

Churches in Development

Learning about change processes in churches
and church development organisations

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1. Introduction

Churches play a central role in development. They motivate voluntary action and advocacy. They provide vital services to the most marginalised and needy. They give people hope. And yet, churches themselves are also 'in development'. Like societies and individuals, churches are in a constant and necessary process of change. This report examines this process of change. It reflects on first-hand experiences from Africa that can inspire and guide us. This can help us lead and support change processes in our own churches and in the church development organisations we work with.

We can learn from one Ethiopian Synod, which was divided and bankrupt in 2002. Trust had been lost. Leaders were accused of corruption. In this chaos knelt a 'remnant' – six people with a passionate burden for their church to change. They met frequently, prayed fervently, and went out and listened to the people in the pews. One person in this group was elected (against his will initially) to take over the leadership of the church. The next four years were tough. But through humble listening, deep repentance and decisive action the Synod gradually transformed. Trust returned, relationships were restored and the books began to balance. As church members said: "We thank God that the Synod became poor, because that was how God changed the hearts of our leaders towards us."

We see from experience that churches are not 'normal' organisations. They do not fit neatly into our theoretical management models. They are a 'community of believers'. They are immensely challenging organisations to lead, to be a part of and to support. In social development, churches have frequently failed to live up to expectations. Some appear uninterested in the poor; others take a 'handout' and disempowering approach. Conflict is all too apparent in some churches. There is a gnawing frustration, a sense of unfulfilled expectations, a longing for the church to be different. We yearn for the church to set an example and bring light to the world - to transform lives and societies.

While some churches function well and do bring light and hope to the world, many churches need to change - whether in Sweden or Swaziland, the UK or the Ukraine. To lead, catalyse or support such change effectively, we must understand the specific organisational features of churches and the development organisations they establish to carry out their social action work. Working effectively with churches and church development organisations requires particular approaches to change.

This report contributes by highlighting the learnings from the workshop Keeping Faith in Change organised by the Swedish Mission Council in May 2007. Twenty-seven participants from 14 churches and church-related organisations in Sweden, Norway, Netherlands and UK met in Lidingö, Stockholm to explore participants' questions and practical experiences of OD and churches. The learning from change processes in two African churches is not only inspiring, but has significance for churches anywhere in the world.

The message from the workshop is that churches change when:

- Leaders practice ‘spiritual virtues’ of humility, patience, sacrifice, self-control and courage;
- God’s Spirit empowers change;
- Churches go through a process of repentance and forgiveness;
- The process follows good practice OD (organisation development) principles

To support change in churches, and organisations linked to churches, requires us to take a faith-based approach to OD. This involves adapting an OD process to the specific organisational features of churches and integrating faith into the OD process itself.

This report is for both SMC members and partners. We hope by reading this you will be better able to support change processes in churches, whether it is in your own church or in a church development organisation you are in partnership with. The report identifies principles to follow. These principles need to be creatively and carefully applied to different situations and contexts.

The findings from the workshop reinforce and build on other SMC publications in the field of OD. It draws together many of the themes from *Creating Space for Grace* 2004, and the *OD Booklet* 2007¹ into the specific context of OD with churches.

Structure of the report

Chapter 2 explores the specific organisational features of churches working with social development. Churches often implement their work through a distinct church development organisation. Churches and their development organisations face very particular organisational challenges due to their specific features. These inherent challenges may need to be consciously addressed when doing OD work with churches in development.

Chapter 3 describes two experiences of OD with churches presented at the Lidingö workshop. One of these comes from the Mekane Yesus Church in Ethiopia. The other from Eglise Evangélique Baptiste (EEB) from the Central African Republic.

In Chapter 4 we analyse the learning from these experiences. We observe: leaders living out spiritual virtues to catalyse organisational change; organisational change following a Biblical process of repentance and forgiveness; a spiritual force in the change processes; professional and well-resourced OD processes; the fruit of

¹ An update of *Directions for SMCs work with organizational development and capacity building* 2002

reconciled relationships and improved impact. We also see that working with OD and churches is not an easy ride. It involves a lot of frustrations, sweat and tears. We conclude in Chapter 5 by highlighting the implications of the learnings for churches and church development organisations wishing to encourage or embark on a change process.

2. Characteristics of churches working with social development

What is special about churches in social development?

Until very recently, official aid donors have viewed religion with scepticism. The connections between faith and development were ‘fragile and intermittent at best, critical and confrontational at worst’². Religion has traditionally been seen as:

- Divisive – a rallying point for division and conflict.
- Regressive – maintaining (if not indeed promoting) injustices such as slavery, colonialism, apartheid and gender inequalities.
- Irrelevant – development being an autonomous technical discipline, about which religion has nothing valuable to say.
- Insensitive - exported in culturally highly insensitive ways.
- Proselytizing – seeking to convert others to their faith.

In the last few years, however, this picture has been changing³. There has been ‘a resurgence of interest in the developmental role of faiths, even in organizations such as the World Bank’⁴. The World Bank now recognizes: “We cannot fight poverty without tending to people’s spiritual dimension and its many manifestations in religious institutions, leaders and movements.”⁵

Official aid agencies are now recognising the particular and significant contribution that churches make to development. Churches have advantages that they tend to be ‘grassroots’, embedded in remote areas - ‘they are not only of the poor, they are the poor’⁶. Churches are also sustainable and long-term. As one international NGO worker put it: ‘I know that when I go back to Kenya my church will still be there, but I don’t know if my development organization will be’⁷. They are often the most valued and trusted institutions in poor communities, according to a World Bank study⁸. They elicit motivated, voluntary and compassionate service from their members, out of a sense of calling. Headley, for example, estimates that one third of all AIDS patients in the world are served by the Catholic Church⁹. Churches address people’s values, attitudes and behaviour – the core development issues – in sermons on a weekly basis. Churches also can have an influential voice in the village and in the nation, speaking out on issues of political and social justice. But churches are more than simply convenient vehicles

² Marshall and Keough 2004

³ Bakewell and Warren 2005

⁴ Edwards 2002:46

⁵ Marshall 2003

⁶ Chester 2002

⁷ Chester 2002:12

⁸ Narayan 2000

⁹ Headley n.d.

for social development. They are able to reach people's spiritual needs, such as a lack of hope, guilt and sense of powerlessness.

This chapter outlines some of the specific organisational features of churches working in social development, whether in Africa, Asia, Latin America or Europe. Experience suggests that churches of all denominations have to grapple with a number of inherent organisational issues if they are to work effectively in development. While these characteristics are not exclusive to churches, any OD work with churches should take them into account.¹⁰

But even before we look at these specifics, it is clear that the 'church partner' itself can mean different things – as the text box shows:

Common types of 'church' partner

1. National denominations or regional dioceses
2. Development department of the denomination/church
3. Local church congregations
4. Associations of Churches/Umbrellas
5. Theological colleges, bible schools, Christian student unions
6. International mission agencies or missionary orders
7. Christian Hospitals
8. 'Para-church' Christian development agencies (e.g. Christian NGOs, missionary orders)
9. Associations of Christian NGOs

Although many international NGOs work with a broad variety of such organisations, the most common type of church partner is the 'development department', which we shall call a 'church development organisation'. This could be an office, a department; a programme; a project; or even a separate organisation set up to implement the development work of the church.

