



An Introduction to Development

Written by Colin Scott, Director of Churches of Christ Overseas Aid (COCOA), the Relief and Development programme of Global Mission Partners (GMP). First published in GMP's *In Partnership* Newsletter.



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Bright Solutions, Vietnam is developing this woman's livelihood, encouraging her self-esteem and growing her capacity towards economic independence where debt no longer monopolises her life

Introduction to Development

Having just looked at the nature of poverty, we now embark on a series about development as a response to poverty. Development aims to change a community's choices in an enduring way. It is a pretty tall order aiming to make a change in someone else's life that might continue after the end of a project. Yet this is what we have seen God do in our own lifetimes in bringing new churches into being (in Zimbabwe, South Sudan and Vanuatu, for example). God is interested in changing the physical and social circumstances of people, as well as their spiritual state. In the end you can't really divide a person up and love their soul without loving the rest of them. Jesus makes this point in a powerful way:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." (Luke 4:18-19)

First of all we see that Jesus picks the materially and socially deprived as the target for the good news. Then we read later on:

"Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, lepers are healed and the deaf are cured,

the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor." (Luke 7:22)

These actions are to confirm to John the Baptist that Jesus is the one for whom they have been waiting. These very practical changes are part of the mission of God and God's people. So how do we get involved in the day-to-day miracle of God changing someone's life through development? Development is not the only method God uses, but it's the only one we will cover in this article. Mindset is the first step. The goal is to take a person or a community a step closer to the fullness of life that God intends for all people (John 10:10). It is not just about keeping them alive or in the same place where they are. Change is fundamental. It is also not about doing something for or to someone. I recall a pair of recovering drug users talking about the pressure they felt to stay clean. There were a whole lot of people who would be disappointed if they went backwards. They had realised that others had created an environment where they could change, but their continued participation and commitment was still critical to sustaining that change. Development is the same. If we think that a project on its own will guarantee a change in a community, then it is probably not a development project. Participation

is fundamental. Development works with communities, allowing them to set the goals and not butting in to do things they can do for themselves. The story is told about a certain government that bought two beautiful fishing boats, which had the potential to increase the fishing capacity of a community enormously over the canoes that they were currently using. The community, however, hadn't wanted the boats and so they sat on the shore and gradually deteriorated.

While on one hand the goals of development seem obvious: better food, better education, better health, we have to remember that it is other people's lives we are dealing with. We must prioritise their goals, not what we think is best for them. It was heartening when we received feedback from our recent Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade review that "You really know your partners", and "I am amazed at your humanity". I think this was their way of saying that we really respected and cared about the people we are working with. For us, this is the most fundamental first step in development, indeed in any missional endeavor in the name of the Living God. I don't think I need to give you a Bible verse to demonstrate that.

Colin Scott,
COCOA Director



Paulino with Butros the School Chaplain

Empowerment

Empowerment is a process whereby individuals and groups become stronger and more confident in controlling or exerting influence over the issues that matter to them. Empowerment means enabling and moving with individuals and groups from inability to ability, dependence to interdependence, and from irresponsibility to responsibility. When my daughter was small, I remember standing in the bank queue with her. There was plenty of time so when she tried to connect the plastic chain back onto the post, I didn't help her at all. It was a long wait in the queue and, after many failed attempts, she worked it out. Another person in the queue praised me for giving my daughter a learning experience and not jumping in to do it for her.

Empowerment means giving away power. Getting the job done is less important than changing people. In fact, thinking we have all the answers is the first step to disempowerment. If I had fixed the plastic chain, it would have been done more quickly, but my daughter would not have the sense of conquest that was motivating her to keep trying. The most wonderful thing is when people realise they have the power to make changes. Over the last two years we have introduced the idea of a community based organisation for the Churches of Christ in South Sudan. This year

the organisation was registered. Paulino Malou, our project director, has grown with the realisation that this new organisation can do things to help people. The project proposals have been coming thick and fast, and he has been out talking with the government and community members to get things started. I have found joy in seeing my daughter and Paulino succeed. We all need to look for that joy, rather than the joy of succeeding ourselves.

