

Among Ourselves

www.social advocacy

Yes, this title is not yet our new website, but encapsulates the realisation that we gained as a result of our Ecumenical Consultation on Social Advocacy (ECSA) jointly organised by the Asia-Pacific Alliance of YMCA, the Christian Conference of Asia and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. We are aware that if we are truly to make Social Advocacy a powerful means of bringing about the Kingdom of God, we need to commit ourselves to creating a World -Wide Web (www) of Churches in dialogue with one another and with the world today. The development of this www calls for a wisdom that enables us not just to understand the global and the universal but also

the local and the specific. Our collective wisdom is vast and profound but fragmented, isolated and dissipated. The Churches in Asia-Pacific have over the years been struggling, to live the Gospel values of Justice and Peace in both their Intra-Ecclesial/Organisational agenda and activities in their attempts to make our ministries of social advocacy more relevant and meaningful. It is sad that we have not done enough as a communion of churches, to harness our energies and resources to a more effective involvement in the area of social advocacy. The unique contributions and potentials of our local churches have not been fully utilised to their maximum. We have failed to create new networks of dialogue and communication among ourselves. The skills and talents of the members of the clergy, the religious and laity could have made crucial contributions to the world of social advocacy.

The areas of collaborations are enormous ranging from those individuals and organisations well informed with instruments for international lobbying, those deeply committed in their prophetic involvement with migrants and indigenous peoples, refugees and those awaiting death penalty in death-row prisons, children and women who are the victims of trafficking and those working on issues of consumer rights and protection of the environment. The list can go on as to what should be done and can be done. What is clear to us is that we need to get back to some of the fundamentals. It seems to begin with a true understanding of ecumenism today in the 21st century. Our brief experiences in both the

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Social Advocacy in the 21st Century Challenges to the Churches in Asia - Pacific

Introduction to the Ecumenical Consultation on Social Advocacy (ECSA)

Introduction

In the context of the emerging megatrends in the beginning of the 21st Century, the Church is being challenged to respond in new and creative ways to make the Gospel of Jesus relevant to the people of today. This is only possible if we, as Churches in Asia-Pacific, begin to develop a more critical awareness of the complex and diverse realities of the world around us. Firstly, it is in this context, that we need to have a deeper understanding of Advocacy in the context of Asia-Pacific. Secondly, we need to clarify the light of the Gospel that will return us to the fundamental principles of our Christian faith.

As we begin this Consultation, we have experienced the tragic events as a result of the attacks on the United States on 11th of September 2001. This has indeed shocked the world and side by side with this tragedy is also the drama of poverty and violence that we experience day to day in the Asia-Pacific. Our Consultation, cannot thus be an academic or intellectual exercise but one that hopefully, will move us to respond with urgency to the demands of advocacy in this new millennium.

It is therefore my task to present some broad guidelines that will be the basis of our Reflections and Discernment these days together.

1. The World of Asia –Pacific¹

Looking around us today, we see ourselves in a world that is undergoing radical transformation in almost every aspect of life. The process of

globalisation is moving us to live in a world of homogenisation that marginalises many of our peoples and communities. We are thus as Christians challenged to reflect on these situations in the light of the Gospel. We hope to develop a perspective of our realities around us and thus begin to see with new eyes that events that are unfolding before us. It is this Faith Perspective that will enable us to discern and discover new ways in which we can promote social advocacy today.

2. The Dream Before Us

In one sense, we are being called to humanise globalisation. How do we bring human dimensions, based on the Word of God to the underlying workings of society today, so that we can begin to speak on behalf of the poor and the voiceless? It is obvious that we need to dialogue with the world, with the Word of the Lord and with each other. We can thus say, that the task before us is to Review the Context in which we live (Our World). Reflect on the Word of the Lord (Our Faith) and Respond in Love (Our Renewal) our lives, so that we can be at the service of the least of our sisters and brothers.

In attempting to journey together in this process, we see the importance of ensuring the dignity of the human person and the promotion of

The Overview of Faith Encounters in Social Action (FEISA IV) -- Understanding Christian - Muslim Dialogue in South East Asia which appeared in our INFO of November - Decemver 2001, Vol. 27, Nos. 11-12 was delivered by **Br. Anthony Rogers, FSC**. We are very sorry for the omission.

¹ Please refer to Appendix One for Asian Context

human rights. This we believe, is the foundation of our attempts at social advocacy. The focus of advocacy is not just the individual but also through the community that seeks to concretise its commitment to the Common God. This focus on the dignity of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God and our responsibility for the common good, is what seems to us as the new path to move away from individualism that marks humanity today. It is this excessive importance given individualism that arises out of our lack of identity of the self and value given to self-worth that makes us excessively competitive and intolerant of the rights of others and the integrity of creation. Our excessive individualism and competition for exclusive possession of material goods has thus to give way to a culture of community and co-operation.

3. Our Responses in the area of Social Advocacy?

The question before us therefore is, How do we concretise our commitment to Social Advocacy in the context of Asia – Pacific? Our common understanding or perspective of the context, in which we live, is the pre-requisite, for the formulation of new strategies in the area of social advocacy. The diverse realities and cultural experiences often prevent us from coming to see the reality around us as a community. Divisions result in partial or distorted perceptions and thus our understanding. It is from this movement to stand on some common ground that will facilitate our progress in attaining the goals that we have identified.

Our Common Strategies can only emerge if we see the inter-relatedness of our realities at the Global, Regional, National and Local levels. We cannot any longer hope to make advocacy effective, without making the vital links and creating alliances at all these levels. The formulation of Our Common Priorities pertaining to both Regional Concerns (related to Human Rights violations in a particular country, Economic Injustices etc) and Thematic issues (Campaign against Death Penalty, Migrants and Refugees, Militarisation etc.) will have to be identified as a result of a process of consultations hopefully resulting in consensus and commitment

to advocacy. Our co-operation in our tasks related to Education and Awareness of the members of the Church, our direct Advocacy Campaigns through information and urgent appeals, petitions to the authorities etc. will have to be painfully planned and implemented at all levels.

Thus we can say that our attempts to promote social advocacy is a process of forging a new global solidarity based on the values of the Gospel. This is our attempt to move from a globalisation with marginalisation to a process of humanising globalisation.

I have therefore taken the liberty, to put together some facts and observations that would enable us, to keep our focus on our Realities, our Dreams and our Tasks ahead.

3.1. Megatrends in the beginning of the New Millennium

- a) There is firstly the growing tendency towards mega-mergers and concentration of wealth and the increasing growth of relative poverty. The top 20% of the world's richest in 1960 had 30 times more than the bottom 20%. In 1995 the top 20% were getting 82 times more than the bottom 20% - 1.3 billion people in the world live on less than US\$1 per day. 800 million people are hungry all the time. (UNDP Report). The Global Economy is under the Mega Players – 500 top companies control 80% of global wealth- Their aim is to maximise profits and not the interest of the majority of those who need basic needs.
- b) There is next the growth of what can be termed Economic Ideology of “Moneytheism”. Everyone believes that there is no alternative to the free market economy and the liberalisation of both Trade and Capital. It is expanding and unchallenged because of the gradual disintegration of local economies and trade sectors and partners. It is only the international market that can bring us the good things in life. It is not the value of the local but the imported that can bring salvation today and for the next generation. Without the Market Driven Economics we are doomed to a permanent state of poverty for generations to come.

