The Impact of Religious Organisations in Development: An example from South Africa

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Religion and Development

Tell us a story about development narratives

• Where these ideas have been produced [West]
• What view they reflect [Secularisation/Modernisation Theory]
• How they have been applied in different contexts [not contextualized and historicized]
Development as a *Faith* itself vs other Faiths

• Within development discourses we often deal with principles like capital, debt and social structures that are invisible realities and vacuous entities.

• Does secular development itself not invoke systems of beliefs (like progress) and defer to the existence of holy authorities and sacred spaces (like the World Bank!)?
Development has *been done* by religious organisations in many poor areas

- Religion-driven charitable contributions remain a critical source of welfare work in many countries and religious organisations remain the most significant non-state providers of basic social services to the poor in many developing countries.

- Notion of social justice critical to work of Christian and Muslim missionary groups.

- Interest on FBOs, but what about not ROs?
An introduction to the Central Methodist Mission, Johannesburg

• The actual number of “refugees” at the Central Methodist Mission (CMM) is unknown but it is estimated to be plus or minus 2500.

• Media reports on the other hand have continued to estimate that there are around 3500 refugees staying in and just outside the church.
• There is the Church Ministry and the Refugee Ministry. The church Ministry is the normal church congregation and there are nine other reverends.

• Refugees are organised and administered under a refugee ministry fellowship called Ray of Hope Refugee Ministry. It has a loose leadership structure but it is chaired by the Bishop and has several sub-committees that are responsible for education, health and the different programs undertaken at the church.
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<th><strong>Health and caring</strong></th>
<th><strong>Other</strong></th>
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<td>Clinic (being run by Doctors without Borders)</td>
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<td>ABET (Adult Basic Education Training)</td>
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<td>For Love of Children (FLOC)-crèche</td>
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Methodist Church in Central Johannesburg - Pritchard Street
Little market in front of the church
Inside the church
Day Care (47 kids)
Primary and Secondary School
Funding

The Church's main source of funding seems to be coming from donations. During the xenophobic attacks in 2008, CMM got overwhelming donations from individual well wishers and organisations that supported in cash and in kind like Standard Bank, South African Airways (SAA), UNHCR, Mormon Church etc.

Whist some have withdrawn their support, there are still a lot of donations coming in as Leo highlighted, ‘every day there is stuff coming in from supermarkets, companies, individuals, churches, NGO’s and the like’. Interview with Leotherere, 3 July 2009
Opposition

*Opposition from shops around*- The shops around the church are probably the biggest opposers to the CMM and Bishop Verryn. They took the bishop to court and the case is still pending. The shop owners complain about dirt on the street because of people sleeping in the street.
Opposition from local religious community - the church congregants seem to be divided on the issue of accommodating refugees in their church. As the church steward said, ‘some of the church members are not happy and criticise the Bishop whilst some glorify him, so there is this division in the church’.

Interview with Leothere, French teacher and Church Stewart, Central Methodist Church, 3 July 2009
Relations with Local Government

The local government in SA addresses the challenges of domestic and international migration. There are significant challenges in developing effective responses to these challenges of mutual engagement. Especially, the lack of trust and lack of intergovernmental co-ordination are key issues.
Until recently, there has been little collaboration with the government in terms of what the church needs.

The church has been appealing to government to provide a building or an alternative accommodation to reduce overcrowding at the church without any success.

However, there has recently been talk that government is going to provide another form of accommodation but this is yet to materialise. The church has also appealed to the council for water and electricity exemption without success.
In Spring 2009 Gauteng local government MEC Qedani Dorothy Mahlangu said Bishop Paul Verryn was exposing refugees at the church to more danger.

‘We are not condoning what he is doing. We condemn it’. However, despite criticising the Bishop, Mahlangu promised continued cooperation with him and said "The City of Johannesburg will continue to partner with the Central Methodist Church. We've been approached by the church. They want to get a building. We're currently processing the issues of them leasing a building”
“it is a church, it is not a refugee camp!”

Example from a Ray of Hope Refugee meeting (weekly meetings):

**Security** - as usual, the security issue drew a lot of attention and the issue of violence and abuse was prevalent. The issues that were raised include the following:

- Donations being taken by the security personnel and not reaching everyone.
- Women with babies being denied to get into the church when it is very cold outside.
• One person said that there were gangs in the church and that people were being beaten and robbed in the church. The gentleman rounded up by reiterating that he was not safe in the church.

• The security abusing and man handling people for nothing and sometimes extorting money from people who want to come into the church.
The Bishop then stepped in to conclude the security issue by stating that any form of violence is not tolerated in the building. He said that no one had the right to beat up anyone or lay their hands on anyone whether they were the security or not. The Bishop even included the issue of violence in his closing prayer and said “even when it seems as if we are no longer safe in a place we have come hoping for a better future, Lord help us root out these unruly elements”.
“It’s tough. There is every conceivable social problem that you can think of. But it is a miracle that we have as little as we do and the community is as creative as it is. The worship services every night at 7 o’clock is wonderful. There are very few places I think in the world where you offer people the opportunity to come forward for communion that you have people rushing to the communion ramp. It’s just phenomenal”

Interview with Bishop Verryn, July 2009
Bishop Paul Verryn was suspended Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) on the 19th of January 2010.

The Methodist Church of SA did not disclose the reasons for the suspension leading to widespread speculation in the media and amongst civil society. The MCSA released a press statement on its website: [http://www.methodist.org.za/?q=node/244](http://www.methodist.org.za/?q=node/244)
Organised response: Facebook

Friends of Paul Verryn Facebook page

http://www.facebook.com/#!/paulverrynv=wall&ref=ts
In conclusion

• Important inputs and activities for migrants in the inner city [lack of state delivery]
• Institution run as a religious community and not as a ‘development agency’ [different priorities and methods]
• Generate contrasts in the long term [different view and priorities]
• Role of the religious leadership
• Thinking in terms of impact; how to optimise the impact of the Church
Thinking about CMC impacts

Sphere of Control

Sphere of Influence

Sphere of Interest

Inputs → Activities → Direct Impacts → Outcomes → Broad Impacts
Affecting broader change?

Sphere of Interest
Sphere of Influence
Sphere of Activities

CMC

Beneficiaries
NGOs, Local Govt.
Boundary Partners