Empowerment means valuing the local way of doing things. GMP's values statement says this: "We seek to empower partners by respecting their cultural presentation of the Gospel and to work with them in enterprises that strengthen local leadership, and that encourage growth, maturity and independence of local churches." If you look at the history of powerful people working with powerless people, you will most often see paternalism. Notice here that our goal is to work with people, and also that empowerment is equally relevant in discipleship, as in development. In The Master Plan for Evangelism, Robert E. Coleman says: "Empowerment was Jesus' whole method". In terms of doing things the local way, food and clothing are generally obvious, but finding the different ways that different cultures relate and work together is where things can really take off.

Empowerment means looking for strengths in the community. When we think about engaging with poor communities, the most obvious thing is what they lack – right? Health, education, water, income, and human rights are all less than adequate. On top of this the poor often feel weak and inadequate. We will, however, only make things worse by focusing on the lack of resources in the community, and jumping in to solve problems ourselves only reinforces this. As soon as you go overseas, however, you see strengths that we lack in Australia, such as thinking and working together as a community and seeing old and young working together to care for family. These are some great strengths to start building on. The story is told of a park with graffiti all over the toilet block, which was a magnet for drug use. One community group saw the desperation of the situation and proposed security lighting, fencing and time locks on the toilets. Another community group saw the talent and proposed art workshops and murals and a community art show. A key to empowerment at GMP is that we look to our partners to take the initiative in proposing projects. This means we begin with their ideas – the best place to start!

Colin Scott,
COCOA Director



Participation

Last month we looked at empowerment – the process whereby people become more able to exert influence over the issues that matter to them. This month we look at the key strategy to foster empowerment in development – participation. Stages of participation in a development project can be described as:

Participation at the beginning – hearing the ideas of a variety of local people and working together on how they can be incorporated.

Participation in the middle – local people fulfilling whatever roles they can in implementing the project, with outsiders teaching locals how to do the less familiar roles.

Participation at the end – handing the continuing work over to local people after giving them the tools to carry it forward.

There are three important reasons behind encouraging participation. The first one is effectiveness. If people are involved they are more likely to get behind the project and make it work well. The Bongibot agriculture project in South Sudan is a good example of this. The project set up local committees in each of four locations to manage the local plot. Hearing these groups talk about what they were doing, I could see that the idea now had a life of its own. The second reason is skills transfer. We could probably

write a suitable child protection policy ourselves, but we insist that our partners do it. This means that they engage with the issues of child protection and they think about how this can be done in their own unique situation, and they get better at writing policies for themselves. The third reason is ownership – in the sense of the right to say what happens to you and your community.

COCOA, like every development organisation, aims to do the best for the communities that we work in but, ultimately, we are not part of those communities. Our lives are not directly affected by the projects that we support. It is only right that the people who are most affected have the most say. When HumeRidge Church in Toowoomba agreed to rehabilitate the road through a key part of the Middle Ramu in PNG, they were getting on board with the community's idea. The Melanesian Evangelical Churches of Christ (MECOC) had met and developed a strategic plan. The thing that they kept coming back to was that access to many communities was so difficult because of the condition of the road. When HumeRidge took on the job, it was important to reengage people and ensure this was something they wanted enough to be part of the ongoing process. To do this, MECOC organised a community meeting, hosted by Gandep Bible College. Prior to this meeting, the Gandep students were

out mowing the grass, cleaning the grounds and erecting a shelter for the meeting. People gathered from the communities along the road, some travelling for a day to get there and staying overnight at the college. There were speeches by MECOC leadership, HumeRidge and COCOA, explaining the proposal. Then there was lots of time to ask questions.