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- c) Thus in this above context, that the role of the state has to be redefined, and all state apparatus have to be utilised to ensure political stability even at the expense of democracy and human rights have to be sacrificed at the altar of the Goddess of Money and the protectors of the Market. The only democracy is the democracy and freedom of the market. Thus the sacredness of the Market and Capital have to be safeguarded at all cost. Thus the violations against sanctity of human lives and the dignity and rights of human persons become peripheral and secondary. It is only obvious that the role of the state is to ensure that the minds of the people are not to be poisoned by notions of freedom and dignity and responsibility and equality. The excessive control of the media by the State and the Corporate Sector ensures save environment for liberalisation of Trade and Investments. These are the two key elements for salvation that comes through the New World Order.
 - d) It is in this context that we see the emergence of the Militarism of Superstates, that will bring together about the New World Order. The growing militarisation and expansion of the arms trade is frightening. Violence and counter-violence are threatening peace.
 - e) We see the very subtle destruction of the identities of nations and dismantling of our traditional cultures. This is the result of the birth of the new Information and Communication Technologies and truly making the Economic divide today also a Digital Divide. It is our fear that this trend may be further heightened thus plunging nations into greater terror and violence for the sake of putting order into violent and unequal world. Together with this culture of violence is the growing culture of silence. The world of Global Sports, Entertainment and Mass Tourism moves us from the world of hard realities to the world of the digital images and heart-throbbing music.

3.2 What are therefore the consequences of these Megatrends?

- a) There seems to be no global and moral

- authority to bring order into the world, since the Nation States have lost their power. They do not govern people but serve the ideology of “moneytheism.” The role of the United Nations, as the true protector the world today, is being questioned by many.
- b) There is thus the increasing marginalisation of poor people and nations in the economic South. It is interesting to note that most of the marginalised in the world today are outside the world of the “Christianised West.” It is obvious that we have seen as a result of the 1997 Asian Economic Crises, the increasing religious and ethnic violence and conflicts in Asia.
- c) With the rise of individualism as persons, communities and nations, we get into a culture of global indifference. Few bother about what happens outside their homes and their countries. Many are concerned about local but not global. It is in this context that one of the urgent challenges is the creation of Networks of Economic Alliances and Social Advocacy.

3.3 What are the signs of Hope?

- a) There seem to be pockets of resistance to Globalisation and World Trade Organisation, both at the International and Local levels. Many organisations have begun a process of demonstrations and protests but have yet to work out clearly holistic and alternative proposals.
- b) There is also an increasing number of Governments that have become critical, about some of the Global issues and have been opening speaking against them and lobbying at the level of International Institutions including the World Trade Organisation.
- c) There is definitely a growing interfaith consciousness about moral values based on transcendental values, justice and common aspirations and heritage of humanity as a whole. It is in this arena that we are being challenged to enter in the context of Asia-Pacific.
- d) The Churches in the Region seem also to give importance to Social Advocacy, as a way to living out fully the Gospel of Jesus Christ. More and more members of

Churches see the relationship between their Faith and Lives and Worship and Witness. There is a growing awareness of the need to work together in new collaborative ministries.

Conclusion

It is therefore in the context of the above, the Ecumenical Consultation on Social Advocacy (ECSA) can truly be an opportunity as Churches in the Region to foster trusting relationships so that we can go on together with our tasks ahead. It is indeed historic that the Asia-Pacific Alliance of YMCA, the Christian Conference of Asia and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences nurture the hope that our days together will be the first steps in our long journey in the area of Social Advocacy.

Appendix One

The Context of Asia Today

*(Extracts from Ecclesia in Asia
Pope John Paul II
Synod of Bishops 2000)*

Religious and Cultural Realities

Asia is the earth's largest continent with nearly two-thirds of the world's population and China and India make up almost half the total population of the globe. It is a continent with its peoples who are "heirs to ancient cultures, religions and traditions." It is not its size of the population that amazes us but the intricate mosaic of its many cultures, languages, beliefs and traditions.

Asia is also the cradle of the world's major religions — Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism and the birthplace of many other spiritual traditions such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Sikhism and Shintoism, as well as the traditional or tribal religions. The Church has the deepest respect for these traditions and seeks to engage in sincere dialogue with their followers. The religious values they teach await their fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

The people of Asia take pride in their religious and cultural values, such as love of silence and contemplation, simplicity, harmony, detachment, non-violence, the spirit of hard work, discipline, frugal living, the thirst for learning and philosophical enquiry. They hold dear the values of respect for life, compassion for all beings, closeness to nature, filial piety towards parents, elders and ancestors, and a highly developed sense of community. The family is a vital source of strength that nurtures a powerful sense of solidarity, spirit of religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence. In spite of bitter tensions and violent conflicts, there is a capacity for accommodation and a natural openness to the mutual enrichment of peoples in the midst of a plurality of religions and cultures. Moreover, despite the influence of modernisation and secularisation, Asian religions show a great vitality and a capacity for renewal. Many, especially the young, experience a deep thirst for spiritual values and thus indicate an innate spiritual insight and moral wisdom in the Asian soul, and it is the core around which a growing sense of "being Asian" is built. This "being Asian" is best discovered and affirmed not in confrontation and opposition, but in the spirit of complementarity and harmony. In this framework of complementarity and harmony, the Church can communicate the Gospel being faithful both to her own Tradition and to the Asian soul.

Economic and Social Realities

The nature of economic development, is diverse, some nations are highly developed, with their effective economic policies, while others live in abject poverty. Some of these poor nations are among the poorest nations on earth. In the process of development, materialism and secularism are also gaining ground, especially in urban areas. These ideologies, which undermine traditional, social and religious values, threaten Asia's cultures with incalculable damage. These changes have both the positive and negative aspects. There is also the accompanying phenomenon of urbanisation often associated with the rise of organised crime, terrorism, prostitution, and the exploitation of the weaker sectors of society. There is also the migration of peoples due to poverty, war

and ethnic conflicts, the denial of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. We also experience the adverse effects of industrialisation. These seriously affect family life and values. The constructions of nuclear power plants have little regard for the safety of people and the integrity of the environment. Tourism has often a devastating influence and effect upon both the moral and physical landscape of many Asian countries. The negative impact of tourism is seen in the increase in prostitution of young women and even children.

Faced with population growth, we need to be aware of false solutions that threaten the dignity and inviolability of life. We recall the Church's contribution to the defence and promotion of life through health care, social development and education to benefit peoples, especially the poor, and noted the contributions of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. New forms of behaviour are emerging as a result of over-exposure to the mass media and the kinds of literature, music, and films that are undermining the Asian cultural traditions. These are often controlled and used by those with questionable political, economic and ideological interests. As a result, the negative aspects of the media and entertainment industries are threatening traditional values, and in particular the sacredness of marriage and the stability of the family. The effect of images of violence, hedonism, unbridled individualism and materialism "is striking at the heart of Asian cultures, at the religious character of the people, families and whole societies." This is a situation, which poses a great challenge to the Church and to the proclamation of her message.

The persistent reality of poverty and exploitation is rooted in history where people have been kept economically, culturally and politically on the margins of society. Although there is the awakening of women's consciousness to their dignity and rights the poverty and exploitation of women remains a serious problem throughout Asia. Millions of indigenous or tribal people throughout Asia are also living in social, cultural and political isolation.

The extensive economic growth of many Asian societies has witnessed the emergence of a new generation of skilled workers, scientists and technicians that is growing and thus augurs well for Asia's development. The most recent and far-

reaching financial crisis suffered by a number of Asian countries had serious consequences on the lives of the Asian peoples but it also shows what the Asian peoples can do for themselves with a view to their own development.

Political Realities

The Church always needs to have an exact understanding of the political situation in the different countries. The political panorama is highly complex, displaying an array of ideologies ranging from democratic forms of government to theocratic ones together with military dictatorships and atheistic ideologies. Some countries recognise an official state religion that allows little or no religious freedom to minorities and the followers of other religions while others reduce minorities to second-class citizens with little safeguard for their fundamental human rights. In some places Christians are not allowed to practise their faith freely and proclaim Jesus Christ to others. They are persecuted and denied their rightful place in society.

With progress there is also the widespread corruption existing at various levels of both government and society. People are helpless to defend themselves against corrupt politicians, members of the judiciary, administrators and bureaucrats. With the growing awareness and people's capacity to change unjust structures, people demand greater social justice, participation in government and economic life, for equal opportunities in education and for a just share in the resources of the nation. People are becoming increasingly conscious of their human dignity and rights and more determined to safeguard them. Long dormant ethnic, social and cultural minority groups are seeking ways to become agents of their own social advancement. The Spirit of God helps and sustains people's efforts to transform society so that the human yearning for a more abundant life may be satisfied as God wills.

