

SELF HELP AND SELF RELIANCE -THE VIEW OF CHURCH-RELATED AGENCIES

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If we look back into the history of the Church-related funding agencies, then we notice a certain development of ideas, priorities and criteria. And to nobody's surprise we will observe that this development, to a certain degree, corresponds with what we could call the «development of development». The Church, as an institution inbedded into the society, acts often as part of this society, especially if she is dealing with secular issues.

In the first development decade (1960 - 1970), we observe that Church-related funding agencies were speaking almost in similar terms as official development institutions, governments and international organisations. The common idea was that the main objective of developmental cooperation was economic growth, modernisation and industrialisation. So the Church's response was this: We support this objective, but since we are unable to construct factories, we will concentrate on an important factor, where the Church could really contribute an essential element, i.e. education or more concretely professional training. So, as a result of these considerations, we still find quite a lot of Church-run vocational training institutes and technical schools.

Many of us were convinced that mass media could change the world: increase the number of radios, TV-sets and dailies, and you will see how quickly people in the so-called Third World will change their behaviours and attitudes. Today we know that this way of thinking was only partly correct, and that the process of industrialisation in many parts of the world accelerated migration into the cities, urbanisation and the growth of slums, symptoms for the widening gap between the rich and the poor, individuals and nations.

Nowadays, after three decades of development, we note quite considerable changes in the whole policy and terminology of the funding agencies. Rarely we will find people in these agencies speaking about economic growth and industrialisation. Even the optimism about the effects of mass media has ceased. Today we use new terms almost unknown in the sixties. We speak about option for the poor, basic needs, participation, organization, empowerment of the poor. But one idea has always been present, and this right from the origin of the funding agencies in the late 50's and early 60's, and that is the idea of self-help and self-reliance. And here we do have the connection with the subject to which CAMECO dedicates this issue of its Information Bulletin.

Some people understand self-help as a flowery language, as a mere phrase. But in reality the term self-help is a key-word and can help us to reflect on the roles funding agencies and their partners have to play. Experience can show us very clearly that financial support often affects negatively the determined intention to stand on own feet, if the receivers consider this support as «easy money». Everybody will agree, that this could lead to unwanted lethargy and dependence. So both sides do have a great responsibility in this relationship. When I was working with Misereor I remember that quite some people coming from so-called Third World countries looked at Misereor as a kind of bank and not as lenten campaign aiming at helping the poor and sick with the alms of the «poor widow». So it is a question of image, information, dialogue, self-esteem and partnership. And on the other hand I remember situations where partners had simply «forgotten» to mobilize all local resources for self-financing of their projects, because it was much easier to write a letter to a funding agency abroad.

Development as economic growth,
modernisation and industrialisation

The idea of self-help and self-reliance

«Easy money»

The Early Church and self-reliance

The idea of self help has always been present in the social teaching and in the documents of the Church related to development issues. Meanwhile practically all non-governmental organisations (NGO's) and even all the official development organisations have adopted as the basic principle of development the idea that people have to help themselves. And indeed the idea of self-help was nothing else than an application of the vast experience which the Church has accumulated throughout decades and centuries. We need only to look at the small Christian communities in the Mediterranean region in the first centuries and at the self-reliant monasteries, not only in Europe but also in other continents. Self-help is part of one of the three most important principles on which the whole social doctrine of the Church is based. What I mean here is the principle of subsidiarity. One of the most important doyens of the social doctrine of the Church, Oswald von Nell-Breuning SJ, described in 1964 this principle of subsidiarity as follows: «What is within the reach of the members, the community has to leave to them in full autonomy. The community solely cares for that what the members can only reach in the community and through the community. According to this principle the community should assist their members, especially the most backward ones, i.e. promote their self-reliance, but should not squeeze to death their own initiative and life.»

Principle of subsidiarity

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RESUMEN

Los modelos de desarrollo defendidos por la Iglesia Católica siempre han tenido relaciones con las ideas de las instituciones estatales y organizaciones políticas. Por ejemplo, en los tiempos de la «modernización» e «industrialización», la Iglesia creaba centros de formación vocacional para fomentar este proceso. Entretanto vemos los efectos negativos de esa política, y también se han cambiado los conceptos y el vocabulario correspondiente. Sin embargo, lo que vale: ya desde sus principios, en la Iglesia y también por dentro de las agencias de ayuda la idea del «auto-ayuda» ha sido un punto clave, como actualización continua del principio de la subsidiaridad. Solamente desde esta idea parece posible desarrollar una relación entre responsables de proyectos y agencias ni de dependencia ni del «easy money».

RESUME

Durant la première décennie du développement (1960-1970), les organismes caritatifs de l'Eglise se sont inscrits dans la même perspective que les institutions officielles et les organisations gouvernementales et internationales, celle du développement économique, de la modernisation et de l'industrialisation, notamment en accordant la priorité à la création de centres de formation professionnelle. Aujourd'hui, après trois décennies de développement, le vocabulaire s'est modifié, dénotant des changements profonds dans les politiques de développement et les priorités. Les termes d'auto-développement, de développement auto-centré, d'auto-financement, de partenariat qui sont de plus en plus utilisés ne sont-ils pas une actualisation du principe de subsidiarité, sur lequel devrait s'édifier les relations entre responsables de projet et agences d'aide si l'on veut éviter les écueils de la dépendance et de «l'argent facile».

