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SELECTED PUBLICATIONS OF CIDSE MEMBERS

BROEDERLIJK DELEN: “Movimientos sociales, solidaridad internacional y construcción de alternativas: ¿más allá del desarrollo?” August 2013
CAFOD: “Common good and the economy.” October 2014
FASTENOPFER: “What is a good life?”, December 2013
TRÓCAIRE: “My Rights Beyond 2015: Making the post-2015 framework accountable to the world’s poor,” September 2013
Xavier Ricard, CCFD-TERRE SOLIDAIRE: “Le progrès, c’est l’équilibre !,” October 2013

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This document is available in English, French, German and Spanish.
Since 2008 we have seen impacts worldwide of the crises in finance and economy, climate, food and energy. Changes in patterns of inequality and increasingly common challenges are taking us beyond divisions between “North” and “South,” towards shared global perspectives. Development cooperation frameworks are undergoing profound evolution. In this context, the CIDSE alliance and its member organisations have been engaged in a fundamental rethinking of development and a sustainable future.

Over the past six years, CIDSE has worked to challenge assumptions on growth, development and consumption. In our work with our partner organisations, we endeavour to fight the structural causes of injustice and poverty, whether related to the impacts of mining, climate change, land grabbing or gender injustice. And yet despite good work, there is a sense of frustration at the continuing overall trends in inequalities, hunger, climate change, and corporate interests being put before people and planet.

This puts a responsibility on us to question our ways of working and test new approaches. We have done so by fostering dialogue, based on experience and trends, and by encouraging new ways of thinking and understanding. Our workshop in May 2013 was an important milestone, helping us to put forward a common vision on “what” key changes are needed for a just and sustainable world (see box). Since then, we have been focusing on “how” we can act to bring this about.

In 2013-14, we saw a growing dynamic and momentum throughout the work of CIDSE and our member organisations. Further developing our strategies towards pathways for change was the aim of the CIDSE workshop, “Acting for transformation towards a just & sustainable world,” 9-10 September in Brussels, which gathered 70 participants from across CIDSE membership, allies and partners on all continents.

As faith-based agencies, we have a great potential to draw from Catholic Social Teaching in reaching out to citizens to question the functioning of our current system and to promote value-based alternatives. Our values can help us to “walk the talk” in our own practice and organisations, increasing our credibility within our own societies.

We know that we must make strategic choices to join forces with others in new ways, strengthening our collective action to bring transformational change. The workshop created a space to learn from experiences, voice challenging questions, and inspire our strategies in order to realise human rights and a life in dignity for all.
Key Outcomes

TO ACT FOR TRANSFORMATION
TOWARDS A JUST AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD, WE NEED ...

▶ POWER
Everywhere people are increasingly aspiring for greater solidarity and good stewardship of creation. We need to regain control over choices in our societies, building people’s power. This requires clearly naming injustices, and exposing false solutions. As political will to move in the right directions is limited by certain influences including concentrated corporate interests, we need to work to democratise decision-making and to open “power spaces.”

▶ STORIES
Our starting point is the serious injustices and human rights abuses experienced by communities around the world every day. We need systemic narratives that integrate questions related to food, natural resources extraction, climate and energy, and social, economic and gender inequalities. Beyond “North” and “South,” we need to foster a global dialogue on our common challenges and shared responsibilities. We need to advocate for people’s alternatives and promote stories of transformational change, reaching a wider public through simpler messages and alternative media.

▶ MOBILISING
Political change will not come without change and activism by people and communities. We need to act together, connecting with social movements, building bridges across struggles and countries and helping to catalyse a global movement of youth, women and men for change. We need to listen at the grassroots, and engage with people personally within and beyond the Church in a shared journey to build alternatives.

▶ CHANGE THAT STARTS WITH US
As development agencies, we are called to review and challenge our ways of working, boundaries of action, and footprints. We need to re-examine our relationships with partner organisations around the world, and increase our support for strengthening people’s initiatives. We need to revitalise our roots in our communities and engage in debates that concern our own societal models. Political, partnership and public work as well as funding should be joined up in a coherent whole. “Walking the talk” can strengthen our profiles as credible actors and change agents.
Strategies for transformational change

TO IMPROVE OUR STRATEGIES
TO ACT FOR TRANSFORMATION, WE SHOULD WORK FURTHER ON...

