

BERKLEY CENTER for RELIGION, PEACE & WORLD AFFAIRS

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY



Global Development and Faith-Inspired Organizations in Latin America: Meeting Report

**Consultation on January 30-31, 2009
Antigua, Guatemala**

A project of the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace,
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of Foreign Service at Georgetown University

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the World Faiths Development Dialogue

Cathedral of San Jose,
Antigua, Guatemala



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LUCE/SFS PROGRAM ON RELIGION AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Since 2006, the Berkley Center and the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service (SFS) have collaborated in the implementation of a generous grant from the Henry Luce Foundation's Initiative on Religion and International Affairs. The Luce/SFS Program on Religion and International Affairs supports research, teaching, and outreach in two program areas, Religion and U.S. Foreign Policy and Religion and Global Development. A major focus is engagement with public officials in the U.S. government and international organizations grappling with religion and world affairs. The Luce/SFS program was renewed in 2008 through the 2010-11 academic year.

THE BERKLEY CENTER

The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, created within the Office of the President in March 2006, is part of a university-wide effort to build knowledge about religion's role in world affairs and promote interreligious understanding in the service of peace. The Center explores the intersection of religion with contemporary global challenges. Through research, teaching, and outreach activities, the Berkley Center builds knowledge, promotes dialogue, and supports action in the service of peace. Thomas Banchoff, Associate Professor in the Department of Government and the School of Foreign Service, is the Center's founding director.

THE EDMUND A. WALSH SCHOOL OF FOREIGN SERVICE

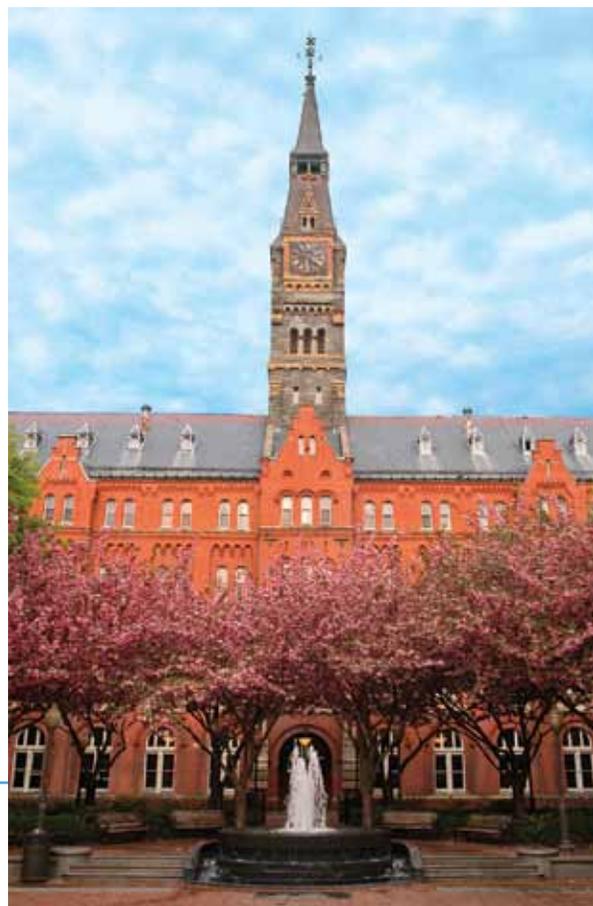
Founded in 1919 to educate students and prepare them for leadership roles in international affairs, the School of Foreign Service conducts an undergraduate program for over 1,300 students and graduate programs at the Master's level for more than 700 students. Under the leadership of Dean Robert Gallucci (through July 2009), the School houses more than a dozen regional and functional programs that offer courses, conduct research, host events, and contribute to the intellectual development of the field of international affairs. In 2007, a survey of faculty published in *Foreign Policy* ranked Georgetown University as #1 in Master's degree programs in international relations.

THE WORLD FAITHS DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE

The World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) bridges between the worlds of faith and secular development. Established in 1998 by James D. Wolfensohn, then President of the World Bank, and Lord Carey of Clifton, then Archbishop of Canterbury, WFDD responded to the opportunities and concerns of many faith leaders who saw untapped potential for partnerships. Based in Washington, D.C., WFDD supports dialogue, fosters communities of practice, and promotes understanding on religion and development, with formal relationships with the World Bank, Georgetown University, and many faith-inspired institutions.

THE UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man, and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA supports countries in using population data for policies and programs to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.





Executive Summary

On January 30–31, 2009, a group of leaders and practitioners associated with religious organizations, academic institutions, and development agencies came together in Antigua, Guatemala to discuss the current and potential contributions of religious leaders and faith-inspired organizations in addressing development challenges in Latin America.

The consultation took place against the backdrop of rapidly shifting patterns of religious identification, a crisis among Latin American youth, and a global economic downturn which, though still in its early stages, was already being felt acutely through the evaporation of remittances from the U.S. and disruptions to migration trends. Participants shared their understandings of and approaches to these and other challenges; in the process, there emerged a consensus on several points:

- There are certain ways in which faith institutions are uniquely equipped, relative to governments, to address the linked challenges of failing schools, family breakdown, and gang violence among children.
- Migration, often by vulnerable children who are exploited in transit, is the symptom of a lack of educational and employment opportunities, as well as systems of land tenure which perpetuate poverty among households and communities through the generations. This heightens the need for attention to basic issues as well as the “symptoms.”
- Fostering networks of practice is crucial for faith-inspired organizations if they are to bring to bear on a larger scale their knowledge and values.
- The rise of Pentecostal and other “new” churches in

Latin America has significant implications for the role of faith institutions in delivering services; however, this trend need not be seen in negative terms.

The Antigua consultation was the first of its kind—never before had such a group, which was composed of evangelicals, Catholics, and representatives from secular institutions, convened to address common concerns around development challenges, and so the discussions were necessarily of a preliminary nature. Despite this, participants were able to engage deeply on a number of different issues, most prominently among them children and youth, migration, and networks.

This report should be read in conjunction with the parallel background report on faith and development institutions in Latin America and in-depth interviews with the participants, available on the Berkley Center website.



Msgr. Alvaro Ramazzini and Schuyler Thorup

Global Development and Faith-Inspired Organizations in Latin America

CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS

Moderators

Katherine Marshall, Senior Fellow, Berkley Center and Visiting Associate Professor of Government, Georgetown University

Nadine Gasman, Regional Representative, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Raul Rosenberg, Program Official, Advocacy, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Participants

Dr. Zilda Arns Neumann, Founder and International Coordinator, Pastoral da Criança

Fr. Óscar Azmitia, Rector, Universidad de la Salle

Alejandro Bilbao, Director General, Centro Magis

Thomas Bohnett, Program Coordinator, World Faiths Development Dialogue

Sylvia Davila, Mesoamerica Representative, Avina Foundation

Melody Fox Ahmed, Director of Programs and Operations, Berkley Center, Georgetown University

Carol Lancaster, Professor and Director, Mortara Center for International Studies, Georgetown University

Alfredo Mora, Director of the Regional Center for Latin American and the Caribbean, Viva Network

Ana Victoria Pelaez, Guatemalan Coordinator of Interreligious Dialogue for Development and Moderator of the Mesoamerican Women's Network, World Conference of Religions for Peace

Msgr. Alvaro Ramazzini, Bishop of San Marcos, Roman Catholic Diocese of San Marcos, Guatemala

Dr. Juan Silva, Eye Care Regional Adviser for Latin America and the Caribbean, Pan-American Health Organization, regional office of the World Health Organization

Elias Szczytnicki, Director of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Office and General Secretary of the Latin American and Caribbean Council of Religious Leaders, World Conference of Religions for Peace

Schuyler Thorup, Regional Director, Latin America and the Caribbean, Catholic Relief Services (CRS)

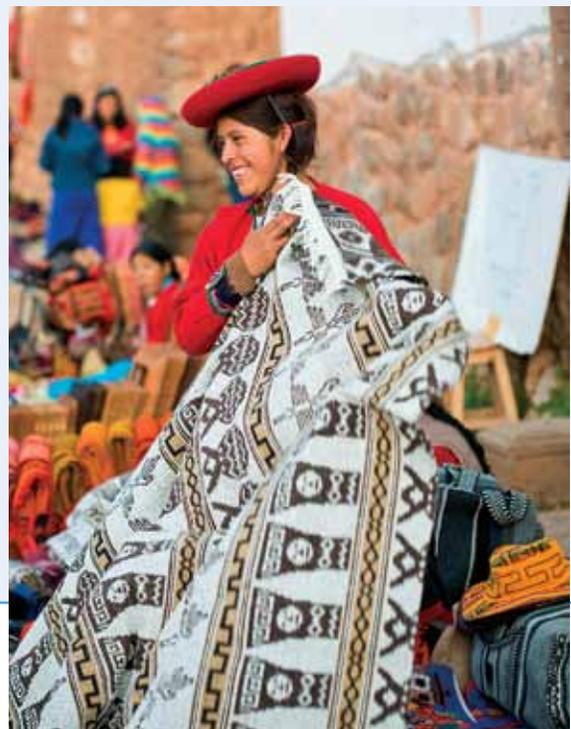
Corina Villacorta, Regional Vice President for Latin America and the Caribbean, World Vision