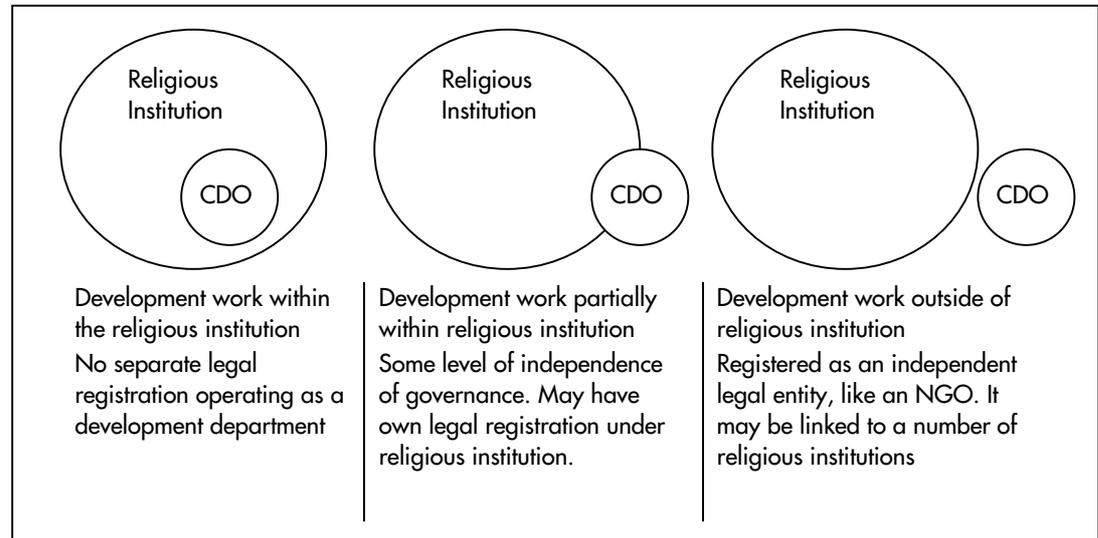
Whichever type of church organisation we are dealing with, they all face these common challenges to differing degrees. We need to pay particular attention to the following features:

Formal Relationship – Identity and Governance

A major difference, therefore, between a church organisation and other NGOs is its relationship with the religious structure. For some church organisations this link is more tenuous and dispersed between many religious bodies, while for others they are directly attached to one institution. The relationship between the development office and the mother church brings specific opportunities and organisational challenges. The formal aspect of this relationship is articulated in the legal governance structure of the development office and is informally enacted on a daily basis through interactions between the religious leaders and the development staff.

¹⁰ For further reading about this topic see James, R. (2008) 'Working with Churches'

The figure below illustrates three common models for relating. In reality there is a more nuanced spectrum of relationships with some church development organisations (CDO) a hybrid of models:



There is no one right answer to which is the appropriate relationship between the development office and the church¹¹. The model chosen depends on a number of factors:

- Theological understanding of development and the role of the church in that process
- Age, size, phase of growth of religious institution and development work
- Denominational tradition and age
- Personalities and behaviour of church and development leadership
- Type of work
- Funding source

Each model of relating has advantages and disadvantages and considerable work with each is necessary to ensure the benefits are realised and the costs mitigated. Ultimately, however, whether the formal relationship is effective depends largely on the informal enactment of this relationship on a daily basis.

Informal Relationship with the religious institution

Most churches have strong teaching on the importance of love and service to others, on commitment and self-sacrifice, on integrity and trust and on forgiveness. This should guide a mutually supportive relationship between the development organisation and its mother body. The human reality, however, is there are usually powerful, inherent tensions in this relationship. These need to be acknowledged and consciously worked through if the relationship is to be productive. Any organisation, however faith-based, is still staffed by people with

¹¹ Crooks and Evans 2001

human tendencies towards jealousy, greed, fear and pride. Consequently there are often tensions in the areas of resources, power and recognition.

Resources:

In much church development work there are tensions between the church and the development office over resources. At an individual level there are often significant salary differentials between the clergy and the development workers. At organisational level, the development office may have greater access to vehicles and other assets. It is a common scenario in Africa that the Bishop, leader of the whole church, has no transport to visit a congregation or hold a meeting, while a number of cars stand at the development office.

These frequent scenarios raise real tensions over the direction that resources should flow – should the church development organisation pay an overhead to the religious institution or should the religious institution give to the poor by supporting the development work? Donors want to see the religious institution contributing financially themselves, but easily overlook the significant contributions they make in kind: through use of buildings; land; time and tax-free status for example. While the church argues for greater flexibility in the use of its development office assets, the development departments strongly states the need for integrity and accountability to donors and to the beneficiaries.

Power and control

There are also often related tensions over who makes strategic decisions, such as appointing the director of the development office, developing a new programme or even controlling the finances. Even where there are legally constituted development organisation boards, there is a tendency for them to be treated by the religious leadership as advisory at best and at worst as rubber stamps. It is not uncommon for religious leaders to directly approach international donors and agree on development and relief work for the development organisation to implement without consulting the organisation's leadership. There are also examples of both the development organisation and the religious institution applying to the same donor for similar programmes without knowing.

Recognition with communities

Who gets the credit for the development work is also sometimes an issue. Some churches want to be seen to be active in development. This makes them appear relevant and dynamic and therefore more attractive to new members. On the other hand, tensions also can arise the other way, if the behaviour of the development organisation's staff adversely affects the reputation of the church in communities.

The relationship between the development work and the religious work is highly influenced by the church leadership.

Leadership

The importance of leadership in any change process is now increasingly recognised. For churches, leadership is even more powerful than in secular

agencies, due to the extra dimension of spiritual authority that is often vested in religious leaders. This gives church leaders greater power to influence change, both positively and negatively. Enlightened church leaders are able to drive visionary change processes, but the converse is also true. The extra spiritual power of church leaders can easily be abused if they are not extremely careful.

Bishops Blocking Change

Things were going well for one Tanzanian church. As they began to serve the poor in their communities, they saw congregations quadrupling in size. Giving had also tripled. People felt more and more empowered. They began to voice opinions that were not altogether in line with the church leadership. As a result, the Bishop decided to stifle and close down this work as they felt their authority was being threatened.

Despite the Biblical model of servant leadership, many church leaders behave in an autocratic fashion. There is a common belief in churches that leaders are closer to God than their congregation. Any alternative opinion can be interpreted as questioning God and tantamount to spiritual rebellion. Some leaders begin to believe this insidious myth.

This extra spiritual authority is even more difficult to use wisely in cultures where power is highly concentrated and church leaders are put on a pedestal by followers and expected to behave like a 'big man' or patron. These tendencies can be even further exacerbated by the hierarchical structures of some denominations, where the priest or pastor is always in charge up-front.

Organisational Culture

Inextricably linked with the question of leadership, is the resulting culture of the organisation. Church-based organisations are often highly aware of not washing dirty linen in public. Airing organisational issues may be interpreted as gossip and criticism, which are not deemed Christian behaviour.

Many church cultures do not deal well with conflict that is inherent in any group of people. Many experience that: 'Churches fear conflict and have no competence to deal with it. They deny conflict which leads to relationship problems'.