People sat under the shelter, under the buildings, or under a tree, wherever they could find some shade. After question time, each community leader met with their community to discuss two questions:

1. Do you want the project to go ahead?
2. If you do, how will you contribute to it?

The groups then came back together and the leaders gave their answers. It was exciting to hear the “yesses” – it was unanimous! But it was even more exciting to hear people offering to contribute freely: trees that may need to be knocked down, food for the work teams, and gravel from the river – a rare commodity which the HumeRidge team were stumped on up to that point! It was a great beginning of participation.

Colin Scott,
COCOA Director



Mrs Vimbai Vuma, director of KCV, Zimbabwe, at one corner of the KCV farm with the clearing behind her for the new fence, which will improve the security of cattle at the farm.

Sustainability

A welfare project is one that requires outside support indefinitely. A development project, by contrast, aims to finish at some point but have an ongoing impact. It is a tall order to change a situation so that things get better and stay that way after you leave. Often the situations that we find ourselves in are where governments don't have the resources to provide basic services, and many changes need to happen before this situation can be turned around. Often we are aiming to increase sustainability rather than achieve it.

When designing a project we ask these questions:

1. How does the project increase the self-reliance of the participants?
2. When and how will support be withdrawn from the project?
3. In what form will the project continue after support has been withdrawn?
4. How will the project change the natural environment?
5. What will be done to make this change as positive as possible?

The first question asks about what enduring change the project aims to make in the participants. Will people gain a new skill or knowledge that they didn't have, or will they have access to rights or resources

that they didn't have before? The fifteen midwives who graduated in Aweil last year, for example, now have a career that can sustain them personally, and at the same time improve the quality of the health system in South Sudan.

On an organisational and managerial level we give attention to training for key staff and boards, and to local income generation. This means that organisations have more of the skills and resources needed to be an agent of change for their communities. The current organisational strengthening project at Ashwood Hospital in India, for example, is working with hospital staff to improve a number of policies and explore opportunities for fundraising. This contributes to building a more efficient organisation that has a broader base of financial support. This 'behind the scenes' stuff is essential for making their face-to-face work with HIV positive people and other vulnerable groups effective.

The second question focuses on economic sustainability. We have a number of initiatives in this category. Some are organisational income generation activities. At KCV in Zimbabwe, we are investing into the farm so that it not only supplies food for the residents, but also produces enough to sell to support the other costs of running the program for vulnerable children. In Bangladesh, the Bandarban Hills Churches of

Christ (BHCOC) are also developing a farm. This will support the work of the hostels, giving children access to good education. On a household level, the Bongibot project and future projects in South Sudan will invest in agricultural training and resources so that people get a better return for their work, and are better able to support themselves and their families.

The third question focuses on environmental sustainability. Ultimately the earth that God has given us provides the basic resources for our prosperity. It needs to be looked after. This applies to us in Australia where we use more than our fair share of the earth's resources. Have a look at how much land it takes to support your lifestyle at www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/personal_footprint. In terms of our partner's project we look for things that can mitigate any environmental degradation, like laying hay in chicken pens to reduce soil erosion, or initiatives that will increase understanding and care of the environment. As Hosanna ministries (India) built new classrooms for Gynan Sampada Residential School, they also planted more trees than they knocked down, and are including environmental education in the school's curriculum.

Colin Scott,
COCOA Director



Boniface Mpfu from Showers of Blessing, Zimbabwe visits the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Learning

My father enjoyed two photos of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, one with the bridge construction in progress on opposite sides of the harbour and a great gap in the middle, and the second of the completed bridge joined up and functioning as planned. John Bradfield and his team certainly got their planning right to get those two halves to join up perfectly! So, what does building bridges and development projects have in common? Are they similar or different? Sure, a clear goal and thoughtful planning based on the best available information is important for both, but I want to suggest that building bridges and development projects are quite different.

The challenge is adaptive not technical.

One school of thinking divides problems into two categories: technical and adaptive. Technical problems are problems that have been solved to a large extent. So if you look at how it was done before (read all the books about building bridges) you will probably come up with something that works. Adaptive problems – by contrast – are those where the solution is largely within the stakeholders. Only by working together can a solution be found that might work, because they, the stakeholders (not girders and rivets), are the main variables in the problem.