Br. Anthony Rogers, FSC

Advocacy in Asia

Advocacy is the act or process of advocating. It comes from the *Latiadvocatus* (called to or summoned). An advocate is one who pleads the cause of another, especially before a tribunal or judicial court. Advocacy, as a legal term, means “pleading for someone else. The counterpart to advocacy in religious terminology is ‘witnessing.’ ...It means actively taking up the case of those whose rights are violated” (Dr. Yash Ghai, University of Kong Kong Law School). I see that one of the criteria for participation in this workshop is a general understanding about Social Advocacy. Being uncertain of just what it means I wrote to Bro. Rogers to ask him: “What is advocacy?”

On September 22, I received the CCA Concerns on Social Advocacy, where it is defined as a specific form of witness on political and economic issues by churches, church-related organisations, etc. in order to influence government policies and practices, international institutions and the corporate sector. But as Humpty Dumpty says in “Alice in Wonderland:” “A word means exactly what I want it to mean.” It seems to me that advocacy is most effective when it concentrates on one particular issue (such as the debt crisis of poor countries) or an outstanding or systematic violation of human rights (e.g., the application of internal security acts). The Hotline Urgent Appeals were a form of advocacy which anyone could easily participate in and which were often effective in righting widespread injustices. This was the “old” advocacy, but the “new” advocacy seems to be more broader and more complex.

The main tool of advocacy is Mahatma Gandhi’s “soul force” or moral pressure. We overcome violence and injustice by “taking the high ground” of satyagraha and ahimsa (truth-seizing and non-violence). Advocacy is an active power but not only a power for action. It is also a strong educational tool, not only for people of good will who might be attracted to join an advocacy network but also for paedology of the oppressors, of those against an advocacy campaign is directed.

In a Christian gathering it should also be mentioned that the Holy Spirit comes to us as an Advocate (Jn 14:26). “The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything.” Paracletos or Paraclete (from *parakalein* – to invoke) literally means advocate or intercessor, one who entreats in favour of another. Scripture emphasizes the in counteracting sinful activities.

If advocacy means supporting victims of injustice

and oppression, its predominant virtue is solidarity – oneness with the oppressed and with each other in the supporting group. “Solidarity helps us to see the ‘other’ – whether a person, people or nation – not just as some kind of instrument, with a weak capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful, but as our ‘neighbour’, a ‘helper’ (cf. Gen: 18-20) (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987, Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II).

The previous words are by way of introduction. I want to begin with a caveat – a word of caution. The Bangladesh Commission for Justice and Peace (CJP) was involved in advocacy issues during the 22 years I was its Secretary. I felt that we had to ally ourselves with the majority Muslim community, since they are almost 90% of the population, in order to be effective and to have national influence. We were influential in forming the Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh and in giving it leadership. Group advocacy was not always the method adopted, however, since the greatest success of the CJP – stopping the army from carrying out forced sterilisation, beginning in an *adivasi* (tribal) area - was done through personal or individual advocacy, without the army or newspapers knowing anything about it. I did this by approaching the donor of the national sterilisation program – USAID – and threatened to ruin their whole program unless they stopped the injustice immediately. This they did, and through public or social advocacy pressure, later on withdrew funding for the entire program.

Another example of social advocacy was my taking part on behalf of the NGO sector in Bangladesh in an Asian NGO attack on the Asian Development Bank at their Silver Jubilee meeting in Hong Kong. I was one of three to hold a joint discussion on Hong Kong radio with ADB representatives on the harmful social and environmental impacts of ADB-funded projects. The two projects of Bangladesh which I analysed for the meeting (having access to all the documents in the Dhaka ADB office) were a rubber plantation and an afforestation program, both in the Madhupur Forest. Both the projects had adverse socio-economic effects on the *adivasis* and harmful environmental effects on the forest, especially resulting in the loss of biodiversity.

As a result of our NGO advocacy, ADB turned down the funding for a second rubber plantation and stopped the funding for the afforestation program. After the Hong Kong meeting the bank set up compulsory environmental evaluation of all proposed projects, establishing three categories according to the probable influence of the project on the environment. They also set up a Social Impact unit centrally to observe the

benefits and adversities affecting minority and disadvantaged groups in project areas.

These may sound like highly-successful advocacy programs, but they were not seen in that light by the Bishops' Conference, who thought that we were putting the Church at risk by our involvement in politics and economics. We are such a tiny Christian minority, only 0.3% of the population, that we should only assert ourselves when the rights of the Church are directly threatened, e.g., when the weekly holiday was changed from Sunday to Friday or when Easter Sunday was not declared as a holiday. Since a local priest has now taken my place as Secretary of the CJP, plans have been drawn up for a much more expensive program, of which all the activities are only within the Church itself.

The policy for human rights, by the way, stands in sharp contrast with the policy of Caritas Bangladesh, which was the first religion-affiliated NGO to work equally for people of all faiths in the same area who were affected by the same natural disaster or adverse socio-economic conditions. I bring this up as an obstacle within Catholic circles, since one of the objectives of the seminar is to "challenge our own church constituencies to become more involved in advocacy." When the connection of the OHD with Hotline, Hong Kong was severed by a few disgruntled bishops about six years ago, here at Pattaya, the Church withdrew even more from the type of advocacy we are stressing now. For this reason, our Hotline Bangladesh, formerly under the CJP, is now registering as an independent NGO.

I feel that advocacy could well be for us more a process of education than of protest, because of the need for understanding before effective action. St. Paul wrote (in my Bible from 1940) about people "having a zeal but not according to knowledge." As a scientist I believe that the discovery of truth ranks infinitely higher than aimless action. My paper should be a stimulus to advocacy, rather than a cautionary tale against misdirected enthusiasm. I hope that it may serve as both.

My second observation pertains to the "new" advocacy itself. One subject matter of advocacy which has become immensely popular is globalisation or interdependence of nations. The enormity and complexity of the challenge is a discouraging factor. Globalisation is by far the biggest issue the Church has ever confronted. We are being asked to face up to much more than we were even 10 years ago. Do we have the people to match the highly-qualified and highly-paid professionals of the World Bank, IMF, ADB, WTO, etc.? Maybe you youngsters are able to acquire a more rapid education nowadays through IT than we old-timers laboriously had to slog through heavy tomes to acquire.

One charge brought against globalisation is destruction or pollution of the environment. A recent advocacy campaign of 72 NGOs of Indonesia was directed against the introduction of cotton-BT, a gene-modified plant, developed by Monsanto. The main contention is that transgenic agriculture is somehow wrong by nature, that it contradicts nature. Long lists of harmful effects were sent out but they were all said to be only probable. We were asked us to send protests, referring to at least one scientific study, but they themselves did not cite any. On the other hand, the US Department of patents are issued by the Patent Office only after verification by Independent scientific agencies. My point is that the constituent elements of globalisation are extraordinarily complex and we do not serve the cause of justice by jumping on every advocacy bandwagon for a joy ride. The protestors may be right, but they have not convinced me.

I note in the CCA paper that in the list of the ways of working together in a more international manner: "to provide ethical perspectives on major international issues." Ethical concerns are those most likely to be left out in top-down development. Popes Paul VI and John Paul II are two of the outstanding commentators on development in recent times. They say, in sociologists, political theorists, anthropologists, etc. – but we are 'experts in humanity'." It is the ethical or moral outlook in development which is the major contribution of the churches. The churches emphasize human dignity as the basis of human rights and the human person as the subject of development, rather than a commodity to be peddled in the market like fish or radishes. Mahatma Gandhi said of poverty vs the resources available in the world: "There is enough for everyone's needs, but not enough for everyone's greeds." At least, if we can't keep up with the experts we can study the impact of development projects on all the classes of people affected by them.