Beliefs and Development Strategy

By definition, one factor that sets church development organisations apart from other NGOs is their faith and the links between their beliefs and the development work. As well as being a very powerful motivator for development, faith can also influence the methods used to implement the development work. For example, if people believe that for human change to occur God's spiritual empowerment of the process is necessary will imply a different approach to development at both an individual and community level. But as well as affecting the 'means', faith also affects the 'end' of the development process. Many church development organisations may therefore include spiritual development as a key element of holistic development – raising the thorny question of where spiritual development stops and proselytising begins. Many church development organisations do not have conscious, coherent and shared answers to such questions.

Church development organisations face particular challenges in the area of development strategy due to their faith-base. The Bible encourages compassion

and giving to the poor, but without detailing how. In consequence, many church development organisations have taken a paternalistic and welfarist approach to development and have over-looked the need to work from a rights-based perspective.

Furthermore, church development organisations face particular strategic challenges from the emphasis of their faith on love for others, self-sacrifice and service. While this certainly provides essential motivation, it also makes it very difficult for them to say ‘no’ when presented with an obvious development need, especially when pressured by the church. This can easily result in the development office becoming acutely over-stretched and ineffective – strategically ‘delinquent’. Another specific strategic choice facing church development organisations is in their implementation strategy – do they seek to work through the local congregations at community level or do they seek to implement development on behalf of the church. By mobilising and working through local congregations there is greater potential for impact. But there are often questions about the capacity at local level to implement professionally and accountably and in ways that do not discriminate against non-members.

Staffing and Recruitment

Church development organisations have the potential advantage of people’s faith giving them a sense of calling and vocation to the work. This can generate extraordinary commitment. But having a faith-base raises specific and distinct challenges (compared with other NGOs) in recruitment. Church development organisations constantly grapple with difficult questions such as: If we are faith-based does this mean that we need to hire people belonging to our faith? Would this be discrimination? But if we hire people with no faith or a different faith will this inherently undermine our faith-base? There are often no clear cut answers to these questions.

Ensuring that the senior leaders of the church development organisation are practicing members of the faith assists preserve the identity of the organisation and maintain good relations with the religious ‘mother’ body. But the downside is that there may be a risk that people with limited competence are hired if loyalty to the church is given undue priority in recruitment.

Development professionalism can be undermined by low remuneration. Remuneration in church development organisations tends to be lower than in secular NGOs, particularly if low paid clergy dominates the board of governance.

Systems

Despite the Biblical teaching on stewardship and accountability, many churches have weak financial and human resource systems. This may be worse in church organisations because:

- Systems often require some professional input to set up and maintain, which many church organisations cannot afford

- Powerful church leaders often resist the development of systems which may curtail their power with unwanted checks and balances on leaders.
- Accountability is seen primarily as being to God, not man;
- Management systems are sometimes seen as 'secularising' - things that quench the Spirit;
- The donor-imposed systems that Church development organisations use can be cumbersome and are sometimes not fully understood

Conclusion

Working with church development organisations poses particular organisational challenges. OD interventions must be tailored to fit these particular challenges. SMC members have considerable experiences of working with OD and churches to address such issues. The two case studies that were presented at the 2007 Lidingö workshop illustrate what such OD processes look like, and highlight good practice principles.

3. Stories of Change in Churches

Tough Changes in South Central Ethiopia Synod by Jørn Lemvik and Ato Paulos Shone

Change in churches is not for the faint-hearted. With God all things are possible, but it requires of us hard choices and on-going effort. What happened in the South Central Ethiopia Synod shows how leadership earned their right to lead the church through listening, through service and through communication. A deep spiritual repentance was at the core of organisational change.

'The place where Jesus is dwelling'

The South Central Ethiopia Synod (SCES) is part of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY). This church was established in 1959, with 20,000 members. Mekane Yesus literally means "The place where Jesus is dwelling". The work of the church has developed tremendously over almost 60 years. Today the membership is more than 4 million, with 19 dioceses and congregations across the whole country, making it one of the fastest growing churches in the world.

The South Central Ethiopia Synod (SCES) is in the south of Ethiopia, in the area around Awassa town (270 km south of Addis Abeba). This synod used to be the Southern synod, but over the years it divided into five synods. Today SCES has eight Districts, two special Districts, 59 Parishes and around 1100 Congregations. There are more than 400,000 members in the Synod.

Ethnic Division and Financial Crisis

The revolutionary government that took over in 1991, gained political support with the message that 'each tribe and ethnic group to govern themselves'. But it encouraged factionalism. The church was not immune. In Awassa, it led to the latest division of the synod into two synods and an area work. This conflictive process left deep wounds and resentments within the church.

A new synod leadership was elected in SCES in 1997. They inherited a looming financial crisis (in part due to the division of the synod), but did not have the management skills to address it. They continued to operate without a plan nor budget. As funds declined, tensions mounted. In 2001, the crisis erupted. There was no cash left in the Synod office. Salaries were not paid, let alone pensions and taxes. There were complaints of corruption as money given for specific development projects was diverted elsewhere.

A remnant for change?

At this time, six people with a passion for the future of the church got together to pray and plan. They were concerned that the present leadership did not take any action on the matter. They said to each other: "We cannot let this go down the drain. We have a responsibility to the people and to God. We must pray. We must

set aside all private agendas and ambitions, and concentrate on building God's kingdom". Ato Paulos Shone was one of the six.

This group began to listen to church members in the local congregations, to leaders at Central Office level, and with international partners. All the people they spoke to echoed their concerns.

Leadership chaos

The General Assembly of 2002 was intended to elect a new leadership with the old leadership stepping down. But the incumbent leadership did not want to leave office. They managed to manipulate the assembly to get re-elected. The Central Office of the EECMY in Addis did not accept the election result, and demanded a new General Assembly to be organised. This new assembly elected a new leadership with Ato Paulos Shone as the President. He clearly indicated he had no desire of taking the position and did not see himself fit for the task. His wife was totally against the idea of him accepting the Synod President office. After considerable persuasion from the EECMY leadership, however, they agreed to accept the election result for one term.

Financial Crisis

It was a depressing beginning. Ato Paulos and his new team started by establishing the financial situation. The Synod was technically bankrupt with

- a debt of 1.8 million Birr (\$225,000)
- a debt to the government of Birr 69 000 (tax not paid)
- no salary for workers
- no operating budget for the work

Ato Paulos says: "The question that came to our mind was: How can we balance our income and our expenditure? ... We committed ourselves to change!"

Springs of Hope

The synod leadership started to negotiate with one of its major partners, the Norwegian Lutheran Mission (NLM) for financial support. The first issue on the agenda was the income tax. Unless this tax was paid to the Government, the Synod would be closed down. Support was promised. The leadership then started negotiating the salary issues with the workers. Again NLM promised to help, but indicated clearly that their means for future support was very limited.

Earning Trust

Because of the long-standing distrust between the old Synod leadership and the Districts and congregations, there was a crisis of leadership credibility as well as of finances. There was no trust between the Synod, District, Parish and Congregation. Ato Paulos continues: "We had to start working on establishing trust between the different levels of the structure. We met with the District leaders. Their message to us was crystal clear: "The Synod is not ours!" We asked

where their Synod leadership was to be found, and we were told that the District leadership was their leadership. There were long discussions, and finally they challenged us: “If you serve us, you will be our Synod!” We promised to serve them. They replied that they had heard such promises before, but leaders did not keep promises. They had little faith in change.