▶ CHANGING NARRATIVES
New narratives are a living process, based on dialogue. They represent our vision and should comprise a set of questions, principles and elements including Catholic Social Teaching values, human rights and justice beyond a North/South divide. They must address systemic causes of injustice in a holistic way and be rooted in concrete struggles. They should showcase the plurality of alternatives through powerful stories of change, which can inspire, motivate and liberate. The narratives should awaken the senses, offering a smell and taste of the challenges and alternatives.

▶ SPREADING THE MESSAGE
We need to speak plainly, spreading stories of change relating to our new narrative with direct and positive messages. Beyond working with mainstream media, we could pool resources to build alternative media channels and platforms, such as radio stations, social media or video clips. This would require joint efforts by staff with communications, campaigns and policy expertise, working together with creative agencies.

▶ LINKING WITH MOVEMENTS
There is a need to enhance capacity and create spaces for networking. We can act as connectors and catalysts, using our convening power to bridge different constituencies. This can mean fostering exchanges across countries on strategies concerning specific struggles, but also broadening views and joining with a variety of “sectoral” actors. It can mean strengthening relationships between organisations, activists and youth in our own countries with movements on other continents. This would require working in an integrated way, joining up notably programme and advocacy work.

▶ MOBILISING THE CHURCH
The Church is a local, national and global institution comprising a number of entities and people. A multi-faceted approach should be taken, based on simple and consistent principles that can link to the many struggles around the world. The theological context offers this basis, but work is needed both to make texts accessible, as well as to amplify major opportunities such as the upcoming encyclical on ecology. We need “1 billion leadership,” capturing the imaginations of all people of faith and good will and working with them to call for putting the preferential option for the poor at the heart of global decision making. Young people in particular should be engaged to become guardians of creation.

▶ REVIEWING OUR WAYS OF WORKING
We need to build on efforts to better connect advocacy, programme, campaigns, education and fundraising work within CIDSE and its members. This means investing in a common “landscape,” in which advocacy staff have direct experience with partners’ work, and programme staff have a complete picture of the global context and root causes affecting their projects. Our constituencies in our social base have great potential to be promoters for change, if we can connect people and issues between our own countries and other continents. In this context, we can reflect on future roles of Catholic development agencies, including within our own societies.
Localised food systems are increasingly referred to as a way to achieve the right to food. There is a need to regain control over natural resources and food systems, in order to make them diversified, decentralised, democratic and sustainable. Equally urgent is to confront access and gender inequalities perpetuating food insecurity. Empowering citizens, farmers and consumers, and opening “power spaces” are necessary if we are to secure a deep transformation of our food systems and achieve food sovereignty.

The dominant discourse surrounding food, which frequently offers an array of false solutions to perceived ‘crises in production’, must be challenged. Misleading approaches, such as ‘climate-smart agriculture,’ may only reinforce harmful practices and market concentration. Building strong, evidence-based critiques will allow us to get to the crux of the debate.

Our objectives require a holistic approach, linking the ongoing crises facing our food, environmental and economic systems simultaneously. This calls for addressing issues that Northern and Southern peasants and farmers are facing together. We can also promote concrete actions to link farmers, consumers, churches, and youth, including within the context of rural development. This can help to highlight the shared but differentiated responsibilities of multiple actors.

Building positive alternatives for “good food” involves showcasing examples, supporting grassroots movements in putting farmers and small producers at the centre of dynamics, and seeking new allies such as within schools. Such an agenda requires a shift in our practices as development actors.

“The majority of the world’s food is produced by smallholders – allowing farmers to come to the negotiations table and speak for themselves about the ir challenges is crucial.”

- George Dixon Fernandez, FMARC
Addressing the global over-exploitation of natural resources requires limits. The expansion of mining in many countries is affecting people’s rights, land and livelihoods. Corporate influence over legislation and payments to security forces are eroding democracy; this needs to be exposed. People’s movements have had some successes in fighting such injustices, for example in gaining allies and broader support to freeze the Conga open-pit mining project in Peru. At the same time, there is a need to link up local movements across areas affected by the agro-mineral-energy complex. Some new tools are helping to do this, such as the Atlas of Environmental Justice. Similarly, it is important to make visible the frontline communities that are affected by climate change.

Climate change should not be considered a specialised, stand-alone topic; it interlinks with lifestyles, development paradigms and corporate influence over political decision making. These intertwined elements come into play when it comes to working for alternative, decentralised and carbon-free models of energy. Local, people-led solutions such as in water management have potential, but may not address global justice. There is a need to move beyond thematic to systemic approaches, creating a common narrative also including gender equality. This could help to catalyse a global movement of people’s power, for example around the concept of ‘freedom.’

