

SECTION IV:  
INTRA-RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATIONS AND  
CHANGES WITHIN RNGOs



# Development as Transformation: Tearfund and the New Evangelical Approach to Holistic Change

## Introduction

In much of the writing about religion and development there is an underlying assumption that religious development NGOs, or faith-based organisations, FBOs, do development differently. This is found particularly in the debates about whether or not FBOs are more effective in carrying out development interventions, and thus should or should not be preferential partners for international donors (eg. Clarke 2006; Leurs 2012; Lunn 2009; Tomalin 2012). This paper seeks to challenge the assumption that FBOs *necessarily* do development differently from secular actors and suggests that in many cases they are simply religious actors carrying out much the same interventions as their secular counterparts. In the few cases where religion actually does make a difference to the way that FBOs carry out development work, this has generally been the result of a long period of internal learning and discussion and an explicit and conscious desire to bring a religious approach into their otherwise quite secular work. This paper tells the story of one such process and looks at how Tearfund, a leading evangelical development NGO and one of the ten largest development NGOs in the UK today, moved from carrying out development projects much like everyone else to developing their own distinctively Christian approach to development. Whilst this process led to a major change in the way that Tearfund carried out its development interventions, I argue that it is still unclear how much this new approach is really different from that of various secular development actors.

The chapter starts with a look at the origins and early workings of Tearfund in the 1960s and 1970s and shows how its work at this time was overwhelmingly secular in nature. It then discusses how staff at Tearfund, and at other evangelical development agencies, came to see this as a problem, and then traces the evolution of a solution to this problem, namely the genesis of a new evangelical theology of development. This new theology, known variously as integral mission or transformational development, outlines a distinctive evangelical approach to development and seeks to combine

material development with spiritual development into a holistic model of good change. The paper then explores how seeking to implement integral mission in its work with beneficiaries in the South has led Tearfund to massively change the way in which it works. Nonetheless, it remains unclear whether their new way of working is as distinctively Christian as they believe.<sup>1</sup>

## The Formation and Early Workings of Tearfund

Tearfund was originally established as a committee within the UK's Evangelical Alliance in 1968.<sup>2</sup> In the years before that British Evangelical Christians had started sending sums of money to the Evangelical Alliance and asking them to do something to help with the famines and refugees crises that they were beginning to hear about on TV (Hollow 2008: 21). The Evangelical Alliance started making small grants to missionary organisations working overseas and eventually set up a separate committee the Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund Committee to manage the process. As the number of donations and grants began to grow it was decided to incorporate the fund as a separate charity and in 1973 TEAR Fund (The Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund) was officially registered in the UK.<sup>3</sup>

Tearfund shifted away from working with missionaries quite quickly and began to work more with indigenous church organisations from the mid-1970s onwards<sup>4</sup>. At this time many indigenous churches were setting up development wings and Tearfund started to give them grants to carry out relief and development projects. In many cases it was grants from Tearfund, and from other evangelical development agencies from different

- 1 Research for this paper is based on in-depth interviews with staff from Tearfund and the Micah Network carried out between September 2015 and November 2016, analysis of published and unpublished documents from Tearfund and the Micah Network, and a review of relevant evangelical and academic literature.
- 2 In later years similar Tear or Tearfund organisations were set up by Evangelical Alliances in other countries, such as Australia (1971), New Zealand (1973), the Netherlands (1973), Belgium (1979) and Switzerland (1984). Unless otherwise stated this paper refers only to the work of Tearfund UK.
- 3 In the early days there was a lot of inconsistency as to the correct spelling and the organisation was variously referred to as TEAR Fund or Tear Fund. In 1998 it became Tearfund. I will use this term throughout this paper.
- 4 Tearfund also partners with local Christian NGOs, particularly in countries where Christians are a minority and there are no strong local church denominations.

countries, that led to the establishment of these development wings in the first place (Hollow 2008: 95–6).