Listening leadership

The Synod leadership continued to visit the districts, parishes and congregations. They stayed with the members, ate with them, listened to them and thought them. Little by little trust was starting to develop. One district leader prayed “Dear Lord! Thank you for making the Synod poor, so that they could come and be with us!” In earlier days the Synod leadership was associated with nice cars, good offices, computers and other equipment. If the old leadership came to visit – they said: “hello, nice to see you” – and left. Now the members were experiencing a different leadership.

Through the visits, the leadership started to understand the situation of their members. In addition, the leadership decide to share information openly on the actual financial situation of the synod. The members started to pray for the leadership and the work, and little by little they also started to take financial responsibility.

Outside Help

At this time the SCES was asked if it wanted to take part in the Organisational Development (OD) programme – organised by the umbrella organisation Norwegian Missions in Development¹² (BN). The leadership accepted to join this programme. Each participating organisation was given a one week a year free consultancy work paid by the OD programme. The consultant came to work with the Synod leadership. This consultant was not new to the Synod work, he had been working with the leaders before.

Ato Paulos says: “The consultant asked about our situation. We informed on all that we knew. The consultant actually only asked for one number - the difference between income and expenditure. We did not know this. It took us a week to find out. By scrutinising books we realised we were using more each month than we were making!”

Tough Financial Decisions

The monthly income at the time was 20,000 Birr, while the salary expenses only were 74,000 Birr per month. They obviously had to reduce personnel costs, but how? Should the focus be on early retirement? Should the Synod hand over the primary schools to the government? Should they start to lay off staff? The answer was that they had to pursue all three options.

¹² The programme is described in detail in Jørn Lemvik (2005) ‘Enabling organisations: Stories and tools’. BN.

Early retirement:

The leadership explained to the workers who were above 55 (pension age is 60), that there was no money to pay them. After long negotiations, with financial support from NLM, 12 workers took early retirement.

Handing over schools to Government:

The leadership negotiated with the government about taking over responsibility for the primary schools. Ato Paulos relates: “The government refused. We prayed, and we continued to challenge the Government. Suddenly some of the Government staff was transferred - and we could continue negotiations”. After more than a year of protracted discussions, the Government agreed to take over the schools. Staff was transferred to the Government payroll.

Cars – and per diem

The Synod had several cars, but no budget to run them. So the leaders agreed to stop using them. The leaders also set an example by stopping taking per diems and using public transport whenever possible.

Relentless Communication

The leadership had decided to be transparent, and they agreed to continue to share information and keep the workers. Whatever was done was shared with the Synod workers. Districts and congregations were constantly updated on the plans and the actual moves they were doing.

Repentance – From Sin to Blessing

But the challenges were not only financial. Ato Paulos relates what happened: “After one and a half year in the office, we still were fighting a very difficult situation. We asked ourselves: ‘What is wrong with this synod. Could there be a hidden sin in our midst?’ The 1997 division of the Synod along ethnic lines had created a lot of wounds. Because of these and similar issues, we felt that there could be no blessing. We agreed that repentance was needed. We agreed to have a Sunday of repentance, fasting and praying. We also agreed to send our leaders to the other synods to publicly kneel and ask forgiveness for the sins and wrongdoings we had made. People started crying in all places, saying: ‘We have forgiven you! Let God forgive you! Let God bless you!’ The healing started”. After some time, the leadership experienced that blessings started to come their way. They found that God listened to the prayers of repentance and He blessed the Synod. Hope returned. Change was taking place.

On-going Effort

It was hard work – and it was not over. Little by little improvements were made. By the end of 2005 they had balanced their books, paid off all their debts and even managed to pay a salary increment. As Ato Paulos says: “This is the work of God. It was impossible for us, but God helped us”.

The leadership continued to meet regularly with districts, parishes and congregations – and to keep them informed on the situation. The districts said to

them: “We thank God that we the Synod has become poor, because that was how God changed the hearts of our leaders towards us.” The leaders challenged the members to take responsibility by giving money to the Synod work. The people responded. For example, when there was no money for the Evangelism Office the districts gave Birr 17,000 to save this office.

Putting Relationships First in Central African Republic by Irma Janzon¹³

Relationships are the essence of development as well as the gospel. This relationship between InterAct of Sweden and Eglise Evangélique Baptiste (EEB) from the Central African Republic was characterised by increasing frustration and misconceptions on both sides. Decades of working together in extremely difficult circumstances were at stake. But through investing considerable time and resources in first rebuilding trust in the relationship and then embarking on a well-facilitated, Christian OD process, EEB (and InterAct) are gradually being transformed.

The Early Years

EEB has its roots in the Swedish InterAct mission. The early missionaries of Örebromissionen came to Oubangui Chari, a part of the French Equatorial Africa, in 1923. Over the years the church grew to become the largest evangelical Church in the west with 10,000 members. In 1962 EEB became independent. All assets were handed over from the Swedish mission to the local church, including health centres, primary schools¹⁴ and a teacher-training seminary.

Since 1962, EEB has enjoyed stable leadership (with five Presidents) and continued growth. Today there are around 70,000 members. EEB has developed a number of committees working with evangelisation, education, literature, youth, women, health services and mission. EEB has supported leadership training through two Bible Schools and one Theological Seminary for pastoral training.

The health work developed considerably between 1962 and 2000 due to the availability of funding from Sida through SMC and medical missionaries from Sweden. A new hospital was built in Gamboula, a dental clinic in Berberati and seven dispensaries. EEB ran several large health projects, such as preventive health care in villages, water, and HIV/AIDS (since 1986). Missionaries handled the administration of the projects funded from SMC/Sida because the documents were in Swedish and demanded a capacity that EEB lacked at that time.

In the 1950s there had been about 50 Swedish missionaries in CAR, a figure that slowly decreased. During the 1990s missionary numbers dropped quickly.

¹³ Irma Janzon was Regional Director for InterAct, Africa, at the time of the change process in this story.

¹⁴ The schools and the teachers training seminary were taken over by the state soon afterwards.

Repeated armed robberies in 2003 forced almost all the remaining missionaries to leave.

The Good News of OD?

In 2000 two InterAct staff participated in an SMC-organised OD training course. We were encouraged to choose a partner that we saw would benefit from an OD intervention. We chose EEB. We talked with EEB about this possibility and suggested they use some Congolese consultants we had been recommended. We were seeing some encouraging results OD work elsewhere. OD became one of the three top priorities in our mission document. But EEB was not enthusiastic. They did not feel comfortable inviting these Congolese consultants and there were problems with the communication with them. The process lost momentum.

Partnership dialogue process

Two years later, in October 2002, InterAct visited EEB again in order to discuss an application with SMC to fund a partner dialogue between EEB and InterAct. The stated aim was to update the partnership agreement of 1993 (which little different from the 1962 agreement). However, we had an underlying expectation that EEB would greatly benefit from an OD process.