The process is the project.

If our project is to increase the dignity and opportunity of people, to spread the fullness of life that Jesus came to bring (John 10:10) the way we go about it is critical. Processes that don't include and involve participants send the message that they are incapable or inferior. Processes that involve people let them know that they are made in the image of the same God as those who have come to help. One participant in the recent Partners Course reflected, "That will take time." It does.

Local is the priority.

In particular, our process should prioritise all things local – local knowledge, local culture and local skills. This project has to work in the local culture and local people are the ones who know it best. My favourite story of a development team that didn't listen for local knowledge can be found online via this link <https://youtu.be/chXsLtHqfdM>

Planners are learners.

So when we come into a community as agents of change, we come as learners, not experts. In Zimbabwe, for example, I thought adoption would be an obvious option for children without parents, but as I heard locals speak I discovered there are some very strong cultural beliefs

that would have to be addressed if this was to be a possibility.

The goal is a human one.

Unlike the bridge, our development project goal is a bit fuzzy. Fullness of life looks different for each person, and if people are really flourishing, it will be hard to predict exactly what they will be doing. Boniface Mpfu, who heads up Showers of Blessing's program in Zimbabwe, says "Drilling a borehole is like lighting a fire - you never know where it will go." Hear the full story from him on YouTube <http://bit.ly/GMPyoutubeFire>

The goal is an ultimate one.

Finally, we need to recognise we are part of a much bigger enterprise. It is unlikely that we will fix everything, even for a small group of people, in three years. More likely, with God's help, we will make a contribution. From that contribution we will learn how to make an even better contribution next time. In the end our efforts will be a "tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work". There is "a sense of liberation in that", as we recognise "we are workers, not master builders". See the full text of this prayer dedicated to Oscar Romero here: <http://bit.ly/oscarromero>

Colin Scott,
COCOA Director



Left: Children practicing acrobatics, Hosanna Ministries, India
 Right: The foundations for the new buildings at Gnyan Sampada Residential School, India.

Participation

Last month we decided that development projects were not like building a bridge for a variety of reasons, all of which come back to the fact that development projects rely on participation by the target community. In fact, COCOA forms and policies refer to participants rather than beneficiaries. This month we look at how a development project might be like investing in a business, teaching the piano, or sewing someone a dress.

Sewing

If you are going to make someone a dress, it seems the first thing that you should do is talk to the individual. What colour would she like? What sort of material? Some measurements would help ensure that the finished product actually fits! The same goes for development projects. There is no substitute for lots of conversation about what it is that we are trying to achieve together, and what are the constraints and strengths of the environment in which we are working. We are currently talking with Hosanna Ministries in India about their next project, which began as the final stage of their school building, grew with vocation courses for girls, then for boys, and now also has training in fundraising for the Board! All of these grew out of listening to one another. Every development project must begin with consultation.

Teaching

Participation is the ‘gold’ of development, so we want people to take on the project as their own. Hoping that my mother will never read this, I confess to never really enjoying my piano lessons. It was not so much the lessons, but the work I had to do myself – repeatedly – during the week to get better. I could not just start practicing the night before an exam, I needed to own the process a lot earlier in order to be a good pianist. Participation, similarly, maximises the benefit a community receives, enabling community to do things for themselves. It also increases the community’s level of ownership so people are more likely to ensure that the project runs well and to continue when COCOA involvement concludes. One day, Boniface Mpfu in Zimbabwe turned up to a borehole site with the equipment ready to install the pump. He found that the community had not done their agreed part by building the concrete surround. Despite protests that, “You are a Christian man. You should forgive us!” he took his equipment and went home, returning later when there was some evidence of participation! Every development project must have participation in the middle.