Building a wider, sustained movement for change would reach out beyond activists, and beyond milestones of climate negotiations. It would not be only dependent on political processes that may suffer a lack of political will, while keeping awareness of these. It would instead anticipate moments to create change, such as the upcoming encyclical on ecology. Key elements could also include simpler messages, use of alternative media, and engaging with people in a journey such as a pilgrimage.

“If power is porous, we can be granular.”

- Pablo Sánchez, GRUFIDES

GRUFIDES

GRUFIDES (Peru) is working on the impacts of mining on local communities. Large-scale mining projects have severely impacted many regions in Latin America, such as that of Cajamarca in Peru. This has included transformation of landscapes, environmental land contamination, as well as displacement of local populations. Such projects have also contributed to economic dependence by destroying livelihoods, and to undermining democracy by paying national security forces and disregarding consent processes for indigenous populations. In Cajamarca, the people’s movement engaged in local peaceful struggles, which built into a massive mobilisation engaging neighboring cities and including a national march for water. The movement also found allies among anti-fracking movements and Catholic investors. In 2011, the Conga Project was suspended.

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“CLIMATE, EXTRACTIVES AND ENERGY”

© Karel Ceule
ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND GENDER INEQUALITIES

Economic paradigms need reshaping in order to uphold human creativity, social inclusion, gender equality, and democratic political culture. For this, naming the structural causes of inequalities, whether social, economic or gender-based, is needed. This includes identifying key actors contributing to those causes, including those with powerful economic interests. Links need to be drawn between inequalities and other dynamics, for example related to extractives, climate change or consumption.

Gender equality is central to an agenda for transformation. It is important to continue dialogue on related issues, with a spectrum of voices within the Catholic community and beyond. Some approaches offer the potential to bring together economy, environment, family, the personal and political.

Women’s movements have been some of the most effective agents for change, and should continue to receive support. New technologies could offer new opportunities to help overcome structures of injustice. Catholic agencies may also reflect on gender equality within their own organisations.

People’s behaviour, and individual or community choices, have an influence on broader issues of equity. Today, inequalities exist all over the world, questioning the relevance of a discourse which divides North and South. These changing trends challenge us to link economic realities “there” and “here,” connecting this with people in our own societies. Transformation may require reflecting on how we understand justice, and how we build upon our work with people in poverty, also thinking about the role of middle classes in decisions on future pathways in our societies. We can find best practices and innovations in the struggle against inequality both in the work of our partners in other countries, as well as within our own societies, including by youth movements.

"Talk to me, not about me."

- Call to NATO by Afghan women’s network supported by Cordaid at a protest on the eve of the NATO summit in Newport, UK

CordaID

Cordaid (Netherlands) monitors the implementation of the UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women and peace and security with a particular focus on conflict areas in fragile states. Together with partner organisations, it has developed the Women’s Peace and Security Barometer. This measuring instrument of the daily reality of local women is used in countries such as Afghanistan. Data from the barometer is used to empower local women to build their capacity and knowledge to influence and implement policies, and to confront international policy makers. In the Netherlands, Cordaid is also engaged in discussions on gender issues including women’s access to public and economic life.
Our advocacy has helped to secure certain "wins," and in other cases prevented things from getting worse. Still, a question of doubt lingers: are we really making a difference? Our ability to "win the argument" and convince policymakers may be overshadowed by the influence of powerful actors and vested interests. Hopes that global crises could force a rethink, have faded away in the face of a return to "business as usual" in terms of concentration of wealth and excessive profit-seeking behaviour. Economic incentives continue to disregard social and environmental concerns. And certain "lock-ins" in political choices, such as within trade agreements, will make it more difficult to seek alternative pathways in the future.

Instead of "policy speak," we should be aiming to change the terms of the big debate, looking at economy through a lens of human rights, dignity and sustainability. This means exposing self-seeking ideology. It means developing a new, convincing story, that can break through deeply-set mental frames such as the desire to "have more." This can tap into Gospel messages of love and sharing, reaching others through what it means to be human: spirituality, culture, art, music, a sense of humor.

Key to changing the balance of forces, is to build a people’s agenda powerful enough to challenge vested interests, including those of concentrated corporate actors. Diverse alternatives are developed at local levels, but often don’t address the wider picture. A number of “popcorn” social movements have risen up, only to die down again. While it is important to maintain a seat in democratic decision making, the centre of gravity of our work should not be lobby strategies only. We should give greater attention to social movement building, identifying the specific role a Catholic network can play.