A small group from InterAct and EEB respectively were chosen to take part in this dialogue. A neutral facilitator, Dr Isaac Zokoue, was asked to lead the discussions. The first partner dialogue took place in Sweden in November 2003. A delegation of three persons from CAR finally came to Sweden after many frustrating and embarrassing visa problems. At the outset, there was a lot of mistrust and mutual misunderstandings. The facilitator, Dr Zokoue, advised InterAct to underline for EEB that this process will not hurt EEB's existing ministries and that he would make strong efforts to build confidence in order to have a good process.

During this meeting the two partners introduced themselves for hours in detail. InterAct drew a map of the different countries and partners with which it was involved. This revealed to EEB that they were only one of many InterAct partners, whilst InterAct is EEB's only partner. Also, it showed that InterAct was no longer the Örebromissionen that EEB had known. It was now InterAct. We then went on to discuss our respective visions. From both sides there were new discoveries about the other partner.

In March 2004 the second meeting took place in CAR with representatives of InterAct and SMC present. The programme from the first meeting was repeated, as now there were a number of new participants from EEB. Some of the issues to emerge were that EEB wanted a field representative from InterAct in CAR and not only ordinary missionaries. EEB expressed that the change from Örebromissionen into InterAct meant that InterAct was pressing a new attitude on EEB. There was also heated discussion about the presence of some American missionaries, whom EEB blamed InterAct for independently inviting in and introducing. It also became obvious that EEB had no proper budget to calculate all incomes and was financially very dependent on interact. At one point the talks

almost collapsed when the discussions touched on specific financial issues. Although EEB was happy to continue with the previous partnership agreement, they agreed to update it and a task force of four people from InterAct and EEB were mandated to do this.

The money for the dialogue process was now used up. It had taken far longer than expected. But another application for money was submitted to SMC to finish the partner dialogue positively and perhaps even initiate the OD process... The church President, Rev Betale, who had declined consultants from Congo had lately had first hand experience of another OD process. He was the Chairman of Bangui Evangelical School of Theology (BEST) which had undergone a management audit by two consultants from CORAT Africa. The management audit and a subsequent in-depth financial analysis had helped BEST see that they required radical organisational change if they were to survive. One of the consultants, Dr. Joe K. Mwangi, had responded to a call by the President of BEST to accompany the seminary in implementing the recommendations. Several positive changes and fruits of improvement were already being seen. Some former students at BEST were now board members for EEB and were positive about the potential for OD to assist. But before anything could be done a terrible event occurred.

The Death of the EEB President

Just a few weeks after the meeting of March 2004 the EEB President Rev. Betale died (probably from a cerebral haemorrhage) in the middle of his four-year mandate. His sudden death raised regional tensions to such an extent that top church leaders from the north did not even dare to stay over night in the town where the funeral was held.

EEB decided to continue with their plans for a General Conference in July 2004. InterAct was asked to send some representative to be present at the General Conference. We understood that it had been culturally insensitive of us not to visit EEB after the loss of their important leader. So two senior InterAct staff went to CAR for a full three weeks to attend at the General Conference. The Vice-President was nominated to act as a replacement for the late Rev Betale for the remaining two years of the mandate period.

By the light of a kerosene lamp

The InterAct staff took part in the weeklong General Conference and 'sat' with many different groups of people and with individuals. They met the steering group of the board and two top people from the hospital several nights during this week. The question of an OD intervention by CORAT was brought up. They tried to explain what it could mean and emphasised that if EEB is not willing to work hard and be open for change, InterAct would not be prepared to support this intervention. They were sitting in the dark around a kerosene lamp and each person seriously expressed his opinion after a time of prayer. Yes, everybody present wanted this to take place. But how could the whole board be open for this process?

It was suggested that EEB should invite Dr. Mwangi from CORAT to come and explain what an OD intervention would mean. The newly elected acting President of EEB agreed. InterAct made an application with support from SMC. The next EEB board meeting was re-scheduled in September 2004 to coincide with an inception visit from CORAT to explain the OD process. This was such a success that EEB started the OD process right away during their weeklong board meeting!

Then the next application was handed in and the OD process could continue. In January 2005 the final meeting of the partner dialogue took place in Yaounde. Things went very smoothly and the partnership convention was finalised.

The OD Process

CORAT has consistently taken a professional and Christian OD approach to the work, making the OD interventions based on the Scripture. Dr Mwangi of CORAT has worked in cooperation with an interpreter in order to communicate in French/Sango. Extensive translation was used throughout the process. The main events are described below:

The OD Process in Outline

1. Inception Visit – Berberati (Sept. 2004)
During the inception visit the need was assessed and proposal for capacity Building developed.
2. Strategic Planning Workshop (April 2005)
Strategic workshop attended by members of the executive committee, heads of institutions and regional presidents, 32 persons. Coordinators were appointed to organize the regional workshops. Handouts and instructions for the regional workshops were provided.
3. Regional Workshops
Six regional workshops with 209 participants plus 'listeners' were held without the consultant. A report was written for each region.
4. Workshop for EEB Strategic Plan - Berberati (Oct 2005)
21 participants attended to synthesize the outcomes of the regional workshops. A task force was chosen to make a draft of the Strategic Plan of EEB.
5. Inception Visit to Gamboula Hospital
Since the start of the Capacity Building process, the consultancy need was expressed to assess Gamboula hospital and the health services of EEB. A visit took place and the consultant met with more or less all the personnel at the hospital.
6. Signature of the Partnership convention – BIG ceremony in the Central Church
The final signature of the partnership convention was made in Berberati in October 2005 as a ceremony with representatives from all the nine districts, community leaders, key people from all the institutions and the facilitator. The serious situation in the country was illustrated by the violent road robbery that the facilitator Dr Isaac Zokoue and his family were victims of driving from the capital Bangui to Berberati. Dr Zokoue spoke to the audience about necessary change in the community, reconciliation and trusting a loving God. I believe that the signing of this convention where InterAct showed its partnership with EEB. Living under hard conditions, occurred at the right time.
7. Strategy for EEB 2006-2010 approved at the EEB General Conference (July 2006)
The Strategy document was taken under a very special prayer session where people surrounded the heap of documents and laying hands on them. Around 500 persons attended this ceremony. At this conference a new president was elected, Rev André Fegouto.
8. Assessment of the Health Services (Aug – Nov 2006)
This assessment was very thoroughly made with many recommendations in specific areas in order to improve the organisation and the ministry (70 pages). The consultant presented the content and all the recommendations for the board that had an opportunity to comment and correct. A number of radical changes are recommended. The draft is now (2007) corrected and will be presented for all the personnel.

At a board meeting in August 2006, EEB Board members vividly described how greatly they valued the OD process. Some of the comments include:

- “Through the method and the result of this process, CORAT/Africa has helped us to see the capacities within EEB and especially the possibilities to put them into practice.”
- “CORAT has opened the eyes of the individual to see that you have done and the things that remain to be done. Every single person is made responsible for making EEB grow/mature.”
- “The result of the Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010 is good. The method is good as it has woken up the leadership of EEB; and this has helped a lot to look at the EEBs strategy with new eyes.”

What difference did this make?

But more important than this ‘feel-good’ factor are the actual changes that have taken place.