One area untouched in the CCA paper is social advocacy for strengthening the instruments that work in favour of the people who are left out in development. Advocacy could address some general educational issues about human rights which have been neglected by the United Nations. For example, the UDHR mentions human rights 51 times but mentions duty only once, even though rights and duties are mutually and irrevocably connected. Strangely enough, considering the strong emphasis on individual rights, the reference to duty in the UDHR is to social duties (Art. 29,1: "Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is

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CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE OF ASIA

Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service

**“Time for fullness of life for all:
Cultivating the culture of peace and overcoming violence”**

CCA Concerns on Social Advocacy

The vision of the Programs Area on Justice, International Affairs, Development & Service (JID) is one that looks towards an Asian society in which the fullness of God’s creation is experienced by all. Thus it is a vision of an Asian society that is just, peaceful, civil, interdependent, and one that cares for all of God’s creation. It is a peace based on responding to people’s security as against national security. It is a peace resulting from reconciled peoples, reconciled communities and reconciled nations. The implementation of this vision therefore will point towards those ways of being Christian, which are both prophetic and allow the fullness of God’s spirit to be experienced. The programs therefore will be important not only in terms of their content but also in the ways in which they are carried out. The quality of content and of process will be regarded as essential.

In accordance with the *Tomohon Mandate*, the Program Area on Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service continue its commitment, strengthening the capability building of churches in order to bring a fullness of life for all. By this we mean to cultivate a culture of peace within God’s creation to restore and reconcile relationships and to address the broken-ness of Asian societies, enhancing the integrity of creation. As a result of these concerns, the main theme to run through the programs will be cultivating the culture of peace and overcoming violence.

On Social Advocacy, we have identified advocacy in the context in which the ecumenical family is searching for ways to enhance their collective advocacy, the term advocacy has a more particular meaning as a form of political witness on economic and political issues. Specifically, we offer the following working definition of ecumenical advocacy:

Advocacy is a specific form of witness on political and economic issues by churches, church-related agencies and other organizations which aims to influence policies and practices of governments, international institutions and the corporate sector in order to bring about a more just, peaceful and sustainable world.

Our vision of ecumenical advocacy is that it is:

- based on our understanding of the Gospel message which calls all Christians to speak out against

injustice, tyranny, and war;

- grounded in our commitment to justice, peace, environmental integrity, and the dignity of all human beings;
- based on solidarity with and accountability to those on whose behalf we are called to advocate, particularly the poor, the marginalized, and those who suffer from the world’s injustices and violence.
- Focused on promoting change to enable all human beings to live in justice and peace and on challenging structures which cause injustice and suffering;
- Characterized as a sustained process rather than a one-time campaign;
- Expressed through a variety of instruments and methodologies at different levels, including public education and awareness-raising efforts, lobbying, empowering people to speak out against their own oppressors and empowering churches to make advocacy part of their ministry.

Advocacy complements actions of solidarity and accompaniment. Feeding the hungry, educating the unlearned, and consoling the suffering are essential elements of Christian ministry. Advocacy seeks to address the causes of poverty, conflict and injustice. It should be noted that advocacy is not the only form of political witness; for example, churches and ecumenical bodies may be called to play a mediating role between different political groups. Rather than advocating for one position or the other, their role is that of the mediator.

Within the mandate of the *11th General Assembly of CCA*, the CCA Justice, International Affairs, Development & Service (JID) on Social Advocacy for the next five years has proposed the following programs:

- monitoring and analysing emerging issues and the dissemination of information and educational materials on issues, particularly in the area of international relations and Asian human rights advocacy,
- engaging the church leaders in dialogue and consultation in order to encourage them to promote the concerns of human rights, peace and conflict resolution,
- organising regional and national human rights training programs to focus on freedom of religion and the human rights situation in Asia,

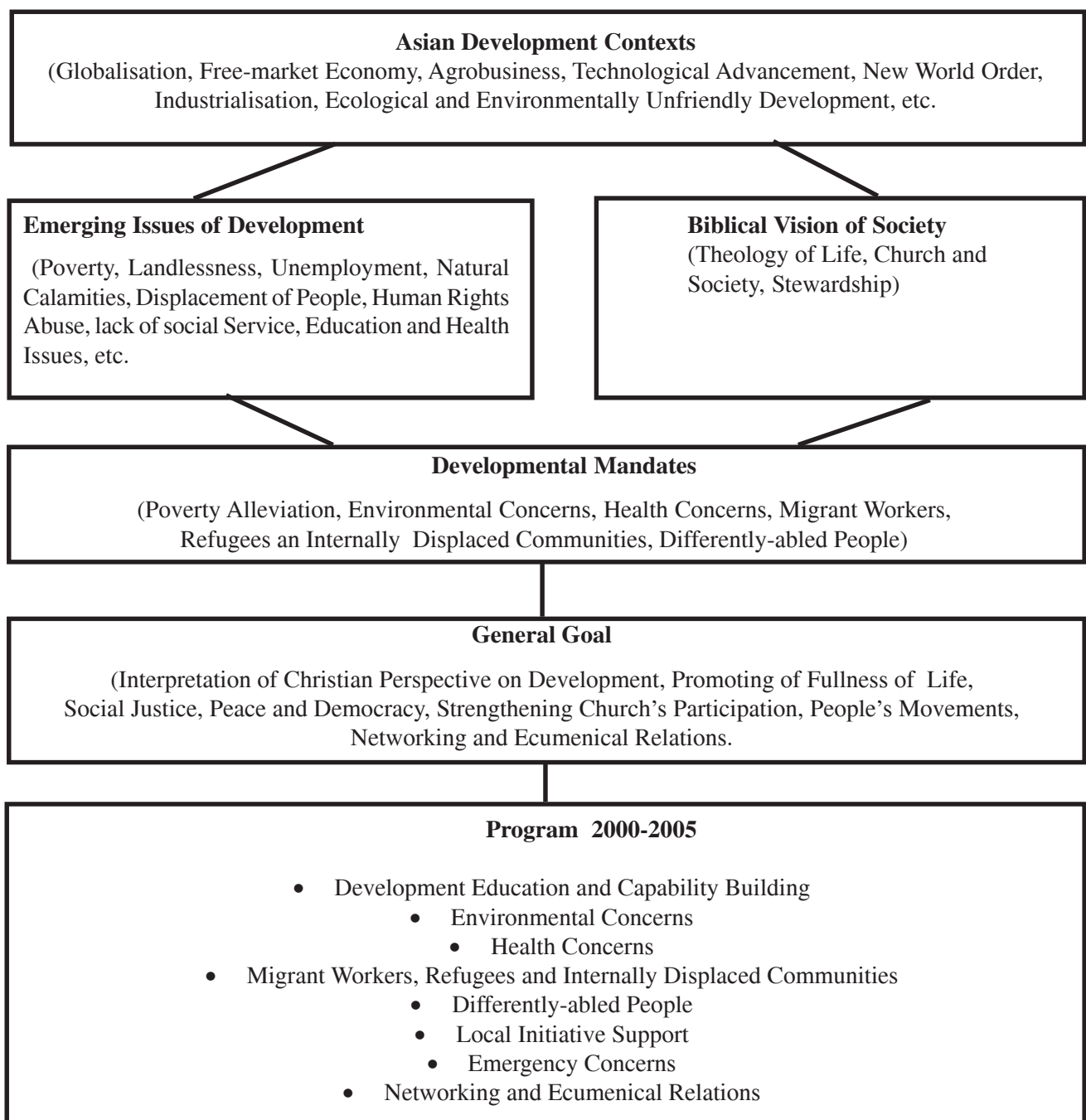
- strengthening Christian-Muslim solidarity efforts to promote human rights concern in countries with a Muslim majority,
- providing assistance and attention to areas where churches face situations of conflict.

The nature of today's world makes it necessary that we think even more strategically about how to change policies at the global level. The pressures of globalization have increased the need to work together, to work ecumenically, and to develop strategic alliances with other actors (including other religious communities and civil society) in pursuit of international policies for a more just and peaceful world. It is not enough to process one's own government on questions of economic justice when important decisions are made by international institutions

and corporations that increasingly exercise power largely beyond governmental control.