“We need to find a new story, using language of kindness, sacrifice, love and sharing. Families should be consuming to live, not living to consume.”

- Lorna Gold, Trócaire
We live in a time where the systemic crises and failures of growth paradigms are becoming more and more evident. People are increasingly protesting, looking for alternatives and testing new ways of living. But meaningful and long-lasting change still remains elusive, constrained by lack of political will, for example in the face of climate change. There is powerful potential in people’s active commitment and social change, requiring a good understanding of the mechanisms of this.

Social transformation operates on the level of key values that prompt human actions. One approach is to consider how to work towards ‘repositioning’ values in society. To address the sustainability challenge of social transformation we can learn a great deal from the knowledge and richness of the plethora of cultures and experiences from around the world, particularly indigenous values. These include helping people to build active citizenship over passivity, promote sharing over individualism, favour innovation over immobility, and deliver concrete results instead of abstract thinking.

To build new narratives, it is important to engage and connect with a wider public, highlighting how systemic challenges touch people’s daily lives on a personal level. Such is the case for climate change – a crisis touching people all over the world and from all social and economic backgrounds, albeit to different extents and in different ways. Making interlinkages between political and behavioural dimensions, particularly in our campaign work, can be vital for empowering people to build a better world.

Social innovation is being driven by people’s movements, local organisations and others. These experiments are creating new ways to relate and communicate with each other beyond as consumers, encouraging a sense of community. We can explore ways of working with people to engage with them in experiencing and building alternatives.

“The dreams and hopes of people are not reflected in government decisions, because of the growth imperative.”

- Shri Jagadanda, Centre for Youth & Social Development
People-driven processes can lead to genuine movement building and local change. Marginalised communities can collaborate to put into action their own visions of well-being and their fair chances to participate in social and economic development. At the same time, today there is a lack of alternative research and thinking from grassroots actors, addressing different understandings of development and how we want to live in the future.

A traditional project-based approach risks being driven by donors’ demands and technical requirements, far removed from the needs and complex realities of the communities we serve. A model considering NGO staff as the experts can overshadow local people’s own change processes and solutions. It is important to reflect on our agencies’ responsibilities. A more suitable role can be one of facilitators, catalysts and accompaniers of local communities’ processes of change. There is a need for connectors, to support spaces for linking different people-led initiatives to gain social power in favour of people-driven advocacy.

The time is ripe for new reflections on our future roles and ways of working. These could include revisiting our programme and advocacy approaches, and our partnership and funding models. It could include acting as a bridge between networks and actors for social transformation in other countries and in our own societies. There is a need to build linkages, articulation and sequencing between different spaces for mobilisation, looking ahead from experience with the World Social Forum. Building broader shared narratives is an important element. There is also great potential and opportunity in our work with the Church.

“A ‘paradigm shift’ should not be arrogant or one-way. Relationships and mindsets should be humble, participative, and respectful of others.”

- John Patrick Ngoyi Kasongo, Justice, Peace & Development Commission

MISEREOR (Germany) has initiated processes of mutual learning and sharing of experiences among partner organisations and the MISEREOR staff that work with them. The idea is to develop new approaches, promoting a deeper understanding and appreciation of participatory processes. As a result, communities are building confidence to assert local initiatives and innovations. In several poor districts of Orissa state (India), local farmers lead learning exchange programmes through block level seed fairs and workshops. Furthermore, both men and women of the different communities got involved in successful advocacy campaigns to resist negative farm policies of the government.
CONCLUSION

Crucial international discussions are underway for the coming years, with decisions to be made on future Sustainable Development Goals and their financing, a global climate deal, models of agriculture and business. We will carry forward the outcomes of the workshop across these areas of our work, and into our 2015-17 Joint Action project that aims to mobilise citizens for change towards sustainable lifestyles.

A number of strategic questions and challenges have been identified, which will be taken up in discussions on CIDSE’s strategic framework for 2016-21. We will continue to work in the spirit of great energy felt during the workshop, to help us to move out of our comfort zone. Inspired by the words of Pope Francis encouraging the Church to go out into the streets and periphery, we find “solidarity in our doubts” as we seek our future paths. Convinced of the importance of seizing the moment, we will pursue ways to unite our work in the CIDSE family and beyond, as together we are stronger.

Bem nd Nilles, CIDSE Secretary General
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