During this period Tearfund funded these organisations to carry out projects very similar to those being carried out by secular development agencies. In the 1970s they mainly focussed on relief work, for example providing emergency food and seeds to drought-stricken communities in Ethiopia, or rebuilding houses that were destroyed by the Andra Pradesh cyclone in India. From the 1980s onwards they moved more into longer term development projects and for the most part they bought into the mainstream development thinking of the time that wealth transfer and improved technology would lead to development. Many of their projects consisted of agricultural schemes and public health programmes: they shipped out tractors, constructed large dams and built and staffed hospitals and clinics (Hollow 2008: 104, 112). All this was very much the same as what many secular NGOs were doing.

During this period evangelical development agencies such as Tearfund approached material change and spiritual change as largely separate matters, and they focused almost exclusively on the material side of things. There was as yet no specific theory of Christian development, or theology of evangelical social engagement, and thus Tearfund and the other evangelical development agencies mainly did the same type of projects as secular development agencies. Whilst there was a desire for evangelism to be a part of their development work, there was no clear approach for how this should be done. For the most part it was assumed that if evangelical missionaries or church leaders carried out development work, then surely they would evangelise while they did so. Thus evangelical development organisations generally focused on the material side of things, while assuming that evangelism would somehow be taking place alongside this work. Over the years many people began to find this approach to be rather problematic and different views emerged about whether and how spiritual development should be integrated with material development, or how evangelism should be combined with material improvement. One view held that development was ‘good works’ and a form of compassionate service that was a key part of Christian responsibility. In this view the one and only purpose of development work was to alleviate the poverty and suffering of others out of love. Another view was more instrumentalist and held that development was a means to an end, and that the final end was conversion. Tearfund supporters often asked if the development projects were leading to conversions, and a number of stories from Tear Times, Tearfund’s supporter mag-

azine, indeed told stories of beneficiaries who had found Jesus as a result of specific development projects (Hollow 2008:192).

There was a commonly used metaphor around this time of scissors, where one blade represented evangelism and the other social action, and both were necessary to help people (Hollow 2008: 191). Stephen Rand, who worked with Tearfund from 1979 to 2004 remembers it like this:

“There were varying degrees of integration and separation. In some cases Tearfund was working with Christian NGOs that were specifically social action organisations, so they were doing the relief work while another part of their denomination was doing the evangelism. I think there were some people who would even have argued that if Tearfund was supporting a development project in a country and there were Christians doing ‘spiritual’ work elsewhere in the same country, that was still integral because the ‘two blades of the scissors’ were seen on a national basis rather than on an individual project basis. What seemed to be missing was the idea that Christians would do relief and development work in a distinctively different way than non-Christian organisations.” (Stephen Rand, quoted in Hollow 2008: 197)

## **Development as Transformation: The Theology of Integral Mission**

During the 1980s and 1990s theoretical and theological discussions about what a distinctly Christian approach to development would look like, and about how the spiritual and the material could be brought closer together, began to take place in international Evangelical conferences and consultations. Starting in the early 1980s there was a growing concern among a wide range of evangelical development NGOs that Christian development looked remarkably similar to secular development. Between 1980–1983 the World Evangelical Fellowship convened a consultation on a theology of development. This consultation culminated in the statement released at the Wheaton Consultation in 1983, which set out a specifically Christian approach to development which built on the concept of ‘*mision integral*’ developed by René Padilla and other Latin American Evangelical theologians some decades earlier (Carpenter 2014; Clawson 2012; Padilla 2002). Crucially, the participants chose to move away from the term ‘development’, with its connotations of modernity, materiality and sole focus on economic growth, and instead adopted the term ‘transformation’. The Wheaton statement describes transformation in the following way:

“Transformation is the change from a condition of human existence contrary to God’s purpose to one in which people are able to enjoy fullness of life in harmony with God. This transformation can only take place through the obedience of individuals and communities to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, whose power changes the lives of men and women by releasing them from the guilt, power, and consequences

of sin, enabling them to respond with love toward God and toward others (...). The goal of transformation is best described by the biblical vision of the Kingdom of God.” (World Evangelical Fellowship 1983)