- EEB has increased its ownership of its ministries. Eyes are opened for their own resources. They are still very dependent on funds from InterAct, but several leaders are aware of this and look for ways to strengthening their own resources.
- There is openness for change within EEB. Around 300 people have been given a method of thinking that can be used in all kinds of situations and this will certainly affect the different committees’ and local churches’ way of working.
- EEB decided to change its constitution. This process is still to be completed, but now the board will have an understanding of why changes are needed.
- The identity of EEB is more evident. This helps in self-confidence and in relating to other organisations
- The head quarter in Berberati has changed considerably. There is a new desk officer only working with development projects. A new accountant and a secretary are employed.
- The women within EEB have strengthened their position. This process along with other inputs has given the women more confidence. There is a strong women’s movement since long ago that is very active in the local churches. There are now three women on the EEB Board. During its last conference (Jan 2007) the women asked the Board to install a new committee to address violence against women and children.
- EEB has opened up for new stakeholders. There is a good cooperation with UNICEF, PAM and others. EEB is right now sorting out the contracts with the American missionaries. EEB has had cooperation with several national organisations for many years, but they have not seen them as partners.

EEB still has a long way to go to further develop the organisation, especially concerning the board members and a more independent and qualified structure for the governance of the health services. But EEB is today seen as a model among the denominations in CAR, according to the consultant. If InterAct and SMC can continue to support this process it can have spill over effects on other faith-based organisations in CAR as EEB today belongs to several ecumenical structures in the country. This process shows the power of dialogue and the importance of relationship in any change process.

Learning from the process

Other additional aspects of the OD process worth learning from include:

- The changes in the constitution and development of by-laws have set the framework for more participatory governance with in-built mechanisms for accountability.
- Some major corrective actions were taken showing that the Board was recognizing their responsibility to the external stakeholders in contrast to protecting local interests.
- OD takes time and it has a capacity to generate new critical areas of intervention.
- There should be adequate resources to support the process.
- The involvement of the persons in EEB in the facilitation of the regional workshops, writing of the Strategic Plan, evaluation of the EEB health services, giving input for the constitution and by-laws had greatly enhanced the capacity building component of OD. It has assured implementation, follow-up and kept the momentum. This capacity will further be guaranteed by the training in leadership and management that four key persons in EEB are undertaking at BEST through distance learning.
- Making evangelists pastors and arranging for their additional training and ordination. This has increased the clergy and has a definite impact in the pastoral ministry of the church.

4. Learning about OD from the case studies

These two case studies from different parts of Africa reveal key lessons about OD. They show that:

1. The practice of spiritual virtues, particularly by leaders, catalyses change
2. Organisational change involves repentance and forgiveness
3. God's Spirit empowers change
4. Change processes still requires human effort and good practice OD
5. An organisational change process is an unfinished struggle, but can yield good fruit.

These lessons echo and reinforce the first hand experiences, the literature review and the Biblical study about organisational change detailed in SMC's other publication on this theme: *Creating Space for Grace: God's Power in Organisational Change*, James, R. (2004) SMC.

<http://www.missioncouncil.se/spaceforgrace>

Spiritual virtues in leadership catalyses change

These stories are about leadership. It was the leadership who catalysed change. This leadership came, not just one individual, but from a number of people within the church and even from outside partner organisations. They were leaders who displayed particular characteristics - 'spiritual virtues'. As these virtues were lived out, leadership earned trust and people imitated these virtues and the organisations began to change. True leadership is not something that is isolated in individuals alone. Change is a team effort, inspired by God.

Humility and listening

The Ethiopian leader, Ato Paulos, was profoundly humble. He was clearly not ambitious for himself. He had no wish to take on the responsibility of power. It was only after a long discussion that he and his wife agreed to take the role of leader on a temporary basis. He insisted on working as part of a leadership team.

As the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Church explains to outsiders:
"If you knock on our door, we may let you in.
If we let you in, then you may enter.
If you show you care, listen and respect us,
then you can start asking questions, not giving us answers.
If we change it is because we develop our own answers.
It will take time".

In both examples leadership prioritised the process of listening to others from all parts of the organisation. In the CAR example, the partners spent many hours during the post-funeral conference with different groups in the church and just listening. These time-consuming exercises demonstrated their humility and respect for other people.

Compassion and calling

The leadership also exuded compassion. The leadership in Ethiopia were so committed to the cause of building God's kingdom amongst the people. They had a clear sense of individual calling, which they were able to translate into organisational calling. The partner in CAR showed compassion for the church to come from Sweden and sit at the annual conference.

Patience and reconciliation

We see the importance of reconciled relationships. The new leaders in the Ethiopian church displayed patience and forgiveness to the former leadership, who wanted to take them to court. In CAR the relationship between InterAct and EEB was initially poor. InterAct tried to force an OD process on EEB before they were ready. There was misunderstanding. Both sides had to be patient enough to listen to each others' (mis)perceptions and learn to respect each other again. Change only came once their relationship had been re-established.

Diligence and determination

The leadership in all these cases also demonstrated a determination to see things through. The change processes took considerable time and effort. The new EEB leader in the CAR was described as a 'very disciplined man. His example made others in the church more disciplined'. In the Ethiopian case study, the church leadership refused to accept 'no' for an answer in negotiations with the Government about returning the schools to them (even though many in the church were desperate to keep the schools). They went back and back and back to the government before the change was accepted. They also realised that turning around the financial situation would take time – three years of hard work and unpopular decisions.

Generosity and sacrifice

The leaders showed generosity of their time and of themselves and their families. They stood against the temptation of greed. In Ethiopia the leaders showed by example by not taking allowances and by using public transport wherever possible. They avoided the ostentatious status symbols of power that were expected of them. Instead, they sacrificed their time. In CAR, the partners even used their own holiday time for the trip, as it was too much for their organisation to support.

Self-control and mindfulness of others

The leaders in these cases were mindful of others. They emphasised being with people, rather than doing things for them. The example of partners spending days with the CAR church leadership at the post-funeral conference spoke volumes. Being prepared to "weep with those who weep" opened up the room for change. The leadership in Ethiopia practised 'incarnational leadership' becoming one of them through the relentless visits to the villages.

Honesty and courage

The leadership in these examples had the courage to bring honesty and openness into the organisations. In Ethiopia they emphasised right from the outset that ‘no hidden agendas’ would be their foundational value. They also surprised people by their open sharing of sensitive financial information. This was culturally very radical.

But these leaders also did not shy from taking hard decisions for the right reasons. In Ethiopia, they had the courage to go ahead with the unpopular but necessary cost saving programme.

Change involves repentance and forgiveness

The case studies show that change follows a Biblical pattern. People have free will and no one is forced to change. Change occurred when individuals, teams and organisations reflected on their past behaviour and admitted it had not been right. People had to get to this deeper level of repentance, of taking personal responsibility for things that had gone wrong, for change to happen. If the desire to change merely remains at the ‘New Year’s resolution’ level then nothing fundamental shifts.

In the Ethiopian example the repentance of the church leadership was core. As the facilitator said: “When the church leaders kneel down in front of the congregation and ask for forgiveness in an Ethiopian context, you know a miracle has occurred. No leader would do it naturally.” But remarkable act broke through the emotional and spiritual blockages in the situation. It helped make them become “our leaders” in the words of the people.