Brady Walkinshaw, World Faiths Development Dialogue, Gates Foundation

Also interviewed

Emily Fintel, Avina Foundation

Patrick McDonald, Viva Network





PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

Fr. Óscar Azmitia Azmitia, the rector at the Universidad de la Salle, shared his evolving experience of working with indigenous groups and challenged the concept of “enculturation” proposed by the Catholic Church. He criticized the Millennium Development Goals as “minimalist,” citing their inconsistency with national goals on education and development. He urged a reconfiguration of notions of educational quality around analyses of the activities and achievements of graduates. Azmitia characterized the unique contribution of faith-inspired groups working on education as their emphasis on values in education—how they teach children “to live, share, and act.” Azmitia spoke about the need for, and potential impact of, an ongoing network of faith-inspired actors concerned with development in the region. He saw the role of faith-inspired organizations and leaders as being essential to a restructuring of an economic order which, he said, continues to marginalize Latin America’s poor and indigenous populations.

Alejandro Bilbao Bilbao, the executive director of Centro Magis, a nonprofit organization that works throughout Latin America to strengthen Jesuit-led social service organizations, described to the group the process of scaling up and increasing the impact of Fe y Alegría, a network of Jesuit educational institutions across the region. He spoke of the value that networks can add to programming, citing their ability to enable the sharing of knowledge and experience, to replicate successful experiences, and

to have broad influence geographically. He talked about one of the current priorities of Centro Magis, which is strengthening connections between Jesuit initiatives such as Fe y Alegría and civil society more broadly. Bilbao spoke about the Jesuit view that “development is not possible without education.” He discussed the current deficit of educational offerings for “at-risk” children, citing this lack of options as a driver of social problems among youth in the region.

Sylvia Davila Davila, the Latin America representative for the Avina Foundation, outlined the Foundation’s four major areas of intervention: social inclusion (work on immigration and educational quality issues); sustainable economic development (fair trade advocacy and encouragement of corporate social responsibility); governance (with a focus on increasing citizen participation in government); and natural resource protection (especially water issues). Avina works through its support for leaders and networks working in these four fields. A major focus of discussion at the consultation was on networks, and what characterized successful ones. Davila shared key lessons about networks from Avina’s experience, saying that the most important factor in forming effective alliances is for each of the members to “avoid being a protagonist. The ‘I’ must be eliminated in order to strengthen a network.”

Nadine Gasman Gasman, who is the regional representative for UNFPA in Guatemala, discussed the importance of the UNFPA partnership with and outreach to faith-inspired development organizations



Carol Lancaster

in Latin America and also globally. She touched on a series of recent meetings held in the region that engage faith groups in discussions about peace-building. Gasman emphasized the willingness of UNFPA to support, on an ongoing basis, collaboration among meeting participants on issues of common concern.

Carol Lancaster Lancaster, the Director of the Mortara Center for International Studies at Georgetown University and head of its new Initiative on International Development, spoke about the two-way relationship of evangelical communities in Latin America and the U.S. Drawing on her work with female leaders in Guatemala, she noted that pressing issues for women in the region including: abuse, violence, and the inability of women living in poor areas to earn a living and to survive. Child molestation also arose as a key concern of women. Lancaster said she suspected that many of the large, structural problems identified by the group during the course of the meeting could not be solved without dealing within the political realm. Connected to this, she supported the suggestion that faith-inspired actors and groups working on development needed a network in order to increase their political influence.

Alfredo Mora Mora, director of the Viva Network's Regional Center for Latin America, discussed the work of the Viva Network, which in Latin America supports programs that address the needs of vulnerable children. In describing the scope of the challenge, he cited an estimate that there are 40 million homeless children across the continent. He high-

lighted efforts to increase the impact of programs for children run by evangelical Christian churches and to harmonize Catholic and evangelical initiatives for children. Mora said that the essential difference between the approaches of government and faith groups in addressing the needs of children is that "...from a faith perspective, the solution includes the family." Mora shared his vision for a new model for development in the region that would be "supportive, participatory, and integral." This model of development would engage government, civil society, faith leaders and networks. He suggested the need for faith groups to mobilize as a network that would constitute a viable and powerful political entity that would have a place in important discussions about development in the region.

Dr. Zilda Arns Neumann Dr. Neumann, the founder and president of Pastoral de Criança, traced the nearly 30-year narrative of her organization's history, which has had a transformative effect on maternal and child health in Brazil. The organization was founded after she had practiced medicine for 27 years and had observed that almost all infant and maternal deaths were preventable with better knowledge about health care among mothers, and that the Catholic Church, with its wide networks in the region, could be the ideal vehicle to help deliver this knowledge. Neumann described the organization's meticulous data-gathering and analysis as being essential to its overall success in meeting its goals. She talked about the Pastoral's emphasis on developing relationships with local governments and health systems. She



emphasized the ways in which faith informed and supported the organization's work. Dr. Neumann was joined by Sister Anita, a Brazilian nun working in San Marcos on the first Pastoral da Criança program in Guatemala.

Ana Victoria Pelaez Pelaez, representing the Guatemalan Interreligious Dialogue for Development, spoke about what she saw as some of the unique contributions of faith-inspired individuals and groups to addressing development challenges, most notably their natural convictions about social justice and their broad influence in Latin American society. She discussed the potential benefits that development work might offer as a platform for increased interreligious understanding. She talked about the difficulty of coordinating the myriad development initiatives of Latin America's religious groups, while highlighting the transformative power of effective networks. Pelaez spoke about her view that a network of faith-inspired leaders and organizations could and should bear on local and national public policy. Building such a network was, she said, essential if large-scale social transformation in the region was to be achieved. A key priority of such a network would be knowledge sharing, so that each member could benefit from and build on the successes and lessons of other members.

Msgr. Alvaro Ramazzini Msgr. Alvaro Ramazzini of the diocese of San Marcos in Guatemala discussed what he described as the most fundamental barrier to poverty reduction in San Marcos and

Guatemala—a system of land tenure which disfavors the poor and strangles social mobility. This situation, compounded by the negative environmental effects of large-scale mining operations, induces migration to the U.S. Connected to large-scale migration out of San Marcos, Ramazzini discussed his fears that the global recession would hit Guatemala most acutely through the reduction of remittances from the U.S. He touched on other threats to stability and prosperity in San Marcos and Guatemala more broadly, including the cultivation of poppy and attendant drug trafficking and unpunished gang violence. He connected these problems to an absence of faith among the political class. Ramazzini described the rise of Pentecostal churches in Guatemala and sharply questioned whether the “Gospel of Prosperity” preached in many of those churches was in the interests of the poor. He stated that 400 unauthorized radio stations across the country were the main vehicle for delivering the messages of the Pentecostals.

Dr. Juan Silva Dr. Silva, a regional officer of the World Health Organization's Latin America branch, the Pan-American Health Organization (WHO-PAHO), discussed the WHO's emergent partnerships with the Catholic Church in the area surrounding Bogotá, Colombia. He highlighted his observations of some of the special roles filled by faith-inspired organizations in the provision of health services, most notably intimate, home-based care for the terminally ill, a service not provided by governmental health systems. He spoke also about weaknesses that he saw in church-based health services, including a



Alfredo Mora and Elias Szczytnicki



Sylvia Davila

lack of training among volunteers. Training these volunteers is one focus of capacity-building efforts for church-based health services sponsored by WHO-PAHO. Silva said that another major component of WHO-PAHO engagement with these health organizations is an effort to improve linkages between local, regional, and national governments and faith structures.