The statement goes on to talk about different aspects of transformation, and claims that to move towards living under God’s reign requires not just the spiritual transformation of individuals, but also the transformation of economies, cultures and socio-political systems. It presents a vision of holistic change leading in the direction of the Kingdom of God. Unlike ‘development’, it is seen as something needed not only by poor countries, but also by rich countries, which also need to be transformed in various respects. Thus ‘transformation’ can be seen as a biblical type of holistic change that is applicable everywhere.

The ‘development as transformation’ or ‘mission as transformation’ movement grew in the 1980s and began to achieve greater prominence in the evangelical world. New institutions and journals were set up to develop the theology and spread it more widely.<sup>5</sup> As theorists and practitioners grappled with the idea various labels emerged, including ‘holistic mission’, ‘integral mission’, ‘wholistic development’, and ‘transformational development’. In 2001 an international network of Evangelical relief and development agencies was formed with the express aim of promoting the vision and practice of integral mission. This network, known as the Micah Network, now has well over 500 members organisations and has national networks in over 80 countries, all working to spread the idea of integral mission and to make it more mainstream.

Integral mission is a theology of Christian engagement with the world. At its core is the notion that there should be no division between belief and practice and that therefore Christians should engage with the world *as Christians*, all the time, in their families, in their workplaces, and in their politics. In the theology of integral mission, religion, or spirituality is not a private matter to be kept separate from other aspects of life. Rather it is something that should infuse and permeate all aspects of life. Being a Christian is something that you should do fulltime, not just in church on Sundays.

The worldview underlying integral mission theology is based on the doctrines of creation, fall and redemption. In this view God created the world and created people to live together in harmony, to be stewards of the earth

5 The Oxford Centre for Mission Studies was particularly important in developing theological backing for integral mission. It ran a number of courses and trainings and in 1984 it created a publishing arm that produced the quarterly journal *Transformation* which focused on issues relating to integral mission (Tizon 2008: 78).

and to share its resources equitably. However the fall was brought about by the work of the devil and people's innate tendency to self-interest. It led to human existence becoming corrupted and bent away from God's intentions. From an integral mission viewpoint this includes social sin and corruption as well as individual sin and corruption. Economic systems, political systems, cultures, society, all became infused with evil and twisted away from the way that God intended. This, then, is viewed as the fundamental cause of poverty and injustice. God's intention, however, is understood to be redemption. In the theology of integral mission, redemption is not solely a personal, private affair, but it also social and worldly. Redemption is for all of creation. A central facet of redemption, in this understanding, is bringing about the Kingdom of God, in which there will be harmony, peace and justice.

There are deep theological arguments amongst evangelicals as to when and where the Kingdom will be, in particular whether it is a present spiritual reality or a future earthly reality. Followers of integral mission draw on the Kingdom theology developed in the 1950s by George Eldon Ladd, Professor of Biblical Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary. In his view, the Kingdom is not a special realm, but it is the reign of God. This reign has already been inaugurated, by Jesus Christ, but will only be completed on his return. Thus the Kingdom is "already/not yet" (Ladd 1959). Whilst acknowledging that full redemption, and hence the ultimate resolution of earthly problems, such as poverty and injustice, will only come about when Jesus returns, integral mission theology argues that it is still important to work towards them and thus 'draw in' the Kingdom to the present. This theology is prominent across the whole integral mission movement. It is outlined in the Wheaton statement, elaborated on in books and articles, and discussed in Micah meetings and in interviews with the researcher. And it also forms part of Tearfund's Statement of Faith.