By working together (CCA-FABC-APYMCA) in a more international manner, we seek to:

- increase our collective impact on decisions,
- gain greater access to decision-makers,
- influence public opinion more effectively,
- challenge our own church constituencies to become more involved in advocacy,
- provide ethical perspectives on major international issues,
- increase our common visibility in the political world, and to
- release the synergy which comes from pooling our efforts and our resources.



Social Justice Advocacy in Australia: ACSJC Case Study

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference mandates the ACSJC to promote research, education, advocacy and action on social justice, peace and human rights, integrating them deeply into the life of the whole Catholic community in Australia, and providing a credible Catholic voice on these matters in Australian society.

The Mandate sets out why the ACSJC was created and makes clear that the work for social justice is a central part of the mission of the Church. It also sets out the principles or philosophy by which the ACSJC works. These are derived from Catholic Social Teaching. It then sets out the specific tasks of the ACSJC (see Mandate). These tasks fall into three main areas: building social justice networks; education and formation; research, advocacy and public policy.

Each year the ACSJC decides on a small number of issues on which to take action. The level of staff and financial resources available to the ACSJC limit the number of issues that can be addressed at any given time (see issue selection flow chart). The network building, education and formation, research and advocacy activities of the ACSJC in any year will all focus on the issues selected for action in that year.

1. Building Social Justice Networks

Mandated tasks:

- ❖ Building social justice networks within the Catholic Church, encouraging local action, coordinating action at the national level, and maintaining contact with relevant international Catholic agencies.
- ❖ Collaborating with national and international agencies with objectives similar or complementary to those of the ACSJC.
- ❖ Witnessing to and promoting unity among Christians through ecumenical action in favour of justice and peace.

Ways in which the ACSJC has addressed these tasks:

- Acting as a clearing house for information among social justice groups
- Putting people in touch with others on areas of common concern
- Preparing a monthly email briefing to contacts in dioceses & other interested people letting them know about ACSJC activities, coming events, and sources of information
- Organising an annual gathering of diocesan contacts who have been designated by their Bishops to be the people through whom the ACSJC should work in the diocese. This is an opportunity for the sharing of

information and ideas, mutual support and coordination.

- Networking with other national Catholic bodies: National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council, Australian Catholic Migrant & Refugee Office, Australian Catholic Commission for Employment Relations, Catholic Welfare Australia, Catholic Health Care Australia, National Liturgical Commission, social justice networks among the religious
- Networking with ecumenical and interfaith bodies: National Council of Churches in Australia Social Justice Network, National Council of Churches in Australia Network on Women & Gender Relationships, Advisory Group on Faith Communities to the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation
- Networking with NGOs: Australian Council of Social Service, Australian Association for Professional and Applied Ethics, Australian Forum of Human Rights Organizations, Australians for Fair Trade and Investment Network, NGO Working Group for the World Conference Against Racism, Fair Wear Campaign
- Networking with Catholic groups internationally: Catholic Justice & Peace Commissions especially in Asia-Pacific, Pontifical Council for Justice & Peace

2. Education & Formation

Mandated tasks:

- ❖ Presenting Catholic Social Teaching and the social justice tradition of the Catholic Church;
- ❖ Applying Catholic Social Teaching to current social justice, human rights, development and peace issues in Australia and overseas;
- ❖ Promoting a spirituality of justice and the integration of concern for social justice into the liturgy, worship and general life of the whole Church;
- ❖ Educating the Catholic and wider community on social justice, human rights, development and peace issues in Australia and overseas by providing guided experience and educational materials;

Ways in which the ACSJC has addressed these tasks:

- Publish and distribute a free quarterly newsletter *Justice Trends*.
- Publish a series of discussion papers called the *Catholic Social Justice Series*. These papers are intended to promote discussion on significant issues from the perspective of Catholic Social Teaching.
- Prepare and publish *ACSJC Position Papers* outlining the stance of the ACSJC in relation to topical social

justice issues. These papers set out the issue, highlight relevant Catholic Social Teaching, and apply it to the issue.

- Publish *ACSJC Background Papers* providing background information on topical social justice issues.
- Assist the Bishops by preparing an annual *Social Justice Sunday Statement*
- Publish *Seasons of Social Justice*; a social justice calendar which highlights key dates that can provide a focus for social justice activities in parishes, small groups and schools. The dates come from the liturgical calendar, dates commemorated by the Australian community at large, or the international community. It contains reflection, prayer and action material for some of the key dates each month.
- Promote a spirituality of justice by producing resources for prayer and worship eg prayer cards, liturgy notes.
- Action leaflets & other materials are produced as necessary eg *Ten Steps Towards Reconciliation*, *Ten Steps Towards Welcoming Asylum Seekers*
- Occasionally the ACSJC will organise conferences, seminars & workshops, and staff try to accept as many invitations to speak at such event organised by others.
- The ACSJC has a Bishop Chairman, and pastoral statements by the Chair are often used to draw attention to particular issues eg the annual *Pastoral Statement for the Feast of St Joseph the Worker* that focuses on issues surrounding work, unemployment and industrial relations.
- The ACSJC maintains an active website with a significant archive of Church statements on social justice issues www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au

3. Research, Advocacy & Public Policy

Mandated tasks:

- ❖ Researching issues and monitoring trends in public policy and current affairs in Australia and overseas;
- ❖ Speaking out against injustice, the abuse of human rights, poverty and violence and in favour of change for a more just society and thereby ensuring a credible national Catholic voice on these issues;
- ❖ Advising the Bishops on statements and actions for justice and peace and assisting them as required.

Ways in which the ACSJC has addressed these tasks:

Australian Government

- The ACSJC presents its views on issues to the national Government through letters to relevant Ministers
- Where an issue is of sufficient importance or dialogue with the relevant Minister has been exhausted, the ACSJC may write letters to the Prime Minister. Such letters could take the form of a private letter from Chairman of the ACSJC or the President of Bishops' Conference or an open letter.

- Another way of advocating on issues is to seek meetings with relevant Ministers and/or their advisors.

Australian Parliament

- Where change might be achieved through action of the Parliament, letters to leaders of political parties, expressing concerns, seeking dialogue, asking for public endorsement of particular views may be sent.
- Submissions are made to Parliamentary inquiries eg Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade inquiry into religious liberty.
- The ACSJC encourages local groups to write to their local members and to seek meetings with them on particular issues eg unemployment.
- The ACSJC has worked with other groups for the presentation of petitions as a result of signature campaigns eg land mines, international debt.

Bureaucracy (public service)

- Cultivating contact with Departmental officials, seeking briefings from them and also briefing them on ACSJC concerns eg asking for the views of Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade officials and expressing to them concern and suggestions for Australian Government action on the situation in Pakistan, Hong Kong.
- By cultivating contact with officials ideas can be fed into the policy formation process eg the NSW Government legislation for the protection of outworkers was influenced by input from the Fair Wear campaign of which we are part.

Governments of Other Nations

- The ACSJC writes letters to the diplomatic representatives of other countries in Australia at the request of counterpart agencies and reliable sources known to be in harmony with the positions being taken by the relevant local churches eg Hong Kong, India, Pakistan, and Japan. If a country's diplomatic representatives fail to respond or acknowledge correspondence, letters are written more directly to Heads of State or relevant Ministers in the country concerned.
- The ACSJC encourages the Australian Government to take up issues with other countries eg via input to the Australia-China Human Rights Dialogue

United Nations

- As an NGO in Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC, the ACSJC is occasionally called on to answer surveys, we also send reports on any relevant activities or concerns eg letters to the Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance, and to the CERD Committee.
- The ACSJC seeks to inform Australian delegations to UN events of our positions and concerns

- Where possible the ACSJC attends key UN conferences.

Public Opinion Campaigns

- The ACSJC uses media releases as a way of publicizing its positions on issues to the broader Australian community. They are usually reported in religious media and often in secular media. Because of the importance of accuracy and rigorous argumentation in such statements, the ACSJC has established guidelines for preparation of major statements.
- ACSJC publications and networks are used to disseminate information, education and action materials, encourage letter writing campaigns & signature campaigns, and consumer actions eg Fair Wear
- The ACSJC also seeks to influence public opinion by speaking at rallies and events, writing letters to newspapers, and briefing journalists.