Repentance was led from the top. Leaders went first. We also see that the change process did not stop with repentance, but that it led to forgiveness, which in turn led to new behaviour. Forgiveness is a necessary part of any organisational change.

The Spirit empowers change

God is at the heart of these narratives. At a fundamental level, change took place because God wanted it. He was the author of change. Looking back, God’s footprints are all over these stories. But at the time, this was not so visible. In the midst of the change processes, many of the people involved felt that they were going nowhere and God had apparently left them. It is often easier to see God’s work with the benefit of hindsight.

The work of God’s spirit in change is difficult to see directly, like the wind. But like branches swaying in the wind, you can see its effects. The stories reveal God working through other people. We see him transforming individual leaders, humbling them in order to use them, giving them the courage to take risks. We see God working through people’s consciences and commitments. We see him

working through ‘fortuitous’ circumstances of getting the right people in the right place at the right time.

The importance of this spiritual dimension to change correlates with the emphasis on prayer in each one of these change stories. There appears a plausible association between the changes in the stories and the prayer that was going on at the time. In the Ethiopian example we read about the group of six who met regularly and faithfully to pray and discuss. We see how they declared a day of fasting and prayer, which catalysed the turning point of repentance. In the CAR case study, their discussions in the main meetings and by the light of the kerosene lamps were saturated by prayer. As they contemplated the changes needed, they prayed for every member of the steering group responsible.

Still needs good OD practice

The presence of God in organisational change does not mean there is no need for human effort. These case studies show that a faith-based approach to OD also required professional management. This particularly included:

Good decision-making and communication

Change would not have taken place without sound financial decision-making in the Ethiopian example. This example also highlights the importance of frequent and clear communication.

Empowering facilitation

All the examples point to the value of a facilitator who is able to assist the organisation understand more about itself and take foresighted decisions for itself. They need to be trusted and inspire hope and energy. The consultant in the Ethiopian example was described as: “one of us; concerned, encouraging, advising, showing direction, rejoicing with us, and being sad with us. We thank God for him”. The CORAT consultant, not only demonstrated his auditing acumen, but also his OD and linguistic skills, earning the trust of EEB and InterAct.

Adequate resourcing

The examples also point to the fact that all were well resourced with enough time and money. Both churches invested time, human and financial resources into the change processes. The Ethiopian process was also supported generously by two Norwegian partners (NLM and BN). The change process in EEB was supported through InterAct from Sweden

Open partnerships

Each of the change processes took place in the context of a trusting relationship. Until the relationship between EEB and InterAct had been restored, EEB felt too threatened to change. The breakthrough occurred when InterAct opened up and realised they were equal partners in this relationship. Until then “we had taken for granted we did not need to explain our identity to our partners”. Having a trusted

partner or sister church is of great value for a church when going through change process. It gives the church access to support, not necessarily financial support, in a situation when it is greatly needed. A trusted partner can provide a new perspective to a situation and also help generate new insights by creating space for dialogue.

Is an unfinished struggle, but yields good fruit

Each of these cases describes a short part of a much longer journey of change. It is clear that in all cases, the organisations have not yet arrived. Transformation is not the same as perfection. There are unresolved issues and on-going frustrations. People have not become angels overnight. When documenting such processes, change sounds easier than it really was. It was enormously hard work. As one of the authors said: “We had 365 difficult days for four full years”. Change took place gradually. There were some obvious high points, but most of the change that occurred was slow and incremental.

We see from the case studies that faith-based OD made a difference. The impacts included:

Reconciled relationships (unity)

In Ethiopia and CAR we see that these change processes brought greater unity within the organisation. It brought greater unity amongst the leadership team and most importantly between the leadership and the followership (the staff and church members). Issues of tribal favouritism were addressed. They also demonstrate how these change processes brought greater unity between the Scandinavian and African churches.

Ownership by the people

These change processes have all increased people’s sense of ownership of the institution. In CAR and Ethiopia members feel that their churches are now “theirs” in a way that previously they belonged to the leader. This increases their commitment and giving to the church, as illustrated by the members’ giving to keep the evangelism office open in Ethiopia.

Clearer direction (calling)

The CAR example shows how this change brought a clearer calling to EEB. Indeed one aspect of this was that “it has brought the church to talk about reconciliation and the need to avoid war. They have begun to pray and speak about the corruption and violence in the country”.

Reconnection with faith identity

The change process helped clarify EEB’s own identity as well as InterAct’s. This helped bring greater self-confidence and enabled better communication with other organisations. EEB is now able to relate more effectively with organisations like UNICEF.

5. Implications for OD practice

So what does this mean for us? How can we assist our church, a partner church or church development organisations to change? This report has shown that working with churches in OD requires a different approach than working with secular organisations. These principles of approach are the same whether we are working with church development work in Sweden or anywhere else in the world, though the application is distinct.

We need to address the specific challenges that any church faces as an organisation, but also do it in such a way that integrates our faith with professional OD practice. We need to be 100% professional in applying the considerable learning from many years experience with the private, public and NGO sector. We must take account of what works and what does not work in facilitating organisational change. But there are also some important differences both in terms of the OD content and process that make Christian (or faith-based) OD distinct. Our failure to apply these distinctive features to our OD work in the past may have severely constrained the effectiveness of our work with churches. But integrating faith in OD must be done with care. It can easily be abused when self-interest is disguised as spirituality.

Good OD with churches and church development organisations addresses the specificities of the church. It adapts OD to the church by:

1. Translating OD with the theology and language of the church
2. Taking a Biblical approach to change, that includes repentance and forgiveness
3. Creating space for God's Holy Spirit to bring transformation
4. Involving prayer – both listening to God and interceding for change
5. Working on church-specific organisational challenges
6. Putting into practice spiritual virtues

It further adapts OD to church development organisations by:

7. Addressing the development work in the context of the wider church.
8. Exploring how the faith of the church development organisation affects its work

OD in churches

Translate OD into the theology and language of the Church

Good OD with churches intentionally integrates the church's religious practices, language and stories into the OD process. This may energise change. It involves:

- Using the faith practices of client
- Speaking in a language and with images understood by that faith

- Respecting the behaviour expected by the faith of the church

Church OD is assisted by using images, stories, verses and language that the client will readily understand and relate to from their faith. For example, many change processes with church-based organisations have used the Exodus story to illustrate many of the elements in any organisational change process. Using such imagery can give meaning to the process.

Respecting the faith of the church means that the OD practitioner's behaviour must be appropriate to the norms of that church. This behaviour may relate to a number of issues such as drinking, eating, or dressing.

Take a Biblical approach to change

Good OD with churches follows Biblical principles of change. For example, it emphasises vision and values, surfacing people's fears and also giving time for repentance and forgiveness. It helps the organisation to move through the process of:

- Developing a vision for change
- Accepting responsibility for failures
- Turning around by repenting and confessing
- Receiving the gift of grace
- Forgiveness and reconciliation
- Taking action to change

Where change is needed to overcome past organisational problems, good OD with churches encourages people to take responsibility by acknowledging failure. It does not shy away from the difficult but often-ignored step of repenting and confessing. Forgiveness is a vital element in the change process. Dysfunctional organisational behaviour creates grudges and bitterness, which can only be dealt with through forgiveness. Forgiveness is neither cheap nor easy. It is a gift of grace.