Living with the tension between 'already/not yet' is thus a key part of the integral mission experience, knowing that salvation can only come later, but nonetheless striving to pull it in and to get a foretaste of the Kingdom now. The former head of the Micah Network in Australia described it this way in a Micah video:

"We are looking to a new future, standing in that place of hope, and then living the reality of that hope, that promise that we have from our great God, and living that reality back into the present."



Kingdom theology re-orientes beliefs about redemption from the individual to also include the social, and calls evangelicals to look at the world around them and to be involved in its betterment. It is a radically different view to the mainstream premillennial dispensationalist theology that is predominant in many conservative evangelical circles. And it has radically different implications regarding the value of social action in the world. From the viewpoint of premillennial dispensationalism, it is understood that the fallen world will only get more and more depraved until Jesus comes back to bring a spiritual redemption for the saved. For these Evangelicals, still the majority, redemption is thus a personal matter and the focus of action in the world should be only to save souls so that they too get to participate in the ultimate redemption. Trying to improve life in the world, from the dispensationalist perspective, is both pointless and futile. Integral mission thus offers a radically different perspective.

What does the Kingdom of God look like? Many integral mission theorists talk about the nature of the Kingdom of God as ‘shalom’, the biblical word for peace, which also has connotations of fullness and completeness. Tearfund puts it this way on its website:

“Genesis 1 gives us a glimpse of what the Kingdom of God should look like. In Hebrew there is a word that sums this up, it is ‘Shalom’. Humans flourishing as part of God’s creation, in relationship with God, creation, others and themselves.”<sup>6</sup>

Moving towards God’s Kingdom requires bringing about transformation at all levels and in all matters, individual and social, spiritual and material. It requires transforming individuals, communities, societies and cultures. And it requires bringing about peace, sharing resources, having people participate in the decisions that affect them, and coming to know Christ (World Evangelical Fellowship 1983). This transformation is thus holistic, or integral.

Transforming communities is central. A key element of this is seen as ‘restoring relationships’. Since local churches are seen as the basic unit of Christian society, and they are located within communities, it follows to integral mission thinkers that the local church that should be the agent of holistic community transformation.

“Holistic mission is fundamentally about restoring relationships - with oneself, with others, with God, and with creation. Indeed, broken relationships are at the root of poverty, for poverty is the result of a social and structural legacy of broken relation-

6 [http://www.tearfund.org/en/about\\_you/go\\_overseas/the\\_journey/journey\\_resources/pre-departure\\_training/what\\_is\\_poverty?sc\\_lang=en](http://www.tearfund.org/en/about_you/go_overseas/the_journey/journey_resources/pre-departure_training/what_is_poverty?sc_lang=en). 18.09.2024, 18:52:53

ships with God, damaged understanding of self, unjust relationships between people and exploitative relationships with the environment. The local church is at the heart of transforming these relationships.” (Raistrick 2010: 138)

In this worldview evangelism and social action, or in more traditional Evangelical language, ‘proclamation and demonstration’ should not simply be combined, but it should be realized that they are actually part and parcel of the same thing. The Micah Declaration on Integral Mission states it thus:

“Integral mission or holistic transformation is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ.” (Micah Declaration 2001)

In this approach there are many other dualisms that should be similarly collapsed: individual/society, sacred/secular, being/doing, and so on. Some of its leading promoters explicitly frame it as a kind of recovery from modernity and the supposedly false dualisms that came into Western culture after the enlightenment (Myers 1999: 4–11). Integral mission seeks to collapse these dualisms and to ‘heal’ this separation. It thus is, or seeks to be, thoroughly non-modern. The International Director of the Micah Network explained it to me like this:

“We do good works because we love, that is the agenda, and in so loving the whole gospel is shared. Because not only do we meet their needs, but we tell them about the Good News that Jesus has come to continually bring them to life in all its fullness. So it’s not one or the other, it’s both working hand in hand. I don’t sit there thinking ‘I must first do the good works and then I can do the proclamation’. I must just live life. So integral mission is not a project, it is a choice of a lifestyle. I do good and I fight for justice because that’s God’s character.”