4. Challenges for Ecumenical Social Advocacy in the Asia-Pacific Region

We all have limited resources for this work. Extrapolating from my experience in Australia, I would suggest that we need to:

- Focus on a limited number of issues on which we will commit to work with each other
- Establish criteria for choosing issues on which we will work together
- Plan achievable strategies and identify specific actions for each partner to undertake
- Find a way to monitor our work together & evaluate follow through

We come from different parts of the Christian family with different ways of doing things. We also come from different parts of a diverse geo-political region. I think this means that we need to:

- Understand each other's methods of social advocacy and internal decision making protocols
- Know the justice and peace structures of other churches and other places
- Choose carefully with whom we will be able to work on any given issue
- Commence new collaboration with modest objectives
- Start shared action in areas where there is significant agreement
- Share reliable information about country situations and particular issues
- Let each other know what would be appropriate solidarity actions to take to support us
- Develop mechanisms for dialogue in areas where there agreement is lacking
- Find ways of moving forward when the local church is silent or unresponsive

- Co-ordinate actions so that we build on each other's work rather than repeating it

Mandate of the ACSJC

Approved by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference on 8 December 2000, to take effect on 1 July 2001.

Why the ACSJC Was Created

The life and teachings of Jesus Christ call us to work for justice, peace, human rights, and development. All Christians share by their baptism in the mission of Jesus. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus describes this mission in the following way:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To let the oppressed go free,
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.*
(Luke 4: 18 – 19)

The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (ACSJC) was set up by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference (ACBC) in 1987 as the national justice and peace agency of the Catholic Church in Australia. The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference mandates the ACSJC to promote research, education, advocacy and action on social justice, peace and human rights, integrating them deeply into the life of the whole Catholic community in Australia, and providing a credible Catholic voice on these matters in Australian society. In this way the ACSJC seeks to bring good news to the poor, release to captives, sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed. The ACSJC is accountable to the ACBC through the Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development and Peace.

How the ACSJC Works

The work of the ACSJC is based on Catholic Social Teaching and is a contribution to this living social justice tradition. The ACSJC works in ways that affirm and express the following beliefs:

- ❖ Every human being is made in the image and likeness of God and has an inalienable and transcendent human dignity which gives rise to human rights.
- ❖ People are always more important than things. People are never a means or an instrument to be used for the benefit of another.
- ❖ Every human person is equal in dignity and rights. Every human community, every race and culture is equal in dignity and rights. The human family is one because we are all children of the one God.

- ❖ We are all really responsible for each other and must work for social conditions which ensure that every person and every group in society is able to meet their needs and realize their potential.
- ❖ Every group in society must take into account the rights and aspirations of other groups, and of the well being of the whole human family.
- ❖ God intended the goods of creation for the use of all, and so everyone has a right to access the goods of creation to meet their needs.
- ❖ Responsibility should be kept as close as possible to the grassroots. The people or groups most directly affected by a decision or a policy should have a key decision-making role.
- ❖ More encompassing groups should only intervene to support smaller, more local groups in cases of need, and where this is necessary in order to coordinate their activities with the activities of other groups in order to promote the common good.
- ❖ Respect for and the development of human life require peace. Peace is not the mere absence of war; it is the fruit of a just order. Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity.
- ❖ Human beings are part of God's creation and are called to act as stewards safeguarding the integrity of creation.

What the ACSJC Does

The major responsibilities of the ACSJC are:

- ❖ Researching issues and monitoring trends in public policy and current affairs in Australia and overseas;
- ❖ Presenting Catholic Social Teaching and the social justice tradition of the Catholic Church;
- ❖ Applying Catholic Social Teaching to current social justice, human rights, development and peace issues in Australia and overseas;
- ❖ Speaking out against injustice, the abuse of human rights, poverty and violence and in favor of change for a more just society and thereby ensuring a credible national Catholic voice on these issues;
- ❖ Promoting a spirituality of justice and the integration of concern for social justice into the liturgy, worship and general life of the whole Church;
- ❖ Building social justice networks within the Catholic Church, encouraging local action, coordinating action at the national level, and maintaining contact with relevant international Catholic agencies;
- ❖ Collaborating with national and international agencies with objectives similar or complementary to those of the ACSJC;
- ❖ Witnessing to and promoting unity among Christians through ecumenical action in favour of justice and peace;
- ❖ Educating the Catholic and wider community on social justice, human rights, development and peace

issues in Australia and overseas by providing guided experience and educational materials;

- ❖ Advising the Bishops on statements and actions for justice and peace and assisting them as required.

Appendices

- A. Membership
- B. Secretariat Arrangements and Finance
- C. Relationships with Dioceses

Appendix A:

Membership of the ACSJC

1. The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (ACSJC) will consist of twelve people being:
 - (i.) two members of the Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development and Peace (BCJDP)
 - (ii.) nine people appointed by the BCJDP from nominees submitted by members of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference
 - (iii.) the Executive Secretary of the BCJDP
2. One of the two members of the BCJDP will be the Chair and the other the Deputy Chair. The ACSJC Chair will serve as the ACBC Deputy for Social Justice.
3. The nine appointed members will include one from each State and Territory.
4. The majority of the members of the Council shall be lay people.
5. There shall be as close as possible to equal numbers of women and men among the non-Episcopal membership of the Council.
6. Members shall be appointed for one three year term and may then be reappointed for a second three-year term.
7. The BCJDP will appoint members on the basis of their skills, experience and knowledge in areas that are central to the mandate of the ACSJC.
8. The ACSJC shall ordinarily meet three times a year.
9. A quorum will consist of not less than two-thirds of the Council's Members.
10. In the case of a tied vote, the Chair will have a casting vote.
11. The ACSJC may establish any committee or working group necessary for its work and may co-opt members for such committees or working groups from outside the membership of the ACSJC.
12. When membership vacancies occur, the ACSJC Chair and National Executive Officer shall advise the BCJDP of the skills, experience and knowledge required by the ACSJC at the time.

Appendix B:

Secretariat & Funding Arrangements

1. The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council shall be served by a Secretariat which shall be accountable to it.
2. The Secretariat shall be co-ordinated by a National Executive Officer, who shall be appointed by the Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development and Peace.
3. The Secretariat shall – at the direction of the Council – undertake a number of tasks on its behalf. These shall include:
 - (i) Development of policies for the consideration of the ACSJC.
 - (ii) Undertaking initiatives and on-going programs.
 - (iii) Maintaining and developing relationships with Church and other agencies.
 - (iv) Collaboration where appropriate with other agencies (Catholic, other Church, and wider community based) with objectives similar or complementary to those of the ACSJC.
 - (v) Preparation of an annual operations program setting out a schedule of activities and targets against which performance can be measured.
4. The Secretariat is responsible immediately to the ACSJC and ultimately to the BCJDP for all matters, normally through the ACSJC Chair.
5. The ACSJC and its Secretariat shall be funded by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference through the BCJDP. It will submit an annual budget, report, and audited financial statements to the ACBC through the BCJDP.

Appendix C:

Relationships with Dioceses

1. The ACSJC shall provide the opportunity for collaboration with the local Churches, including maintaining close links with and arranging meetings of diocesan justice and peace organizations and representatives for the exchange of views and information.
2. The ACSJC shall advise the BCJDP on the views of the Australia-wide Catholic community on major social justice issues.
3. The ACSJC shall promote justice, development and peace in an integrated way at the Diocesan level in association with the local Bishop or those nominated by the Bishop for such work.
4. The ACSJC shall encourage and assist where possible in the running of diocesan regional seminars, conferences, lectures and workshops that increase the awareness of clergy, religious and laity of the social teaching of the Church.
5. The ACSJC shall, as far as possible, respond to the requests of local Bishops or diocesan justice and peace

representatives for particular assistance. This includes review and evaluation of particular local projects as requested and as far as possible.