Investing

When you invest your money to start a business, you do so with

the expectation that one day you will stop putting money in and the business will turn a profit. Approximately four out of five small businesses fail so you are generally investing against the odds. You guessed it. Development projects are risky too, but the main similarity is that the input is for a limited time with a vision that the project (or its impact in the community) will gain a life of its own. For this to happen we have to plan an end to the input. In South Sudan we rejoiced last year at the graduation of 15 new midwives, but perhaps even more exciting is that the government has since established a school to train 120 health workers each year. It was important for us to stop so our investment could reap its return. Every development project must have an exit plan.

Consultation, Participation and Exit

A good project has consultation at the beginning to shape it, participation in the middle to enliven and own it, and an exit plan at the end to let the change stand on its own two feet. Our friends in South Sudan who ran the Bongibot project understood this well. From the beginning they said, “Only give us money for three years, because we want to stand on our own two feet.”

Colin Scott,
 COCOA Director



Bandarban Hills Churches of Christ hostel in Bangladesh under flood

Risks and Safeguarding

Last month Colin Scott, COCOA (Churches of Christ Overseas Aid) Director, explored how a development project, like a business, can be a risky investment. This month, Jan Bayliss looks at some of the risks inherent in development work and some steps we take to safeguard against them.

Risk to Vulnerable People

Much development work includes vulnerable people: children, women facing discrimination or gender-based violence, people with disabilities or marginalised minorities. We have to make sure that projects designed to help them do not inadvertently put them at greater risk. One bad example is a project (not COCOA) that provided family planning services in an area where women had little power. Women welcomed the services, but men did not. The project led to an increase in domestic violence. We can reduce this sort of risk by carefully studying the context and involving all stakeholders in the planning. To safeguard children, COCOA helps partners identify risks and develop child protection plans. Every partner commits to screen and train all staff and volunteers, and to implement a clear code of conduct and a child-friendly complaints process. Partners working with children also develop unique ways

for children's voices to influence the shape of their projects.

Misuse of Money

If it's hard to balance the books of a business here in Australia, it is doubly hard when coordinating with partners overseas. Some partners have excellent bookkeeping, while others are new to financial management, so we look for local courses that help develop their financial skills. In the last three years, partners from Zimbabwe and South Sudan have attended financial training courses. We are also improving our own acquittal processes so that we know exactly how each project is progressing against the agreed budget.

Fraud and Funding of Terrorism

Terrorists and fraudsters may see development agencies as soft targets when it comes to money laundering and diverting aid money for their own purposes. We work to alert partners to these risks and help them develop robust practices. We screen all partner organisations and staff against the Australian Government lists of proscribed people.

Environmental Risks

It is worth remembering a well-known phrase: First, do no harm

(a principle from bioethics). Before we act, COCOA spends a lot of time listening and learning to understand a situation. Partners complete an environmental risk assessment, and plan mitigating activities. We also consider possible natural disasters and include activities to build resilience. For example, the Bandarban Hills Churches of Christ in Bangladesh are working on disaster risk reduction and mitigation plans to address the risk of hostel flooding that occurs in the wet seasons.

Risk to the Project

When developing a project design, COCOA considers what might stop us achieving its goals. These risks might be internal, such as a lack of skilled workers, or external, such as war or drought. We create strategies to minimise any significant risk where we can, and develop contingency plans for risks that are not in our control.

No one person can imagine all the likely risks. Like anything in development, risk assessment and management needs to involve the full range of stakeholders.

Jan Bayliss,
COCOA Administration Assistant



Left: Women collecting water for their gardens in Zimbabwe. Right Beneficiary Mr Dieu Kram outside his new toilet in Vietnam

Inclusiveness

Previously in Introduction to Development, we looked at the importance of participation. For participation to be effective all need to participate. This is difficult if some people are excluded from the process such as women or people with disabilities. This month Suzanne Hayes, COCOA Program Officer, explores ‘Inclusiveness’. Development inclusiveness ensures that all groups of people are given the opportunity to participate in development and its benefits.