## Integral Mission for Development Agencies

Through the 1990s the ideas and concepts of integral mission became broadly accepted by many of the larger evangelical aid agencies. The question then became what it might actually look like to implement integral mission in practice. In the mid-1990s Tearfund established a team of theologians and development professionals to develop a clear theological understanding of what would make its work specifically Christian and distinctive. In 1996 this group launched Tearfund’s ‘Operating Principles’, which set out its understanding of a distinctively Christian understanding of poverty and development, (Coey 1998, following the appointment of René

Padilla as Tearfund's International President, they decided to adopt the language of integral mission.

In what follows I will consider how a desire to embrace integral mission and to move beyond the separation of the spiritual and the material has radically changed the way that Tearfund tries to work with some of its partners in the South<sup>7</sup>. The goal of Christian development is to help individuals and communities transform towards a state of 'shalom' by healing broken relationships between people, God and the environment. Therefore part of Tearfund's re-focusing has been to emphasise the importance of relationships, and this is now stated in its Operating Principles:

"A desire for good relationships is woven into all our activities. We are not isolated individuals, but persons in relationships, designed to live interdependently in communities and in the wider world. Therefore a constant question for us is, how does what we are doing affect relationships?" (Tearfund 1996: 6)

Tearfund spent many years discussing and debating how to implement this approach in the on-the-ground work of their partners. They finally decided that the best way to do this was to try to shift from funding church development wings and other Christian development agencies to implement projects, and instead to get them to facilitate local churches to be the main agent of transformation (Tearfund 2009; Raistrick 2010). In their vision the local church, a religious organisation embedded in the community, should be empowered to be the main agent of transformation. Tearfund's Operating Principles state it this way:

"The New Testament gives little explicit teaching on either evangelistic or developmental methods. Instead it calls upon the church to be a caring, inclusive and distinctive community of reconciliation reaching out in love to the world. When we see the church in this way there is no opposition between evangelism and social action." (Tearfund 1996: 8)

7 Tearfund has of course changed the way that it works with partners in the South many times in the last 50 years and I do not trace all of these changes here. For the most part these previous changes were in step with changes in mainstream development thinking, for example the shift from top-down development interventions to 'small is beautiful' community projects and then to a participatory approach. Tearfund has also embraced child sponsorship and then later rejected it, engaged in fair trade and then moved away from it, as well as numerous other operational changes. What is different about the change that I discuss in this paper is that it was brought about by an explicit desire to integrate religion into the development process.

In Tearfund's view, working with the local church would help to collapse the boundary between evangelism and social action, because when the local church, already an institution of evangelism, adds social action into its repertoire this results in a single institution doing both spiritual outreach and also material development. This, from the viewpoint of Tearfund, is an important step towards bringing these two elements closer together to result in transformation. A long time Tearfund staff member explained it to me in this way:

"At Tearfund we always work through the church. There were people who imagined that the only reason that we worked through the church was for convenience or for reasons of financial probity, and those were relevant factors. (...) But, and I used to stress this in the leadership team meetings, the main reason we worked with the church is that we were working with people who can share their faith."

Tearfund has tried to flesh out what doing transformation with the local church means in practice. In the early 2000s they developed a process generally known as Church and Community Mobilisation (CCM), which is now widely used by Tearfund partners and also by other Christian organisations, such as the members of the Micah Network and other development and missionary organisations. CCM seeks to empower churches to be the agents of transformation in their communities. A Tearfund staff member described its aim in the following way:

"The vision is of an army of ordinary people; grassroots members in their millions, equipped and empowered to bring local transformation to their streets and workplaces. The world can be redeemed by small local action in every neighbourhood of the planet. The powerless, who sit at the back of our congregations by their millions, are our capacity for this dream to come true. If we can envision and empower the 99 % in our members who we have taught to be passive consumers of privatised religion, the church will become the most powerful agent for transformation the world has ever seen." (Izsatt 2003: 1)