Elias Szczytnicki Szczytnicki, the Latin America representative for World Conference of Religion for Peace (WCRP), discussed the relationship between interreligious dialogue—which focuses on theological issues—and interreligious cooperation, which is concerned with addressing issues in the environments in which religious groups exist. He talked about the occasional difficulty of doing any kind of interreligious work in the context of overwhelming Christian predominance in Latin America. Involving indigenous leaders and communities in interreligious work has proven especially hard, something which Szczytnicki attributed to the lack of formal organizational structures in indigenous populations. During a discussion of the potential of a network of faith-inspired actors addressing development challenges, Szczytnicki stressed the need for an academic component that would inform the network’s priorities. Szczytnicki talked about how religious schools in the region had in many cases lost much of their moral authority in communities because they had prioritized academic competitiveness over their unique ability to inculcate values in children and families.

Schuyler Thorup Thorup, the Latin America Regional Vice President for Catholic Relief Services (CRS), discussed the three principle concentrations of CRS’ work in the region: disaster relief, rural development, and support for the rights and development of indigenous populations. Thorup shared that CRS implements programs at the request of local Catholic bishops and works through the Caritas structure, and it supports advocacy efforts on several issues, including human slavery in the Amazon, peace-making in Colombia, and land reform in areas with indigenous populations. Thorup suggested that the credibility of Catholic bishops and the hierarchy of other faith traditions in speaking about macro-level social issues in the region is connected to their effectiveness in delivering basic services at the community level. Thorup discussed CRS’ attempts to stanch the flow of at-risk youths into gang life through offering vocational education opportunities. He also shared the results of a large-scale survey sponsored by CRS of Latin American youth who had been deported from the U.S. Some key results: the most significant motivator of emigration was economic, followed by a desire to reunite with families that had emigrated previously. Two-thirds of the deported children came from families headed by only one parent. 27% had been the victim of theft during the deportation process, and 12% had been subjected to verbal or physical abuse; border police were implicated in most of the cases of theft and abuse.

Corina Villacorta Villacorta, the Latin American Regional Vice President of World Vision, discussed

World Vision's child sponsorship model, which supports nearly two million children from across the continent through donations from the U.S. World Vision works with a range of faith-inspired partners on the ground, "from the most fundamentalist Pentecostal churches, to the most charismatic Catholic ones." Villacorta talked about World Vision's recent efforts to become involved in the shaping of local and national public policies relevant to children. She cited statistics about high rates of child abuse within families and World Vision's efforts to address this. Villacorta discussed the essential linkages between development, which she characterized as "the search for well-being" and faith. Villacorta talked about World Vision's efforts to foster youth-to-youth networks as an attempt to lessen the appeal of youth gangs. Villacorta shared the results of World Vision survey work, which suggests that these networks have succeeded in part because they, somewhat tragically, play on the distrust of youth in their teachers, churches, and parents. She attributed this distrust in part to "a culture that patronizes children."





Framing the Discussion

The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs and the Institute for Social Studies (ISS) hosted a two day consultation in Antigua, Guatemala, on January 30–31, engaging a diverse group of practitioners, technical specialists, and religious leaders. The topic was the emerging issues in religion and development in Latin America. The event was a part of a three-year Berkley Center project to explore both the landscape and potential issues for faith-inspired organizations in international develop-

ment. The project is supported by the Henry R. Luce Foundation. This program segment focuses on different world regions, and builds on earlier consultations in The Hague in June 2008 on Europe and Africa, Doha, Qatar in December 2007 on the Muslim World, and in Washington, D.C. in April 2007 on the United States. A further consultation to address Asia is planned for fall 2009. Publications present highlights of each of these events and results of background research.



left to right: Panel participant Msgr. Alvaro Ramazzini, and moderators Raul Rosenberg, Nadine Gasman and Katherine Marshall



Óscar Azmitia

BOX 1

Luce/SFS Program on Religion and Global Development: Exploring Faith-inspired Institutions

Katherine Marshall, Senior Fellow, Berkley Center and Visiting Associate Professor of Government, Georgetown University

The Religion and Global Development program examines both the role of religious groups and ideas in donor and developing countries, and the prospects for greater religious-secular cooperation in the development field. Its components include graduate student research fellowship, a religion and development database, and the creation and dissemination of “religious literacy” materials for development professionals in government, NGOs, and international organizations. Through a series of meetings with stakeholders and background reports, the Luce/SFS Program on Religion and Global Development maps the role of faith-based organizations around the world and points to best practices and areas for collaboration.

The multi-year project explores issues involving institutions that play critical roles in social and economic development and that are, in various ways, inspired by and linked to religious faith. The objectives are to establish a solid information base about the nature of institutions and the work they do (a “mapping” of organizations and activities), to take stock of the dynamics and direction they are taking, and to explore the range of policy issues involved, including: relationships to secular development institutions, political and social ramifications of their work, and approaches and work styles that distinguish these institutions and their leadership from other institutions working in the

development field.

The work program involves a sequence of distinct reviews focused successively on issues in different world regions and faith traditions. The investigation entails research papers (involving substantive input by Georgetown graduate student research teams) followed by a focused consultation meeting with small groups of academics and practitioners engaged in the field. A particularly useful feature of the approach is proving to be in-depth interviews with leading practitioners to explore their individual, thought-provoking, and differing approaches to emerging issues.

The work will be summarized at its conclusion in a book. Over the course of its life, the program is seen as a dynamic and “living” effort, where information, interviews, and tentative findings are an evolving and expanding part of the Berkley Center’s work and website. The work is pursued in partnership with other institutions active in the field, both in the United States and overseas.

Faith-Inspired Institutions and Development: The Backdrop

The worldwide resurgence of religion and its greater presence on public policy agendas are important contemporary global phenomena. There is growing awareness in both policy and religious circles of the powerful roles, both potential and

actual, that faith-inspired institutions can play in a variety of social programs. One such area is international development work, which seeks to relieve poverty, address humanitarian crises, and work for longer term human and socio-economic development.

Until recently, religion and religious institutions were only partially engaged with the major secular development institutions, with the notable exception of humanitarian aid and emergency work. This picture is changing as a growing group of faith institutions build on their traditional work in health and education and expand their development work, propelled by issues such as HIV/AIDS and rising consciousness of the pain of world poverty.

The leading development institutions are showing greater interest in learning from this experience and in building partnerships that reflect both different and complementary approaches to development challenges. There is still much uncharted ground, however, because there has been little systematic investigation into the work of faith-inspired institutions, and the area is complicated by tensions and failures in communication between different faiths and between faith-based and secular development institutions. There is an urgent need for better knowledge and understanding. These offer the potential to enhance both the quality and reach of global development work.

Phase 1: The United States: Faith-Based Organizations Working in International Development. The first stage of investigation focused on the United States, which culminated in a conference at Georgetown University in April 2007. A student team reviewed the academic literature on the topic, assembled information on the wide range of institutions from different faith traditions working in the field, and investigated emerging issues. Leading practitioners participated in the conference, examining issues such as distinctive elements of faith-inspired development work, financing sources and trends, relationships with governments, sensitivities around proselytizing work, their views on priorities, and areas of focus.

Phase 2: Development and Faith in the Muslim World. The second stage focused on the Muslim world. This addressed the role of non-state institutions in majority-Muslim countries with special focus on those inspired by faith and on the emerging role of global Muslim-inspired institutions, including Islamic Relief, the Red Crescent

Society, the Aga Khan Network, and the Islamic Development Bank. Building on background research and discussions with quite different practitioners leading a spectrum of institutions and with scholars, a consultation meeting was held at the Georgetown campus in Doha in December 2007. That discussion addressed institutional arrangements and trends in Muslim-majority developing countries, relationships among public, private, and religiously inspired actors, financing issues (including the post-September 11, 2001 landscape), and approaches to leading issues such as children, education, health, and gender. The review highlighted active and widely differing work by emerging institutions in the Muslim world, especially those with explicit faith links, and the issues of social and economic development.

Phase 3: Europe and Africa. Approaches to faith-inspired organizations differ across the European Community and within individual European countries. As in other world regions, there is fragmented data and little systematic stock-taking. Africa presents an extraordinarily varied tapestry of organizations working in development, many of them inspired and often founded by faith traditions. Recently their work has received greater focus (prompted above all by the HIV/AIDS pandemic), but still little systematic information is available, and policy implications have barely been explored.

Phase 4: Latin America. The fourth stage, covered in this report, explored faith and development issues in Latin America. Participants at the January 2009 consultation (in Guatemala), which was co-sponsored with UNFPA, focused on issues involving children and youth, the global economic crisis and its impacts on the region and migration.

Phase 5: Asia. The final stage explores similar issues for Asia with a consultation in Cambodia in late 2009.