Checklist for Major Public Statements by the ACSJC

This checklist presents the way in which major public statements of the ACSJC will ideally be prepared. In cases where there is an urgent need to make a timely statement, or where the statement is not deemed to be of major importance, an abbreviated version of this process will be employed.

Name the Issue

- Collect background information
- Seek advice from appropriate members of the ACSJC e.g. those with expertise re this issue and its background and/or its implications; members who lives or works in the area affected by the particular issue; members of the working party for this issue
- Seek advice from local dioceses as appropriate

Check for Existing Policy, Current Information

- In Church teaching, documents, policies, statements
- With appropriate Church bodies and agencies, including the BCJDP
- In statements from the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference

Notify Government

- Alert appropriate Government agencies and/or departments that the ACSJC is working on the issue

Prepare Draft Statement

- Seek advice from appropriate members of the ACSJC
- Discuss with ACSJC Chairman

Prepare Final Statement

- Prepare media release
- Request signature from ACSJC Chairman

Send Media Release to:

- Members of the ACBC
- National agencies of the ACBC
- Members of the ACSJC
- ACSJC Diocesan Contacts
- Catholic Media outlets
- General media outlets

Church Media officers

- If the issue is controversial and liable to evoke requests for comment and/or more information, inform Church Media Offices before sending out media release

Political Leaders

- Advise leaders of major political parties of the ACSJC's statement

Dissemination

- Issue full statements as requested

ASIA AND PACIFIC ALLIANCE OF YMCAs ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL ADVOCACY

In a historic *Asian YMCA Planning Seminar on Development* held in Chiangmai, Thailand, in 1976, we had declared that our understanding of development was one of people's participation for the transformation of society. Humankind is made in the image of God, made to be co-creators with God. Humankind will be less than God has intended it to be as long as it is oppressed and dehumanised. Therefore, a growing emphasis in the YMCA's interest in development from 1976 was underlined by self-reliance and social justice, leading to social transformation and/or some substantial restructuring of how economic and political power is distributed in society.

The YMCA has, over the past two decades, recognised and engaged in social issues and social justice. Whilst there has been growth in our work on these issues, the impact of globalisation in recent years has created the urgency to shift our work more into Social Advocacy, to work on structures and laws that will protect local communities and their rights.

We recognise the need to view Social Justice with Social Advocacy. We see the relationship between participatory democracy and alternatives for sustainable development. Policy advocacy for structural changes has also been recognised as important. In some of our National Movements, these have been actively and successfully pursued. One focus for the movement is to work together with the church on the theological basis for engagement in Social Advocacy.

In January 1997, a *Regional Consultation on YMCA Mission* was held in Tozanso, Japan to engage in a "Mission Review to reflect contemporary understanding of YMCA Mission in our context". The "Mission Imperatives" adopted are an indication of the commitment of the YMCAs in the region to pursue the Biblical vision of "the reign of God" where justice, peace and love prevail, "to work for building people's communities, and to strengthen civil society", in fulfilment of Jesus' declaration in Luke 4 : 18,19 :

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor, He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

These "Mission Imperatives" are reflected in *Challenge 21*, a declaration by the World Alliance of YMCAs, approved at the 14th World Council of YMCAs in Frechen, Germany, in July 1998, sets out our Missional Tasks, including those of engagement in Social Justice and Social Advocacy :

Affirming the *Paris Basis* adopted in 1855 as

the ongoing foundation statement of the Mission of the YMCA, at the threshold of the Third Millennium, we declare that the YMCA is a world-wide Christian, Ecumenical, Voluntary Movement for women and men with special emphasis on and the genuine involvement of young people, and that it seeks to share the Christian ideal of building a human community of justice and love, peace and reconciliation for the fullness of life for all creations.

Each member YMCA is therefore called to focus on certain challenges which will be prioritised according to its own context. These challenges which are an evolution of the *Kampala Principles* adopted in 1973, include :

- Sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ and striving for spiritual, intellectual and physical well-being of individuals and the wholeness of communities.
- Empowering all, especially young people and women to take increased responsibilities and assume leadership at all levels and working towards an equitable society.
- Advocating for and promoting the rights of women and upholding the rights of children.
- Fostering dialogue and partnership between people of different faiths and ideologies and recognising the cultural identities of people and promoting cultural renewal.
- Committing to work in solidarity with the poor, dispossessed, uprooted peoples and oppressed racial, religious and ethnic minorities.
- Seeking to be mediators and reconcilers in situations of conflict and working for meaningful participation and advancement of people for their own self-determination.
- Defending God's creation against all that would destroy it and preserving and protecting the earth's resources for coming generations.

To face these challenges, the YMCA will develop patterns of co-operation at all levels that enable self-sustenance and self-determination.

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possible”). Richard Falk in Commentary (June 2001) has suggested drafting a UN Declaration of Human Duties as an indispensable companion to the UDHR. In fact, the Charter of the Unity of African States and the American Declaration of Rights are formulated in terms of duties of states, the former exclusively and the latter embracing 27 rights and 10 duties. This is an area of social advocacy within our competence as educators.

In closing, I am still not convinced that the advocacy I read about in the preliminary papers should be our main endeavour, rather than locally-oriented initiatives. A good example from Bangladesh shows the benefits that can be gained from advocacy support groups and also illustrates the harmful effects of violent protest as against the use of peaceful means to combat injustice. Two large organised groups of landless peasants received substantial quantities of government land for cultivation. But they were prevented by the powerful and influential landowners of the area, who tried to get control of the land for themselves. The group which used non-violent means had the backing of a strong support group and even though the general secretary and prime minister of the reigning party tried to get their co-operative de-registered, ultimately the members regained the full ownership and use of their land. The group which reacted violently to defend their obvious rights was swamped by numerous court cases, which have not all been settled yet 18 full years after

the clash between the cooperative members and the large landowners. Another example is the eco-park which is planned for the northeast hilly area of Bangladesh. Up to 2000 adivasis live there, making their living by raising betel vines on the trees. They have traditional land rights, which are not recognised, but they have been paying taxes on the land as government unused land (khas). Government under its own funding is trying to make an eco-park out of it, where the environment will be preserved (by thousands of tramping feet?). At first government wanted to banish the inhabitants but after well-organised protests at the inaugural ceremony and in a prominent protest spot in Dhaka, the people are now to be allowed to live there and be on display to the tourists like animals in a zoo. Though they have not solicited outside help, a Sister in the USA has taken up their cause and has sent out a well-written background paper, requesting groups to appeal to the Bangladesh government to choose a nearby site, which is not occupied by people and where a genuine eco-park, preserving the natural environment and bio-diversity, is likely to be much more successful.

It seems to me, before hearing all the arguments of this seminar, that such kinds of localised advocacy should be the main focus of small organisations like our Bangladesh CJP, rather than participation in intricate international issues which are beyond the competence of most of our members.

Rev. Richard W. Timm, CSC

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preparations for the Consultation and the three days together showed us clearly that our way forward will have to be a task filled with mutual trust. The building of world wide web is an intricate and delicate task. It needs a process of putting people together in small environment where they feel comfortable listening to one another, their views and perspectives, their experiences and their encounters with the victims of the marginalisation and dehumanisation that they are encountering in their daily lives.

It is this process of dialogue that will lead us to a deeper analysis of the root causes of many of the global and local problems today. The Church today, really needs a *Dialysis* – a Dialogue of the Sisters and Brothers of the Lord, working for a Holistic Analysis based on the Vision of the Gospel.

Our attempts at common projects often fail to gain momentum, due to the fact that we do not fully recognise, what it means to journey together as Church and with the poor.

It was also our realisation that a www can only be sustainable, if we are deeply rooted in the spiritual and the transcendental. It is the rediscovery of the heart of the Gospel, the Gospel of Non-Violence and the heart of the compassionate Jesus that can give us the creative energy to creating genuine alternative to the current dominant norms and values of the world. We have taken the first step to work together, we have next to make the connections and alliances for greater peace and justice.