CCM has five basic steps. The first step is to 'envision the church'. Envisioning is defined as a process of passing on a vision to others. In this case, the vision is of integral mission, and more specifically that the church should be involved in social action as well as Evangelism. Thus the first step of CCM is spreading the vision of integral mission to local churches in the South. According to a Tearfund Guide about CCM called *Partnering with the Local Church*:

“Most churches have yet to consider the need for integral mission, and those that understand it may lack the confidence to carry it out. In order for relationships with local churches to be worthwhile, Christian organisations may therefore need to envision them.” (Blackman 2007: 64)

The envisioning process can include discussions with church leaders, training sessions and group bible study. It is then necessary to equip the church with some new skills and approaches, and this can include trainings on facilitation, teamwork, needs assessments and so on. Churches are encouraged to think about the community and its needs and how it might be transformed. In its ideal manifestation this is deeply religious work. The International Director of the Micah Network explained it to me like this:

[We would ask] “what is the theology? How does God think about this community? What’s your perspective?” So it takes people on a journey in that world view, in that context. ‘What does God say?’ It teaches people to see that community through the lens of God’s missionary heart for them. And then it says ‘well, what are our gifts and skills?’ I might be able to paint, you may be able to play the piano. We look for practical as well as spiritual gifts. Then we say ‘right, what are the community’s needs? (...) But we’re not just saying ‘what are their physical needs? We are also asking about their spiritual journey as well.’”

The second step involves the church seeking to envision the community. Here the vision is not so much one of integral mission as such, but it is rather about getting people to think that they can work together for the betterment of their own community. Church leaders are invited to meet with community leaders and to arrange a big community meeting. During this and subsequent meetings the church facilitator will lead community members through a process of identifying their needs, analyzing local issues and making lists of local resources. A variety of participatory methodologies are used to collect the relevant information and for the community to analyse the situation.

The third step involves imagining possible futures, defining goals and making plans. Community members are taken through more participatory processes to imagine what changes they could make, themselves, which would improve their lives. They are then invited to make a plan of action, allocate responsibilities, and collect resources.

In the fourth step they then carry out the chosen action, and in the fifth and final step they meet back together and evaluate how the process went and how satisfactory the outcome is. The idea is that they will then repeat this cycle again and again such that communal social action becomes an integral part of church and community life (Blackman 2007; Carter 2003;

Tearfund nd).<sup>8</sup> This is clearly a very different style of doing development from Tearfund's earlier model, and since the late 1990s Tearfund has massively changed the way that it works with its partners in the South. By 2015 Tearfund claims to have mobilized some 97,000 local churches across the world through its CCM process (Tearfund 2015: 3).

Church denominations in many of the countries where Tearfund works have started to go through trainings and workshops to reorient them towards an integral mission approach and train them in CCM. In Nigeria, for example, workshops on the new approach of integral mission have been held for the leaders of several of the development wings of Tearfund's partner denominations, including the Church of Christ in Nigeria, the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria and the Evangelical Church of West Africa. And a series of practical trainings on CCM were given to staff over a period of several years (Musa nd.). In Ethiopia Tearfund's largest partner, the Kale Heywet Church Development Program, has been through a large organizational change program in order to embed the integral mission approach into its way of working. A national change team was set up and a huge training program was implemented, starting with the senior leadership and then cascaded through the whole organization right down to local church level (Blackman 2007: 51; Izatt 2003: 3; Yakob 2001). Other African denominations trained in CCM include the Anglican Church of Tanzania, the Pentecostal Assemblies of God, Uganda and the Living Waters Church, Malawi, amongst many others. They have all started to change the way that they do development by moving away from large-scale projects and seeking more to facilitate local churches to carry out their own community development initiatives.