Gender

Gender equality is about equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities for women and men, girls and boys. It does not mean that women and men are the same, but that both have rights. So why is it important to consider gender equality in development? Human dignity and equality is integral to the being of God. It is reflected in the equality of the Trinity, the fact that all believers are equal in Christ, and that all are given the same life in the Spirit. Being male and being female are gifts from God to be acknowledged, affirmed and practiced.

Equality between men and women is more than a matter of social justice – it also makes good economic sense. When women have equal access to education, and go on to participate fully in business and economic decision-making, they are a key driving force against poverty.

Women with equal rights are better educated, healthier, and have greater access to land, jobs and financial resources. Their increased earning power in turn raises household incomes. By enhancing women’s control over decision-making in the household, gender equality also translates into better prospects and greater wellbeing of children, reducing poverty for future generations.

In *Showers of Blessing* (Zimbabwe) we are working with the local community in drilling boreholes. By reducing the walking distance from 15 km to 500 metres, this has eased the burden on the women and girls whose daily task is fetching water for their families. Suddenly there is time in the day to do many other things. Women are also on borehole committees, which gives them a greater say in how the boreholes are managed.

Disability

People with disabilities are people who have episodic or long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which may hinder their full and effective participation in society. So why is it important to include them in development? In God’s sight, people with a disability are people first of all. Their disability does not make them worth less nor stop them from knowing God. By including people with disabilities in the

development process it can give them the opportunities to access the health care they require, to access good education, and to participate in the workforce. This is a double benefit as they are not a burden to their family and can contribute to the family income, which reduces the impacts of poverty. In COCOA’s project in Vietnam, we are working with the local community to provide toilet facilities that are suitable for people with disabilities.

How do we ensure inclusion?

When designing a project we must ask:

- How have the rights and special needs of these groups been taken into account in the program design? We need to note that each group will have different needs.
- How will the project actively involve these groups and address the specific (and various) barriers to inclusion and opportunities for participation?
- How will the project address the empowerment of these groups?

We insist that these questions are addressed to ensure these groups are shown love and dignity as children of God.

Suzanne Hayes,
COCOA Program Officer



Recap

In this edition of In Partnership, we conclude the 2016 COCOA 'Introduction to Development' series. During the year we have looked at the basics of development and so this month we will recap some of what we have learnt. Here is a short summary for you:

What is development?

God is interested in changing all of people's lives – their physical, social and spiritual circumstances. He recognises that people are whole beings, not easily divided up. Development aims to change a community's choices in an enduring way. The goal is to take a person or a community a step closer to the fullness of life that God intends for all people (John 10:10). It is not just about keeping them alive or in the place that they are in. Change is fundamental. It means working with people. The first step is developing a relationship of equality and respect. Empowerment, participation and sustainability are key concepts in fostering healthy change.

Empowerment means...

Enabling and moving with individuals and groups from inability to ability, dependence to interdependence. It means: giving away power, valuing the local way of doing things and looking for strengths.

Participation at every stage.

At the beginning – this is listening to the ideas of a variety of local people and working together toward a plan. Begin with an amount of consultation as if you were sewing someone their wedding dress – lots.

In the middle – this is about giving local people every possible role in the project, with outsiders teaching locals how to do the less familiar roles. Get people involved like you were teaching them the piano – they do the practice. Don't do for anyone what they can already do for themselves.

At the end – this is about handing over the continuing work to local people having given them the tools to carry it forward. Plan your exit like you are investing in a business. Make your input strategic.

Sustainability means...

Making a change that endures after the project finishes, helping

communities generate their own funds, and preserving the earth – our God given resource for shared prosperity.

We come as learners.

Prioritising local knowledge and input, and the fact that we are aiming to change lives means we need to be open to learning.

Risks and Safeguarding.

Make sure vulnerable groups like children, women, and people with a disability are safe. Manage the risks of fraud, terrorism, environmental damage and project failure.

Inclusiveness.

Remember everyone is made in God's image – everyone.

Colin Scott,
COCOA Director



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