The Antigua Consultation

The first day's session offered a chance for reflection on the roles of faith-inspired organizations in the region. Each of the participants introduced themselves by describing their background and work. Among the participants, and reflective of the continued predominance of the Catholic Church in Latin America, there was significant representation from organizations with a Catholic identity. There have recently been shifts in religious identification in the region, however, and these shifts—especially the rapid growth of Pentecostal churches—and their implications were a major part of the discussion on the first day.

Participants observed that because the Catholic Church has such a long standing and wide presence in the region and a traditional commitment to service delivery, a shift in the population towards other denominations would likely have a profound effect on how people access services such as health and education. Alfredo Mora suggested that the movement of people towards other denominations was a signal to the Catholic Church that it needed to be more sensitive to the needs and conditions of the poor. Msgr. Alvaro Ramazzini talked about contemporary Guatemala having become a “religious marketplace,” and an environment in which “what prevails is the desire to win customers,” rather than a genuine desire to serve the poor.

Supporting and professionalizing networks of faith-inspired actors addressing development challenges is a key element of the work of many of the participants, and a major question of the discussion asked what elements need to be in place for networks to succeed. There was a

suggestion that networks of faith-inspired actors need to have better links with civil society more broadly.

Connected to discussions about regional and national-level networks was an urgent call for faith-inspired groups to support community-level networks that would better serve the needs of a generation of children that all participants agreed is at grave risk. Both schools and families are failing the continent's youth, with the result being high levels of abuse, unemployment, and a terrifying tide of gang violence, much of it perpetrated by children. Linked to this, there was broad agreement that the natural role of faith institutions to instill values in children in educational settings was not being adequately filled. There was a discussion about the widespread migration to the U.S. of young people in search of employment.

The second day's session extended the focus on challenges for children and families. There were references to the current “lost generation” of children in the region who don't have access to decent educational options and are thus not being prepared for future employment. Raul Rosenberg framed the discussion with statistics suggesting that over 30% of households in Latin America are headed by a single parent, with most of those headed by mothers. Corina Villacorta shared the results of a World Vision study of children in the region, one of the findings of which was that 25% of teenage pregnancies are the result of rape. Incest is also a widespread danger for children. Dr. Juan Silva connected the conditions that make children vulnerable to rape, abuse, and incest with the conditions that foster



left: Elias Szczytnicki;
above: Katherine Marshall

higher rates of HIV transmission. Difficult conditions for children have induced large-scale migration to the U.S., a process which is fraught with danger. Schuyler Thorup shared the preliminary results of a large-scale CRS survey which detailed the threats to children during migration.

Alfredo Mora suggested that faith-inspired organizations could and should play a different role than the government when dealing with family breakdown and child abuse while the first option of the state in these cases tends to be institutionalization, faith-inspired organizations have the ability to “restore the family.” One of the ways in which faith-inspired groups can positively influence family health is through education, as Elias Szczytnicki suggested. Szczytnicki continued to say, however, that these opportunities were being lost, and that faith-inspired primary and secondary schools in the region measured their success in ways that undercut their own ability to helpfully shape family life. Several of the participants noted the unintended consequences of laws designed to protect children from abuse, including schoolteachers becoming so fearful of being accused of abuse that they withdraw from meaningful contact with their students.

Ana Victoria Pelaez suggested that changing family structures and the loss of the “traditional” family structure in Latin America were worth consideration, but could not alone be blamed for the failure to inculcate values in children. There was a discussion about the need for religious leaders to have some accountability for the social and health consequences of their followers.

Participants discussed what might be some of the characteristics of a useful network of religious leaders and faith-inspired development organizations. One recurring request was for a network that could help to systematize the knowledge and experience of its members.

Connections Between Faith and Development

Participants from faith-inspired organizations saw their work as being informed by, and closely linked to, their personal faith. Several of the participants described the ways in which faith-inspired organizations have special capacities and responsibilities because of their faith background. These special qualities come into play especially around children and families. Here, participants noted, faith-inspired groups can make positive contributions that strengthen families, whereas governments often have difficulty relating to family structures and talking about values.

Corina Villacorta

Faith is very essential to what we are as an organization. The ethos of the organization is very much grounded in the Biblical tradition. We are a Christian organization that follows Jesus Christ—that is central to what defines World Vision and what we do. It clearly is a factor in who is attracted to work with World Vision. Our faith is very much an integral and visible part of our corporate life. World Vision’s first value is that we are Christian; the second is that we are committed to the poor. Our work always brings together these values in a theological and Biblical conception. We have devo-

Conference site at the
Porta Hotel, Antigua



tions as part of our daily work life, and organize prayer groups. We start the fiscal year with a day of prayer everywhere in the world.

Our approach to development is very much based in a theological grounding. We not only draw on it for our theoretical grounding in development, but there is always an effort to bring in this theological perspective in our practical work with the poor. Perhaps most important is World Vision's focus on issues of justice and injustice. We talk about transformational development. We are seeking a transformational approach that is holistic and conceives of individuals with a spiritual self.

Our faith also informs the work we do in terms of policies and advocacy. It is also what gives us hope even in the darkest times and places. We see the image of God in poor people's lives and especially in children. We are looking for the fullness of life; that is a theological conception, and it is not just about wellbeing and rights. It is about dignity with the image of God. We work in very difficult environments, under very significant constraints, hopeful about what God wants us to do. We have a historic approach to this process, in Latin America, the Caribbean, and all of the countries where we are working.

In short, everything we do has a faith component.

Schuyler Thorup

What I have found over the years is that the faith-based element, particularly in Latin America, provides a unifying fabric at the community level to quickly engage

and earn trust. At CRS, "faith" provides us with an immediate and natural bond, a common language and a common sense of purpose. This is particularly the case when we seek to establish partnerships with local Catholic organizations because we are motivated by the same set of Catholic teachings on social justice and community development. This natural constituency, built on the deferred local credibility and moral authority of these long-established local Church partners, helps us tremendously in mobilizing and sustaining behavior change both quickly and efficiently.

In other ways, the differences between CRS and secular NGOs are much less obvious in that we are held to, and indeed hold ourselves to, the highest level of program and management quality standards. It is for this reason that well over half of all CRS revenues come from governmental, multi-lateral and non-faith based entities that recognize our organization for its ability to efficiently execute and achieve impact in a completely non-partisan manner.

Alejandro Bilbao

Faith has to do with motivation. That is to say, faith energizes and leads to a strong commitment. It has motivated and mobilized many people. Fe y Alegría has led many people to turn their faith and motivation into concrete practice. Furthermore, Fe y Alegría programs involve a teaching and transmission of values that are in harmony with the faith and vision that spring from the Gospel. Fe y Alegría does not proselytize. Fe y Alegría works to allow the individual to respond with courage and skills to build a more just and equitable society.



That is the way to evangelize. To proselytize and to evangelize are quite different. *Fe y Alegría*, for example, does not provide a Catholic education in the sense that it is not only for Catholics. *Fe y Alegría* advances a model of education that meets the needs of the people. But the faith that mobilizes *Fe y Alegría* grounds it in a coherent and demanding set of values that are woven through all its programs and their implementation. The spirituality of the Jesuits, when they began to found universities more than four centuries ago, is to do good, to do the most good possible, and to do it well. For the Jesuits, this means that they seek to work where their work can have the most impact and where they can do it in an excellent way. This kind of faith movement must be grounded in something fundamental if it is to translate its work into concrete programs, into an education that transmits values. It is faith that motivates the entire project.

Dr. Zilda Arns Neumann

My brother, Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, was the Catholic Cardinal of São Paulo in the early 1980s. At a meeting in 1982 on poverty and peace in Geneva, involving UNICEF and the United Nations, he met James Grant, the legendary head of UNICEF, who challenged him to act to halt child deaths. Grant suggested that the Catholic Church could and should do far more. My brother telephoned me to ask my views. Together, we came to see this as a challenge to the Catholic Church, and we saw the potential for what the Church could accomplish. Ever since then, that has been my mission, and my commitment, to working with and through the Church.

I was inspired by the Biblical parable that tells of how Jesus multiplied bread and fish, producing extraordinary results. That is the essence of our methodology, and we work through faith and life to multiply Christian brotherhood in small, informal communities and to assess how it brings about change and what concrete results our interventions achieve.

Our faith is not hidden. Everybody knows the Pastoral's identity. We are the Church; we are not 'from' the Church, we 'are' the Church. It is by these means that we work to create these communities of faith and life. Our faith is an intrinsic part of our approach at all levels, the way we work with people with love and our technical training. For example, we have a book that we call the "Leader's Guide" (*guía do líder*). In one part it talks about maternal breastfeeding, which is very important in reducing infant mortality and malnourishment rates. So we look for, in the Bible, references that might highlight maternal breastfeeding. And we reflect on this with the community. Another example would be oral rehydration therapy, which drastically reduces mortality caused by diarrhea. There, we highlight the topic of water, and where it can be found in the Bible. So faith and life always go together.

