and the oppressed.

Thus the JCTR is more than simply a non-governmental organization (NGO) but we are a faith-based organization (FBO)! Our relationship with the Jesuits demands both a high academic quality to our work but also a deep compassionate commitment. This has been shown, it seems to me, in the call we experience for very explicit articulation of social and ethical values in all we do. Good social analysis is coupled with good moral analysis, whether we are addressing issues of constitutional reform, environment, free trade, hunger, budget priorities, role of women, or whatever.

Where do we get these values that inform our moral analysis and guide our actions and recommendations? Certainly from our own lived humanity, and from the context and context of the best of shared African values. But in a very particular way, as a Jesuit-sponsored FBO we are informed, shaped, inspired by what is called the church's social teaching (CST). This is the body of social wisdom grounded in our Scripture and articulated in statements from our church leaders.

This CST isn't so very unique only to one church (Catholic) or one religion (Christian). Its main message is about the dignity of the human person in community, with special concern for the poor and our environment, and a recognition that love only finds its fullness in justice.

Over the years the JCTR has worked to ground that CST in the joys and hopes, sorrows and anxieties of the people of Zambia and Malawi. We have tried to do our research through the lens of the CST and make our policy recommendations encouraged by the hopes of the CST. We have also worked to make our churches more aware of the riches of the CST, through our publications (e.g., pamphlets, calendars and homilies), workshops (e.g., in dioceses and parishes) and formation programmes (e.g., in seminaries).

Always, faith promoting justice . that's what makes the difference!

Integral Human Development

So what have we tried to advance in society around us? I like to use the phrase integral human development because it embodies so many of the CST values I referred to above. In JCTR studies and workshops, we repeatedly emphasize that development is much more than economic growth marked by rising GDP or new investments or technological breakthroughs. It is about women and men enjoying the fullness of life in every dimension of that life.

In a great CST document, *Progress of Peoples* (1967), Pope Paul VI described development as the movement from less human conditions to fuller human conditions. And so JCTR works for a society where children or their mothers don't die soon after birth, where youth have the chance to expand their abilities through good education, where gender concerns are incorporated into public policies, where farmers can grow healthy and abundant food for the people, where decent jobs are available, where rights and protected and duties accepted, where the environment is treated as sacred, and where the spirit is enriched in a community of friends.

encouraged by the insights of so many experts who take this broader example, Nobel Prize Laureate Amartya Sen and his explanation of the Human Development Programme (UNDP) and its construction of a human development index. In Zambia, Professor Venkatesh Seshamani's emphasis on the

It is with this understanding of integral human development that over the years JCTR has challenged the narrow constraints of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), advocated for our *Basic Needs Basket* to be a norm for wages, advanced debt and trade policies that put impact on the human person as the first criteria for evaluation, lobbied for economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR) in a new Constitution, and challenged the social consequences of introducing genetically modified organisms (GMO) into Africa.

RESEARCH-BASED ADVOCACY

Over the years, many people have often told me that they consider the JCTR a "think tank." I don't like that! I want the JCTR to be an "action tank" guided by good thinking. A "think tank" seems to me to be too abstract, too removed, too out of the ordinary lives of ordinary people.

A long time ago I learned a good lesson for those of us who are involved in social justice work. When you are pushing a good cause or challenging a bad issue, shout loud, but back it up with facts and figures! Yes, press for the programme you believe will promote integral human development, but show with solid research why that programme is necessary and possible.

I believe that JCTR has followed that guideline during the past twenty years. Our physical archives and computer based data systems are filled with studies that we have done on a wide variety of topics. These are studies that have enabled us to lobby for changes in national government policies, or offer criticisms of programmes of international bodies like the IMF and World Bank, or raise our voices to support church involvement in political issues that are matters of justice.

Examples are many, so let me mention only a few. When the SAP was introduced in Zambia in the early 1990s, JCTR investigations on the impact of this macro-economic reform on people, especially the poor, women and children, enabled us to continually challenge the government and the international financial institutions. Advocacy efforts in the Jubilee-Zambia campaign for cancellation of debt were substantially strengthened by our study of apartheid-caused debt. How Zambia had to borrow because of its stance against the crimes against humanity of the Pretoria regime. Lobbying for better labour conditions was focused by our research on casualisation and hiring policies. No fair contracts given to workers.

Comparative studies on constitutional reform in Africa are even now feeding into effective church advocacy for a new and more comprehensive Bill of Rights in the Zambian context. A study in cooperation with the Centre for Social Concerns in Malawi showed the deplorable conditions of tenant farmers in the tobacco industry and helped to promote a campaign for protective legislation.

Probably our best-known and most utilized research for advocacy is the monthly *Basic Needs Basket* (BNB) and its allied studies on education, health, social services, etc. Whether relied upon by trade unions in their wage negotiations or called upon to substantiate Parliamentary arguments, the quantitative and qualitative studies surrounding the BNB is a great example of moving beyond "think tank" studies that gather dust on library shelves to values-inspired action for integral human development.

COOPERATION NOT CO-OPTATION

Surely one of the notable characteristics and great strengths of the JCTR over the years is that we have cooperated with a variety of groups in our mutual efforts to promote social justice. Among other things, this has meant sharing of materials, participation in education courses and joint sponsorship of programmes.

As an FBO, we have worked closely with other church organisations in Zambia, especially the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC) and its justice and peace and development departments (now called Caritas). An ecumenical focus has kept us in collaboration with the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ) and the Council of Churches of Zambia (CCZ). Internationally, we have cooperated with the Vatican's Council for Justice and Peace and the several church-related partners outside of Africa that have supported us.



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overnmental organisations . in a strong civil society. The JCTR has
al way. For example, the women's NGOs keep us alert to gender
udies that show the impact of food prices on women-headed
is on good governance issues and this surely relates to JCTR

Because of our strong concern about the social impact of issues such as debt, aid, foreign investment and trade on the lives of people, the JCTR has also had relationships with institutions such as the World Bank and the international Monetary Fund as well as various Ministries of our Zambian government (e.g., Finance and National Planning). This has meant inviting representatives of these offices to appear in our public forums and also participating in various events sponsored by these institutions. To be honest, this has occasionally brought us criticisms from friends who feel we should keep a healthy distance from such groups!

Well, I believe the best response to that criticism came from one of our JCTR staff who replied, %it will promote true social justice, then we believe in *cooperation* but not *co-optation*, or, to put it another way, *engagement* but not *marriage!*+

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