Br. Anthony Rogers, FSC

Reflection on Faith Foundations

We are glad to receive this article from Fr. Antonio Rodriguez, CSsR. We think this is very helpful for us to continue a Dialogue that will focus on certain nuances that need further discussions and clarifications.

The Editor

CALL TO RENEW FAITH FOUNDATIONS

It is absolutely necessary first to go to the basics and ask, "what does really Faith mean? For me, Faith is an ability to see the meanings of what we experience, facts, events, etc., in the light of the Revealed Knowledge. Of course by the word Revelation I understand what is or has been communicated to humans by THE OTHER. So Revelation for me is not what for example Indian Shastras appear to mean, namely, the knowledge originating in an intuition and or insight (as it is said by prathibha and or prajna). Such knowledge does not necessarily come from THE OTHER, and thus revelation is confused or also called realization. To take a simple example, we are told in the gospels that Jesus Christ joined the crowd of people who were going to John in the river Jordan for baptism. When Jesus Christ approached John to be baptized like everybody else, John recognizes him and refuses to baptize Jesus saying 'you ought to baptize me!' I ask: 'What gave John The Baptist, the meaning to find a great difference in Jesus who was among the crowd of Jews? This is what I mean by Faith 'to be able to see a meaning in persons and events in the light of the revealed knowledge'.

The basic concept of what we mean by Faith is most important, for to take some examples, the INFO, vol. 27 nos. 9-10 quotes some facts, which are given meanings that are most arbitrary. 'Israel's brutal occupation of Arab land'. Can we say it is an occupation? And can we really call it brutal? What is the meaning we see in the presence of Israel in Palestine? Does not both Jews and Muslim Palestinians hold on to Abraham as their Father? Abraham whom the land of Palestine was given and where, for years, Jews loved and prospered? Weren't they expelled from there by the Romans when Jerusalem was destroyed? Now that they are coming back to occupy the land, on what grounds can we call it 'brutal occupation'? Are we to say that since they were forcefully expelled, they have no right to come back? Or are we to say that the Jews have no right to any land? Or are we to go even further and say that the Jews have no right even to exist, as the Nazi Germany appeared to proclaim?

So how are we to solve the problem of misery, death and suicide taking place in Palestine? The obvious solution is to be found in the basics of Faith shared by both Arabs and Jews. Rabin, shortly before his death, did proclaim it publicly 'Palestinians and Jews are brothers!' There is place in Palestine for Israelis and Non-Israelis. There is a need to be filled for services of all types. Actually what Abraham's son Isaac acknowledged that the two brothers should live in unity, is what the basics of Faith proclaim. Going a little further, we find those scores of workers from Philippines and India and elsewhere are doing what Palestinians were supposed to do in peace and joy among the Jews. So Palestinians and Jews were to work together for a prosperous Palestine to lead the world in technology and development. These are some of the blessings Abraham gave to both his sons.

Then there is the other fact mentioned in the same pages (of Vol. 27) and that is 'terror' & 'terrorism'. Our media experts find it difficult to define 'terror & terrorism'. They ask what activity can or ought to be considered as 'terrorism' and so forth? But what does an analysis of what is called 'terrorism' in the light of Faith show? It shows that what is known as terror simply proceeds from HATRED, PRIDE, ENVY and TREASON'. Anyone needing a concrete example of this can examine what happened on 11 September, 2001 in the U.S.A. Individuals burning with hatred, puffed up with pride to show they can destroy the other, and not only the other but the symbol of the other's power and greatness, full of envy 'why should the other prosper and try to dominate, and treason, that is, going as friends, training as trusted students, then taking American blood of unwary passengers and destroying American symbols of their power, riches and dominance. Doesn't any one who claims to have Faith profess that these, HATRED, PRIDE, ENVY and TREASON are the negatives we ought to fight against in our own hearts first of all in order to establish a worldwide society of Love, Justice and Peace? Is there any religion, which professes and promotes those negatives?

Yet no reader ought to jump to the conclusion that obviously only the perpetrators of 11th Sept. are being classified as Terrorist. That would be very wrong. For there is no need of the presence of all four elements mentioned, any one or two of them is enough if it leads to the destruction of oneself or another. Thus Faith impels us to fight these negatives wherever these are to be found.

Since these negatives, as a matter of fact, have penetrated our civilization and cultures, from the experience of what is happening just now throughout the world, everyone is aware of one's dignity and the gift of free will make a definite choice and take up the task of promoting a new culture and a new civilization. Thus employment will have to be sought by closing arms factories and starting promotional factories. Political activity overt or covert, to promote factions and regimes like Taleban will have to be stopped. Arms and bombs should not be made available to peoples; rather implements for development ought to be made available to them. What is happening is just the opposite: developed countries set up arms factories to create jobs for their people and enrich themselves with the sales of sophisticated means of destruction, then the arms produced are loaned to poor and mostly ignorant people who make bad or wrong use of them. All these are genuine forms and types of terrorism.

Thus it is acknowledged today all over the world that at present, our life situation offers just two camps, neither the old East-West divide nor the North-South economic conglomerates, but strange combinations of Pro-Terror and Anti-Terror camps have emerged wherein one finds strange bed fellows who up to yesterday were averse to one another's company, now standing and fighting together to eliminate terrorism! And if one looks at this combination in the light of the revealed Faith, one is sure to see that the fight that is being taken up by this strange combination is indeed a fight against the negatives, HATRED, PRIDE, ENVY and TREASON! Is there any doubt about this?

No one would be able to explain exactly how these negatives took hold of so many individuals today. No one can say that poverty and oppression led them to it. The lecturer Gilani, New Delhi, who harboured and helped in planning the terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament, 13 December 2001, was neither poor nor in anyway oppressed.

He was a free Lecturer and had tons of money. So also those who ordered and paid for the destructive weapons found on the ship in the Red Sea just this month, January 2002. So also those who are spending tons of petro-dollars to produce weapons of mass destruction.

Thus the 'CALL TO RENEW FAITH FOUNDATIONS' has come at the right time. Thus viewed in the light of Faith, to classify Taleban and other terrorist forces as Radical Islam (vid. Pp. Of Info vol. 27, nos. 9-10) appears to be cheap socialist theory. For what is happening in Islam is what, given the existence of human free-will, happens in all religions: there are always some

individuals who for umpteen reasons fail to follow the tenets of one's Faith and then justify their stand by either their strict interpretation which is another name for fundamentalism specially when the interpretation is literal, or by their lax interpretation, in a word a different interpretation, of what is supposed to be their religious tenets. Human history is full of such facts showing how and when humans have misused their freewill to cause destruction to them and to others. To classify such as Radical Islam, I say is cheap socialist theory for the simple reason that we would be led to believe that Radical Islam promotes HATRED, PRIDE, ENVY and TREASON. In the same way to talk about 'American Hegemony' and to attribute the death of innocent children in Iraq to it, would equally be wrong. Has the U.S.A. forced itself into any country? What is the meaning of Hegemony? Weren't they asked for help? The children die in Iraq for lack of medicine but were sanctions forced arbitrarily?

In an Inter-Religious Dialogue and those participating in it, if they belong to a religion at all, then it is obvious, everyone of them believes in THE SUPREME REALITY whether known as ALLAH, YAHWEH, PARAMISHWAR or BRAHMAN, the Lord of the Universe. The Supreme Reality is THE OTHER that it belongs to a field of being beyond our human field. So what we call The Supreme Reality are our words or the words of the founders of these religions. And when we come to know the tenets of a given religion human beings endowed with freewill must make a choice to follow those tenets. Needless to stress that human beings, no matter how loudly they shout out whatever names they give to the Supreme Reality, often fail to be faithful to those tenets and if such individuals do not acknowledge their failure they are likely to justify their choice.

Thus our socio-political and economic analysis got to be solid and not superficial and cheap. If we really and sincerely take up the call to renew our Faith foundations, we got to acknowledge that there is place for the change of heart, to give up the wrong choice and to make the right choice afresh.

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