Alfredo Mora

We were lied to for the longest time. We were told that we had to be a professional, a politician, or a person of faith, without mixing these different areas. Actually, the whole person cannot be divided like that. In the past, there used to be not only a great deal of isolation among us, but also a profound mutual mistrust.

We used to perceive other religious groups as different from ours and decided that we didn't like the technical, methodological, and political aspects of their work and that, furthermore, we were not even going to try to understand them. Also, from the viewpoint of politics, they thought that religious groups had nothing to give, nothing that would allow them to enter the equation. It's time for Latin America to realize that the magnitude of our problems calls for a response of equal magnitude, a response in which each of us has a fundamental role to perform. Regardless of our personal roles in society—big or small—history is inviting us to do something.

Fr. Óscar Azmitia

My real conversion took place among the Mayan people. With them I discovered how the power of faith can move mountains. Faith has the power to transform ourselves, to force us to get involved in radical enterprises, and feel passionate about it. Above all, the recent awakening and revival of Mayan spirituality have shaken one of the most important teachings I received: the fact that there's no salvation outside the Church. I learned that there are alternative spiritual lives, which can also be as profound. But I also learned, unfortunately, how faith can divide us, as it is taken as an obstacle to get to know others whose faith we misunderstand. The passion that comes along with faith, as many of you have said, is the engine that propels our actions.

Dr. Juan Silva

We have found that the relationship between the government and faith-based groups—or pastorals—has a great potential to create synergies and provide a service to people who haven't received any help from any other source, or who might have got it but in an unprofessional manner. So in the first place, our task consisted of documenting all the work of the pastorals that the public health system has not documented before. That is, in the public health system nobody teaches how to take care of terminally-ill patients in their own homes. That is something that public health schools don't teach. And this is an area where pastorals generated some knowledge based on their experience. They do this of course based on love and their religious convictions, something that is not present in healthcare systems. So they [pastorals] have some elements that healthcare systems lack, which is that motivation, love, passion, and spirituality to provide weaker individuals with care. And practically all religions have this common denominator.

So we have all these areas where the health system had never entered before, and these groups have taught us a lot. We have learned from them and we have helped them improve, from a technical point of view. We've done this by connecting them with local health systems, especially in Bogotá, where the government is from the left. Most of them, people in the Health Department, are not religious, but they still understood the benefits that these communities could bring to the health system. For example, many hospitals don't know what to do with a terminally-ill patient, for whom there's nothing they can do. Well, these communities receive them, or they take them home but stay with them there. So what this means is that these religious communities are now supporting the health system, regardless of their particular faith.

Perspectives on the Effects of the Economic Crisis in Latin America

Ripple effects of the global financial crisis, though it has its origins in financial capitals far from Latin America, have already reached the region. Participants noted that the crisis was most clearly apparent in trends around remittances and migration. With employment opportunities scarce in the U.S., fewer people from Latin America are migrating there. Related to this, remittances have dropped due to the challenging employment climate in the U.S. for those Latin Americans already living in the country.

Schuyler Thorup

Unfortunately, it's a vicious circle. For instance, in Central America, the economic downturn in the U.S., combined with the increased deportations of undocumented workers back to Central America, is reducing the inflow of remittances, which typically constitutes anywhere from 20 to 35% of the GNP. This phenomenon reduces the capacity of these local governments to provide basic services and employment opportunities to their people, resulting in increased pressure to migrate and/or to become involved in drug trafficking or gang-related violence.

Elias Szczytnicki

At this point, the crisis is largely seen as a reflection of the broader world problems. It has not seriously affected Peru yet, despite the increasing numbers of layoffs and

BOX 1

Msgr. Alvaro Ramazzini on the Catholic Church and Land Reform in Guatemala

San Marcos reflects a broader and fundamental problem of this country—that there has never been comprehensive agrarian reform. Whenever we talk of land reform, the response has been that we are communists, because there are still people who recall the attempts at agrarian reform under President Arbenz (who was overthrown with the support of the CIA, in 1954).

It is significant that this historical memory is still used to dredge up the argument that religion was used there to support proposals that went against the interests of the poor. You should be aware that here in Guatemala people are very much attached to a very famous shrine, on the border with Honduras, Santo Cristo de Esquipulas. And that was the flag used by the “liberation”—that’s what it was called. Those who came to free the country from this incursion of Marxism and communism were represented by Arbenz, who entered to carry out the revolution. And thus, the attempt at agrarian reform was scotched. Sadly, like all

historical processes of change, there was violence; there is always death. And there comes a breeding ground for revenge and resentment that people take advantage of to harm others.

But there has simply never been comprehensive agrarian reform. And to this day when we talk of reform, the first argument people give is: “So, how do you want to divide up the land?” We respond that we are not talking about a land reform that would take land away from some to give it to others. The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace carried out a very interesting study on land reform, and it makes clear that land reform is not simply about taking land from some and spreading ownership among others. It is much more complete and integrated. We cannot deny that here in Guatemala there are large estates of vacant land, but here the right to private property is an absolute right. We do not recognize the role of property rights in that same way that we see them in the Church’s social doctrine.

the demands for help from the businessmen. The most worrying concern in Peru is the fall of financial remittances. The religious communities see the economic crisis as an issue tightly linked to justice and ethics. It is difficult to understand how earlier, resources to fight hunger could not be found, but now far larger sums are being mobilized to save the international financial system. Thus some countries of the region are demanding a change in the international financial system in order to democratize it so it can provide far more generous help to poor countries.

Msgr. Alvaro Ramazzini

When we think about the global crisis and its effects on Latin America, don’t forget that remittances are second among Guatemala’s income sources. So that represents a real problem whose effects we are beginning to feel as part of the global economic problems. They have not really hit us in Guatemala yet, but the analysts say we will soon feel the impact.

Fr. Óscar Azmitia

I think we have to differentiate between the crisis and the financial fall we’ve just had around the

world. We already had poor people even before this event—the millions of poor people in Latin America already existed before this recent economic crisis. The Obama administration—or any other government—can probably reverse the crisis in 4 or 5 years, as is forecasted, but they would be fixing the financial crisis, not the social crisis. The social crisis is related to a structural model that needs to be changed, and changed through faith.

Raul Rosenberg saw that the present economic challenges can bring not only threats, but also opportunities, citing the “demographic bonus” that Guatemala shares with many other countries in Latin America. In Guatemala, 69% of the population is under 30, which represents a tremendous opportunity to harness the power of a large working group. However, 62% of this generation is poor, and 72% are outside the educational system. If these people have access to education and job training, they can contribute to the challenge of development. Lacking formal access to the system, Rosenberg suggested reaching out to them through informal education with a behavioral focus targeted to change negative patterns in a short time.



left to right:
Sister Anita, San Marcos,
Dr. Zilda Arns Neumann
and Schuyler Thorup

Emily Fintel

I don't think that what Latin America faces is so different from the challenges the rest of the world faces. One real danger that we have to be aware of is trading long-term sustainability for short-term crisis management. How do you reconcile what we need to do about climate change and the need to create better livelihoods, with the urgent need to mitigate the crisis? AVINA believes that innovation and partnerships are more critical than ever in this environment. We see the crisis as an opportunity for social entrepreneurs to bring solutions to bear on these very serious challenges.

A Religious Marketplace: Reflecting on Tensions Between Catholics and Protestants

For hundreds of years, Latin America has been, in terms of religious identity, almost wholly Roman Catholic. As in much of the rest of the world, the last several decades in Latin America have been marked by pronounced increases in proportions of the population that identify with other, mostly Pentecostal, Christian denominations. Participants noted that this shift had already had profound social implications, and that the story was still unfolding.

Some participants were critical of the new groups, accusing their teachings of being hollow, and predicting that they would fail to answer the needs of the poor in the long term. Fr. Óscar Azmitia noted, "For the evangelical churches, poverty is your problem, and you have to deal with it," claiming that these churches were not seeking to affect needed structural changes in society.

Msgr. Alvaro Ramazzini said that what he feared was not the rise of Pentecostalism per se, but rather that Pentecostalism was being used as a vehicle for religious fundamentalists.

Others among the participants work closely with Pentecostal groups. Dr. Zilda Arns Neumann said, "We have been working with Pentecostal groups [since the Pastoral was founded 30 years ago]." Corina Villacorta of World Vision said that her organization actively seeks to engage new Pentecostal churches in social work.