So what is the impact of this new approach? In many respects it is too early to say. In Nigeria a few churches have started income generating projects and cooperatives, others have set up community water projects and some have set up adult literacy classes (Musa nd: 3–4). In Ethiopia some local churches have started small community projects, such as fattening sheep and goats, and producing and selling cash crops like coffee, sugar, onions and mango (Izatt 2003: 5–8). In Kenya some churches have facilitated the community to build earth dams and to take up bee-keeping

8 Despite this holistic view, where integral mission is seen as part of the natural life of the church, in practice aid agency involvement can still turn it into a project, and thus lead again to the separation between the church's spiritual work and its physical work. This risk is noted again and again by integral mission theorists and came up in several interviews.

(Hollow 2008: 125). In Tanzania and Uganda households involved in CCM projects have started to grow a wider variety of crops, including more food for the market, and tend to seek expert agricultural advice more often (Scott et al 2014; Tearfund 2014: 4). At first blush none of this seems particularly innovative. Similar community level income generating projects can be found in the work of many secular development NGOs, who have also moved to supporting small-scale entrepreneurial activity, cooperatives and micro-projects since the early 2000s.

According to Tearfund, however, one of the most striking impacts of this new approach has been in strengthening community relationships. By going through the process of CCM many villagers reportedly say that their sense of unity and of trust and togetherness has increased. An evaluation of Tearfund's CCM work in Zimbabwe found that an increase in social connectedness was the greatest impact (Tearfund 2016: 15), and an independent review of CCM in Tanzania found that communities felt empowered by the process and that people's "sense of belief in themselves and in others within the community" was enhanced (Scott et al. 2014: 19). There are also reports of growth in church membership and improvements in church attendance (Musa nd: 3; Scott et al. 2014: 17). Only detailed ethnographic research will show what exactly is happening in the communities and in the churches that are engaging in CCM. At the present it is impossible to say whether or not having the local church instigate and run these community projects makes a significant difference in how they play out in people's lives.

## Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the way that Tearfund, a leading evangelical development NGO, has sought to integrate religion into its work and to develop a distinctively Christian approach to development. It has traced this process from the 1970s to the present day and has shown how Tearfund has grappled with this issue, expended considerable time and effort reflecting on it, and ultimately tried to massively change the way that it works in order to try to put Christianity at the heart of what it does, and to bring together material and spiritual development.

Following its embracing of the concept of integral mission, Tearfund started to move away from carrying out development projects through the development wings of large denominations and towards training these denominations to facilitate local churches, at village level, to plan and carry out their own community development initiatives. This represents a signifi-

cant change in the operational work of Tearfund and its partners. And it represents a major change in the experience of 'development' for many of their beneficiary villagers in the global South.

But while the impetus to shift to this new form of development intervention was a desire to develop a distinctively Christian approach to development, it is unclear how different this new approach is from that of various secular development NGOs. In the past years many secular development NGOs have also started to carry out small-scale, market-based, self-empowerment projects in local communities. Many secular NGOs work with poor people to set up various kinds of saving and lending groups, to stimulate small-scale entrepreneurial activity and to organise cooperatives. The main difference in the Tearfund approach is that it is the local church, in the village, that is organising these micro-scale projects. To ascertain the implications of this difference in the ways that the development initiatives play out in local communities and are experienced by Christian and non-Christian villagers will require detailed ethnographic research at the community level.

But what is clear is that the integration of religion and development in the work of religious development NGOs is far from straightforward. The distinctiveness of religious NGOs is most certainly not something that can be assumed. Not all religious NGOs have grappled with these issues to the extent that Tearfund has, and many continue to operate in much the same way as secular development NGOs. Their faith may provide the motivation for their work, but it does not shape its design or implementation. Other religious NGOs may have reflected on the issue of how to integrate religion and development in their work and come to other conclusions and changed their practice in different ways. Thus it is not useful to generalise about the special efficacy or otherwise of religious NGOs in general, but rather it is necessary to take a case by case approach and to examine in detail how and whether particular religious development NGOs seek to embed their faith in their development activities and how this influences the impact of their work.

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