Create space for God's Holy Spirit

Good OD with churches has faith that God can change the church, however dysfunctional it currently is. It is about trusting in a power greater than us to create order out of the chaos. This involves creating sacred spaces for this to happen. If OD processes are packed too tight with activities and exercises there is little space for God.

These spaces need to be safe spaces, where fears are managed. They need to give people time to stop, reflect, listen to others and God, hear feedback about past behaviour and future plans. For example this may mean during workshops giving participants time to pray and listen to God before discussing answers to strategic questions of direction. Good OD with churches has faith that God's spirit can breathe life in such sacred spaces.

Pray constantly

Faith in God is demonstrated by prayer. If we believe in the importance of God to transform a situation, then we will pray. OD with churches therefore involves both listening to God about the situation and interceding on behalf of the people and organisations involved.

Listening to God is essential to discern God's will and way forward in the situation. In preparation for OD all involved should invest time praying and listening to God. Closely inter-linked with listening to God about a situation is praying for God to change the situation. Praying involves an element of faith that God can change a situation. Even if it looks bleak in human terms, faith says that God is able to do much more than we can even ask or imagine.

Work on church-specific organisational challenges

Good OD with churches appreciates the common organisational issues that churches face in development. It is important to consider:

- Strategy – how are they prioritising programmes and saying 'no' to the bottomless pit of need? Have they chosen to work on behalf of local congregations or through them? If they are working through local structures how are issues of professionalism and accountability being addressed? If they have chosen to work on behalf of congregations, how are they ensuring that the potential comparative advantages of grassroots reach and sustainability are not lost?
- Leadership – who are religious leaders and development organisation leaders accountable to? What structures do they report to? What is their view on development work? What is their vision for it? To whom do they really delegate power? How are they developing future leaders? Do they see a future for themselves beyond leading that organisation?
- Structures and Systems – how do these function? Do they fit with the strategy, phase of growth and size of the organisation? Are there established human resource management systems with job descriptions and appraisal processes? Are adequate financial systems in place to provide management with information for decision-making and accountability?
- Staffing – what is the policy on recruitment? What is staff turnover like? What are the terms and conditions like? What do they say about expected behaviour? What does staff feel about this? What motivates staff to stay? What induction and training processes exist?

Live spiritual virtues

We saw in the case studies that change happened when key stakeholders practiced spiritual virtues. Not only were these virtues the means by which change occurred, but they were also the product of such processes.

Good OD with churches therefore models and encourages the spiritual virtues highlighted by the case studies. This applies to all stakeholders in the process. Each will need to live out:

- Humility to look to God's power, to value others' contributions, to genuinely listen, acknowledge weaknesses and to continuously learn
- Compassion for the beneficiary, earnestly desiring the very best for them and injecting hope
- Patience to put up with a different pace and standards of others
- Determination to implement good practice
- Generosity in seeing the good in a situation
- Self-control to be a careful steward of time and resources
- Honesty to be as transparent with others as we demand of them.

OD in church development organisations

The principles and qualities of OD in churches also hold true for OD in church development organisations. But, as we saw earlier in this report, there are specific organisational issues that need to be understood when working with organisational change processes in a church development organisation. One of the distinctive features of many church development organisations is that they are an integral part of a wider religious institution. It is important to analyse the nature of the relationship between the church development organisation and the wider church in any initial organisational assessment process. The complexity and sensitivity of this relationship, however, must make us wary of jumping to quick conclusions about how it should be.

Good OD with churches in development often helps establish appropriate boundaries and clarifies roles and responsibilities. The necessary ownership of the development work by the religious institution may need careful differentiation from control by the religious institution.

The less formal relationship issues can also have a profound impact

Integrating the wider church in the OD process of a church development organisation

Some ways in which the wider church was integrated in a recent OD process included:

- Discussing the initial terms of reference with the church leadership;
- Interviewing most Synod leadership during the data-gathering;
- Having church representatives present at the CDO Board/Senior management Vision, Values and Strategy workshop;
- Discussing the Strategy Concept Note first with the Synod management board, even before the CDO's staff;
- Supporting the development of a Terms of Reference between the Synod and CDO as part of the change process

on the effectiveness of the church development organisation in achieving its mission. The opportunities as well as inherent tensions over resources, control and recognition mean that the relationship has to be actively managed to ensure these tensions are mitigated (particularly in a context of declining foreign support for pastoral work). Complete harmony will never be achieved, as issues will continually arise. The important thing is to strive to deal with them in an open and forgiving way.

Although many international NGOs prefer only to deal with the development offices and avoid relating to the wider church, experience suggests that an OD process needs to actively engage the wider religious institution. Even though this may make the change process slower and often messier, this wider involvement is critical for implementation. The religious leadership often have considerable power to influence the church development organisation. Private discussions with these religious leaders can be pivotal in gaining support for the development organisation's change process and channelling their leadership power in a positive direction.

Explore how the faith of the church affects development work

Faith is a vital source of motivation and energy for organisational change. OD practitioners need to actively seek to understand the faith of the church. Asking about the faith-base is more than an initial cursory question, it is a theme to explore from different angles with different stakeholders trying to find out what makes the organisation unique. It involves asking questions such as: What makes you faith-based? What does faith-based mean to you? What have you faith in and to do what in development? How does this affect decision-making? How does this faith affect your development work in actual practice? How should it? ...

In some OD interventions with church development organisations, the spiritual dimension of the development work is not very clear to board, staff or even the church. OD may assist the church development organisation to explicitly think through what it meant to be a faith-based organisation and what implications this had for their own internal organisational functioning as well as their external programming with beneficiaries.

6. Concluding thoughts

Churches and church development organisations are often in need of organisational change. But they need support that is appropriate to their very particular organisational contexts. Churches are not the same as businesses and church development organisations are not the same as NGOs. Good OD recognises and adapts to these differences. But faith-based OD goes even further. It integrates faith into the OD process adding a spiritual dimension to the process. It engages with the theology of the church and the beliefs of participants to empower change. This is no simple task.

SMC has set up a learning network for anyone interested in this field. To find out more please send an email to cop@missioncouncil.se.

This report we hope is a contribution to sharing learning in this complex, but vital field. We leave you with some questions to think through when working with churches in OD:

Summary Checklist

Eight useful questions to ask in supporting OD with churches and church development organisations are:

1. How is this OD process engaging with the wider church?
2. What is the attitude of the church leadership to the change process and what can be done to enable them to be the drivers of change?
3. To what extent is the process really addressing church-specific organisational challenges, such as strategy, leadership, culture and management systems.
4. How does the process explore how the faith of the church affects its work in all its departments?
5. How is the process using the church's theology as a power for change? Are we using appropriate language and symbols?
6. Where is the space for grace, repentance and forgiveness in this process?
7. To what extent are we also giving spiritual support for this process through prayer?
8. To what extent is our support for the OD process modelling humility, patience, and self-control?

For More Information

Please do not hesitate to contact the Research & Development team at SMC for more information and ideas about initiating an OD process. SMC is committed to helping its members and their partners by:

- Increasing knowledge and awareness about OD

- Supporting long-term OD processes with the support of experienced facilitators
- Developing local resource pools of OD providers

Useful Literature

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