Carol Lancaster framed the discussion with the overarching question of why so many have moved away from the Catholic Church to evangelical communities in recent years. She noted this was true particularly among indigenous populations, and asked if it has been due in part to the fact that Catholic leaders were often identified with the ruling elites, while those who had little to gain from the existing system were open to change. She suggested looking more at the practical connections between religious non-governmental organizations and social work—how effective are they, how do they manage the relationship between religion (including proselytizing) and service delivery, what do they see as their responsibilities, and what psychological roles they play. These issues have not been fully examined and without further inquiry we do not fully understand the phenomenon driving evangelicalism in Latin America.

Msgr. Ramazzini was hopeful about the potential for religiously-inspired social change in Guatemala. He believes that "the vast majority of Guatemalans are

seeking to link their faith to practice, to relate their faith to their lives,” but that achieving success is still far away. He sees in the Catholic-Pentecostal divide a “crisis of Christianity” in that people have forgotten the essence of Christianity, which can be boiled down to just two things: to love God and to love your neighbor. He said that 98% of Guatemalans are Christians, adding, “If you ask any Guatemalan ‘Do you believe in God?’ He will say ‘Yes, I believe in God.’ ‘What is your religion?’ They will say ‘I’m a Christian.’ But the next question is always: ‘Catholic or not?’”

Patrick McDonald

Tensions among Catholics and Protestants, especially in Latin America, are real and they do impede our work. It seems that every time we add a Catholic organization or community [to the network of organizations we support] we lose two Pentecostal ones. It is tribal warfare, and it is profoundly sad and childish. There is an urgent need to get grownups around the table and to talk about what can be done together.

What we find is that if discussions are about what we disagree about, they are short and acrimonious. If they are on the action that we agree together is needed, they are productive and we find ways in which we can work together. There is an urgent need for dialogue, but it is a tough one to start. There is plenty of blame to go around, especially the unhelpful rhetoric on both sides. But children need to be fed, and helping children, we agree, is what God intends. We can all agree—readily—that no child should be exploited and abused. I am a firm believer that if we can define a common agenda, all will start to behave in better ways. When people work together they realize that the other is not the monster that prejudice would have them believe.

Mexico and Brazil are very divided. A major reason is that the Catholic Church has lost many members to Protestant denominations, largely evangelical churches. And the Catholic Church is entrenched, and tends to view losing converts as a loss of power. This is odd as Jesus had a lot to say about power and about finding it in laying it down. Jesus gave religious bigots a very hard time and as Jesus seems keen to give people ‘new birth’—analogous words for a new deep and meaningful experience of the spiritual life or ‘the divine’—and to disciple people into becoming all he has intended them to be: free, fun, daring, vibrant, alive, generous people bonded together

in love with others that can keep them accountable and encourage them in service. It hence seems reasonable that each person should serve where they find the possibility of spiritual fulfillment and belonging.

Another way to look at this is to go back and look at the word ‘Church’ which is a Greek word meaning ‘gathering of saints.’ It follows that these places are communal (gathering) and full of people who are ‘saints’ or at least try to be. If people find such places then surely anyone who loves Jesus would rejoice regardless of what such ‘gathering’ is called. Instead of envy at the ‘sheep going where the grass seems greener’ any Christian should rejoice that their sheep get fed and nurtured and perhaps work harder to fertilize the grass under their own feet and make it nice and rich for other sheep nearby. But, remember, the church is both a hospital and a battleship: it is full of people who are, just like me, terribly imperfect. That said, when the church works—and it often does—it is a wonderful force for good.

And my experience is that some of the very best social work on earth is being done by the Catholics. The approaches of the Protestants can be superb but they also can be naïve. Much more could be learned by looking at the work of the Catholics.

Schuyler Thorup

In that [the new Protestant churches in Latin America] are organizations of faith, with the capacity to mobilize and influence people at a large scale, I see that it creates more opportunities than challenges. CRS is not in competition with anyone as our faith-inspired mandate focuses exclusively on responding efficiently to the needs of the poor and excluded so that they may live full and dignified lives. As an organization, we do not engage in evangelization; we do not build churches; we do not distribute bibles; we do not hire only Catholics or even only Christians. We are inspired by the Gospel to do the work that we do, however, we see it critical that we maintain a firewall between the provision of assistance and solidarity and the propagation of the Catholic faith. Indeed, our mission statement clearly delineates that our programs are based on “need, not creed, race or nationality.” This is an important philosophical choice but also a plainly pragmatic one—we can’t be seen to be influencing or favoring one faith group over another, because by doing so, we would put our activities and staff in danger and almost certainly diminish our ability



to work effectively in many countries around the world.

Thus, opportunities have been created for building strategic synergies with non-Catholic, faith-based organizations. Our concern would only manifest itself if there were to exist overt linkages between that organization's development and evangelization activities.

Corina Villacorta

We follow the statistics, and particularly in the past decade we have indeed witnessed the impressive growth of Pentecostal churches in many areas. We work with many of them, though our work to date has been more significant among the historical Protestant denominations. These in practice have had a more solid and consistent engagement with social issues. What we are seeing among the Pentecostals are first, new ways of addressing social issues, and second, wide variations in approach. These congregations are usually focused in the poor areas where they are growing incredibly fast. Their approaches are quite varied; some of them do not have much interest in social issues, but some of them do. We tend to partner with those churches that are already engaged in social work and increasingly try to encourage other Pentecostal churches that do not have much interest in social work to be engaged and to participate actively on these issues.

World Vision also has changed with the shifting religious landscape. It has been very interesting to see, in the last ten years, how the staff of World Vision has gone from an essentially evangelical organization to one that today includes more and more Catholics and other faiths.

Tensions between Catholics and the evangelicals are very much part of Latin America's history. Given that background, we have tried to do our work in a way that is not exclusively related to evangelical churches, but with a very clear orientation to work among them. For example, we never ask people to enroll in a certain church or a denomination.

We have a very clear process that guides our work, and that allows us to follow and profess our faith without proselytizing. We need to have a very delicate balance to achieve this and we have clear policies on how to witness to our faith. This calls for great sensitivity. We are an NGO with technical expertise and resources, and the reality is that this puts us at the point of departure in a position of power vis-à-vis local communities. So we try hard to come to our work in ways that do not put pressure on people. We have faith and convictions, but that faith also in many ways bars us from proselytizing in our work. Instead, we take what people have in their own faith lives and what they believe. We shape our roles from theirs. We only speak about faith when people ask "why are you here?" And "why do you care for us?"

We try hard to capture the essence of the ways in which communities lead their "faith life." This element is very present and very much a part of the culture in the areas where we work, with a symbolism that is particularly Latin American, though we also see it in Africa and Asia.

Fr. Óscar Azmitia

I heard recently from someone in the [Catholic] seminary that almost 35% of Guatemalans are Pentecostals.



Óscar Azmitia

I don't believe the rate to be so high, but we do know that Brazil and Guatemala have very large and growing numbers of evangelicals. There are more than 20 different kinds of Pentecostal churches in Guatemala. Such growth has to do at least partly with the fact that the Pentecostal churches can very effectively separate people from vice. They are able, in quite powerful ways, to help people free themselves from alcohol addiction, for example. The other side of the coin is that they promise great prosperity, while demanding very little from their adherents. These churches spread a message of, "We should only worry about ourselves! Others will be fine." For the evangelical churches, poverty is your problem, and you have to deal with it. It is the theology of prosperity.

One thing about this rapid growth that is very worrying and problematic is the level of fanaticism promoted in these churches. They spread messages that what is festive or fun should be attacked, and they promote a God that punishes over a God that loves.

According to what we hear, evangelicals are growing in numbers, perhaps at four times the rate of the growth in the Catholic population. They are also increasing their financial bases impressively. It is impressive how the presence of the churches has grown in the media—some people say that there are over 400 evangelical radio stations, to only 100 Catholic ones. There is also a political component—those parties supported by evangelicals are given a big advantage in elections. Currently, the relationship between Catholics and evangelicals is characterized by a lack of communication.

My biggest concern is the advance of fundamentalism, cloaked in Pentecostalism. I worry that the thousands of Christians that have left us have done so because they think they will find comfort elsewhere. I worry that faith might not be an impulse of solidarity anymore. I worry that we may become unfit to participate in a dialogue. I worry that ecumenism is not higher on the agenda, and that interreligious dialogue seems like a far-off goal.

Msgr. Alvaro Ramazzini

What I see, as I reflect on our country's religious landscape, is a scenario where the Christian religion, which most Guatemalans believe in, has been transformed into a weapon of confrontation and not of unity, where what prevails is the desire to win customers. And we use a contemporary phrase, that Guatemalan society has become an active religious market, as if religion were a supermarket where everyone can find what he likes. But you cannot find in this environment the essence of Christianity.

Unfortunately, there are influential sources in various quarters, relying heavily on Old Testament theology, that are advancing what we call a Gospel of prosperity. That is, if you have great wealth, it is because God has blessed you, but if you are poor it is because God has cursed you. Religion's proposition then is, "We will teach you how to act so that you will be blessed by God and succeed in your business. If you do well in business, it is because you really are doing what God wants, but if it goes wrong it is clearly because you are doing something that God does not approve of." This theology of



left to right:
Ana Victoria Pelaez,
Msgr. Alvaro Ramazzini
and Raul Rosenberg

prosperity is very dangerous, especially in a country that is so poor and so beleaguered and beaten down by violence. Truly, the almost 40 years of violence that we lived through during the armed conflict have left their mark on our country. I firmly believe that much of the violence that we face today is the legacy of the time of violence and repression, which was brutal.

Dr. Zilda Arns Neuman

When we first began to work in Florianópolis, there were three evangelical churches. I believe that all children, not just Catholics, are part of our ministry. I saw at the start that there was much tension between the Catholic and Evangelical churches. I committed myself to ensuring that the program reached all. I visited three pastors from other religions. I told them that Jesus said: “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” Not only for Catholics or non-Catholics, but for everybody. Thus, our Pastoral da Criança had an ecumenical origin. I began to ask the evangelicals and Catholics if there is any part of our Christian religion that offends us and divides us, because what I want is that all may have life in abundance. We found good ways to work together from the start.

Sylvia Davila

In the case of Guatemala, at least, I have seen impressive solidarity in the evangelical churches in two important historical events that our country has lived. One of them was the 1976 earthquake, and the other, the 36 years of internal armed conflict. In both circumstances, the evangelical churches gave away construction materials and money freely, especially to the indigenous

communities. What happened after those events is that the people of the communities receiving the assistance converted to evangelicalism.

A part of this story is that the secular groups, which traditionally were an important part of the Catholic Church, are not as committed as they should be. I work with the social pastoral at my parish, and it is difficult to encourage participation among the laity. There is a strong tendency to believe that people that do volunteer work do it because they have nothing else to do.

Without a strong social work ethos at the parish level, each individual can only be inspired to volunteer through his or her own will. Without this it is impossible to establish the foundation and processes that can help build a better society.

Questions at the Intersection of Culture, Values, and Faith

Several of the participants questioned how Latin America’s unique blend of cultures and faiths impacted policies and prescriptions for change—especially when efforts to begin dialogues or improve the lives of victims come primarily from official or academic sources that may not resonate with communities on the ground.

Corina Villacorta focused on the paradox of Latin America having such high levels of inequality and family abuse despite being overwhelmingly Christian. She noted that the situation poses a great challenge, and described World Vision’s process of examining the cul-



tural components of faith, asking how Latin American people learn and exercise their faith, through parishes, Sunday school, catechism, etc. Her goal is to work with the Catholic Church and other organizations in order to modify what she sees as a culture that is both tolerant of and complacent about the high levels of injustice on the continent. World Vision aims to shape new generations in such a way that they can break the old, restrictive patterns of how faith was learned, or how relationships were established, allowing them to build self-esteem based upon a positively-defined identity.

Fr. Óscar Azmitia addressed the challenge of intercultural themes for countries like Guatemala, Brazil, Bolivia, and Ecuador where there are large indigenous populations with histories of marginalization. He described looking at the situation through two new perspectives: the first is to challenge the concept of ‘enculturation’ proposed by the Church, which proposes that indigenous cultures be accepted generally, but not in areas where there are conflicts with the Gospel. When there is a clash between the gospel and the ways of the indigenous people, the teaching has been to discard their values, which causes a great deal of resistance among indigenous people.

Azmitia proposed looking afresh at the culture of the Mayans—in terms of population among the most numerous of the indigenous communities in Latin America—whose wisdom he regards as having largely been ignored. He lamented that people do not make connections between the Mayans, who discovered “zero,” built pyramids, and devised a solar calendar

more complex than the Gregorian calendar, and the present-day Mayans, who are regarded as ignorant and uneducated. He described a project at his university through which they are trying to bring together Mayan wise men and quantum physicists to build upon their common knowledge and to reinforce shared values such as respect for life, intergenerational respect, and care and respect for the earth.

Alfredo Mora also commented on issues of culture and faith that arise when working with indigenous communities. He said, “I have a problem when we go to an indigenous community and see practices that sometimes can be classified as child abuse, such as sexual initiation, which is a common practice in some of our communities; a relative with a girl. We have a serious conflict here, since there are scholars and anthropologists who protect the way of life of these communities. This is a serious issue that faith communities need to address.” He also sees that incest is a very serious problem in Latin America, citing high statistics of teenagers who are pregnant due to incest. He blamed cultural constraints and criticized governmental policies that institutionalize teenage victims but do not prevent contact with the abusers. He called for faith organizations to play an important role in cases like these and in all issues related to justice.

On Migration Challenges

Closely connected to the downturn in global and regional economic fortunes is the rising tide of migration from Latin America to the U.S. Msgr. Alvaro

Ramazzini connected migration trends directly to a system of land tenure in Guatemala which effectively prevented the poor from ever rising out of poverty. He posited that family breakdown was both a cause and effect of widespread migration. He discussed efforts underway to engage Catholic bishops on both sides of the U.S. border on comprehensive immigration reform.

Schuyler Thorup of CRS shared the preliminary results of one of the first large-scale surveys of Latin American children deported from the U.S. back to their home countries. The survey revealed some of the hazards, including theft and abuse, to migrants during the deportation process.

Msgr. Ramazzini

The problem of violence today in Guatemala is very serious. Last year, according to government statistics, there were more than 6,000 killings, “murders,” not people who died from illness, but murders. This concerns us and we are alarmed because, especially in Guatemala City, many people now live with the psychosis of insecurity.

But we connect this insecurity with the structural problems, the lack of bold policies to change the situation of poverty, the lack of opportunity for many young people and family disintegration, which also is the result of migration, migration which is the result of poverty, poverty as the result of injustice. It all forms part of the challenge and the need for change. We need to look for places where we can find the strength to break the cycle and bring change.

Schuyler Thorup

We have fairly extensive programming in the areas of migration and human trafficking, funded by the Department of State for trafficking and the EU for slave labor in Brazil. We support advocacy efforts for dignified treatment of those who are in transit, and not just to the U.S. We also focus on migrants going to Brazil, or from Nicaragua to Costa Rica, from Haiti to the Dominican Republic. People are migrating to areas where people have better opportunities for economic survival or security, and the Church feels very strongly that they should provide shelter, health services, and meet the basic needs of these migrants while they are in transit. We also support *casas de migrantes*, which are safe houses where migrants can stay for up to three days.

We also recently undertook a major survey of deported migrants, to get a better sense of the challenges they face and their stories. We surveyed 600 unaccompanied minors over the course of eight months. The data is still being analyzed, but even early on it is clear that some countries in the region have better infrastructures to receive unaccompanied minors, while others treat minors no differently than adults. Girls face special dangers. These are the issues of concern for us. What we are seeing more and more is the younger generation trying to migrate to reach their families, who have established themselves in the U.S. or elsewhere.

Sylvia Davila

We look at the social dynamics of immigration. We want immigrants to think not just about money but also to reflect upon their families, what they leave behind, what they expect to find, etc. This initiative is taking place in all Latin America, and we also work very closely with pastoral groups and the work that the Church does, for example with the Jesuits, the work being done in Neuquén, Argentina, in Chile, in Mexico, in Bolivia, etc; all places where a lot of work is being done on immigration issues.

On Challenges Around Children and Youth

Latin America's youth are in crisis. Families are disintegrating, levels of child abuse are high, schools are failing both to impart values and to prepare children to join the workforce, and the allure of youth gangs seems to rise inexorably. These challenges were described by all participants, who connected many of these problems to the failure of faith institutions in the region to exercise their roles as moral authorities in their communities. Related to this, they saw that faith institutions have a unique opportunity to improve the prospects of youth because of their ability to work closely with families, something that they doubted that government could effectively do. Participants described some current interventions targeting children and youth.

Alfredo Mora

From a biblical perspective, childhood cannot be conceived outside the family framework. So there is indeed a direct relationship in the way we interpret this. I think the topic of family is central in our agendas on childhood. So we don't have to speak about families as



Panel discussion

a first priority, but we do have to refer to childhood and adolescence within the framework of the family.

When we look at this from a faith perspective, the solution includes the family. And that should be a priority. If you look at some of the solutions provided by the state—solutions from the civil society—institutionalizing the child is among the first alternatives. From a faith perspective, the solution should consist of restoring the child's family, or providing an alternative family. So we change the perspective on the problem. And our experience has shown us that institutionalization should not be among the first alternatives; rather, we have to look for ways to get families back together.

Schuyler Thorup

Youth development is fairly new for CRS. One example is in El Salvador, where we recently became involved in a program with youth gang members. Actually, we became involved there at the request of the youth gang members themselves. The gang, Ocho, was led by a young boy, who was not more than 15 years old. The gang wanted to find ways in which they could make positive contributions, and not be perceived as pariahs in society. They were looking for an opportunity for some sort of group activity.

CRS tried to find an appropriate local activity they could become involved in, and came up with the idea of building a park where the gang members lived. The local municipality gave the land, and gang members actually participated in the construction over the course of a year. It is a very challenging environment by the

way, because at the same time you have Mano Dura and social cleansing squads going around—a very violent and harsh place to be. Of those 30 individuals who came to us initially, after a year and a half, almost 1/3 had been killed, including the youth leader. So, while the program was very worthwhile, there are challenges working with these communities. But the church has a natural role here.

Dr. Juan Silva

We've seen that communication between parents and their children is very difficult and many of the risk factors among teenagers are due to this separation between parents and children. We have been implementing a proven strategy that consists of helping parents learn aptitudes to raise their children. We also teach parents effective strategies to discipline their children and guide them on healthy actions for their future, and even strategies to help their children cope with stress. These are the fundamental elements. The strategy is based on love and limits, that's the cornerstone, and then we establish clear rules at home, promote good behavior, and build communication bridges.

And we believe that religions are connected to this. In the first case, they help with education, child care, love to the child; and in the second case, they help strengthen bridges, harmony, and love between parents and their children. I think these are values shared by all religions. So we think there is a connection between public healthcare and religion.



Corina Villacorta

We have had some interesting experiences with networks formed by children. Sometimes they are called “Friends Clubs” or “Children’s Parliament,” “Networks for teenagers,” etc. And what we are seeing now is not only that they participate by themselves in these groups, but also that there is a cohesive element reminiscent of what brings gangs together; it’s their mutual trust. We participated in the study on violence that the United Nations had around 3 years ago, and we were determined to include the children’s voice in this study. I don’t know if you are familiar with the results, but they are appalling: Latin America occupies the second place in childhood violence in the world, after Sub-Saharan Africa. So that led us to reflect on what is going on in the family, at the community level, and why the majority of abuse cases against children take place in their own homes. There is also the issue of street violence in cities.

We are working in Colombia and Chile and there we have local donors that help with local programs. So teenagers from an upper-class church get involved with teenagers from poor communities. We are really encouraging these meetings between rich teenagers and poor teenagers from the same city. Hopefully, this type of human encounter will help to shape a new generation that views life in a different way.

People are eager to manifest their solidarity. Wealthy people in our region have enough material things, and now they need something spiritual. So we need to promote and facilitate these bridges between different sectors of society. We need to connect “the north and the south”

within our own countries; we have developed and underdeveloped worlds within our region. We need to promote this type of cooperation in our continent, but of course we also need cooperation from areas outside.

Corina Villacorta also addressed the fact that the groups most affected by HIV/AIDS in Latin America are women and children. She spoke of the need to solve the problem by focusing on integral development, teaching children and adolescents to respect and care for their bodies. She sees this as a challenge due to the cultural constraints mentioned by other participants, which lead mothers to hide the rape of their children by a family member. World Vision has a program called Channels of Hope, also active in Africa, which works with churches and priests to address the taboo topics of HIV/AIDS and sexuality in order to overcome people’s deeply rooted reluctance to discuss sexual topics. The program seeks to inform and educate about HIV/AIDS to overcome ignorance and misrepresented information, to raise people’s responsiveness to the problem, and to call for solidarity.

Dr. Zilda Arns Neumann

More work on cultural values needs to be done. There are problems such as corruption, lack of solidarity, and others that are due to lack of appropriate values. The priority thus should be to educate children from the mother’s womb. We need to strengthen faith within as one component of integral development. This integral development should target physical aspects, such as health, nutrition, as well as social, spiritual, mental, and cognitive development.



There should be continuity with the youth. There are Pentecostal sects that go out and ‘hunt’ our teenagers. I remember a story a bishop told me about a young boy who had received baptism, first communion, etc. and then the bishop saw this boy some years later and asked him how he was doing. The teenager said that he was working now for some Pentecostal religion—I don’t remember which one. The teenager said “the Catholic Church did not offer me anything, whereas the Pentecostal Church asked me to deliver magazines, and then we started doing other things together, sports etc., and eventually I liked the religion and stayed with them.” So teenagers need to be busy all day long.

Dr. Juan Silva

What I said before are specific topics at the local level, but at the regional level we have created the “strong families” course. The objective is to improve communications between parents and their teenage children, in order to decrease risk factors among adolescents, such as alcoholism, drug addictions, and other dangerous activities. And it is all based on a workshop that promotes both love and limits, and we establish rules for the household, encouraging appropriate behaviors, consequences of bad behaviors, and bridges between parents and children. We did this for the Health and Early Childhood Pastorals in Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico. This strategy was very well received. This strategy was designed by the PAHO, and welcomed by the pastorals in all these countries, and now we want to have a national workshop in all these countries. In Central America, we have done it in Nicaragua. Our concern is how to move

from the pastorals to the parishes, and there can be problems in that respect, because it’s not easy for this to move down from the pastorals to the bishops, and then from bishops to individual parish priests.

Family was central to the discussion on children and youth, and many participants saw it as the key to solving children’s issues. For Elias Szczytnicki, a strong family and a well adjusted child go hand in hand: “My position is that the family is probably the best instrument to deal with problems in childhood and adolescence. In turn, some of the problems among adolescents are the result of problems in their families.”

The discussion on family also raised definitional questions, as Raul Rosenberg noted: “Family is certainly a topic debated in the public sphere, as we haven’t come to an agreement yet as to what family means in all these different situations. For example, the connotation of ‘family’ 40 or 50 years ago in Latin America was very different from the one we have now. The statistics show that a little bit more than 30% of homes in Latin America have one parent only, in most cases headed by a woman. For some institutions, this does not constitute a family. So, what constitutes a family? I think that we should act based on human charity, on quality, and we can’t underestimate a single woman who is raising her children by herself. This is also a family.”

Ana Victoria Pelaez echoed Rosenberg’s call to look at the reality of Latin American families, noting that the image of the ideal family is often difficult to reconcile with the reality of children in institutions, children

raised by a single parent, children in dysfunctional families, working children, etc. She also addressed a growing feminist stance which claims that family promotes patriarchal schemes and therefore women's submission is perpetuated and passed on to children.

Education was a prominent theme, with participants calling for greater "education for pluralism," in which children are taught to accept others with different religious identities, races, cultures, and so on in order to aid work going on in Latin America to improve the condition of excluded sectors of society such as indigenous and African-descendant communities. Participants called for faith institutions to play a greater role in changing the educational system so that it promotes values and change.

Issues of Coordination and Capacity

The challenge of coordinating efforts and a variety of capacity issues were discussed throughout the seminar by virtually all participants. Networks were emphasized—from their creation to building and strengthening alliances among partners—and the challenges of forming and maintaining successful networks sparked debate among the participants. Participants judged the relative strengths and weaknesses they faced as faith-inspired organizations as they built alliances and networks—from organizational issues to moral ones, such as in Dr. Zilda Arns Neumann's case when contention occurred over alliances with what was judged a corrupt and dictatorial government.

There is a central need for more and better trained leaders, several participants emphasized. Elias Szczytnicki called for the creation of interdisciplinary groups that are trained to work and transform others. Many saw a need to move beyond "preaching to the choir" training techniques that fail to create new allies and leaders outside of those who are already invested in faith inspired movements. There was also a discussion on the issue of accountability for religious leaders, with debate over how to demand concrete results, to create an environment that allows for criticism of religious leaders, how to overcome entrenched Church hierarchies, etc. Dr. Zilda Arns Neumann and others gave detailed examples of how their organizations track performance and results, and the type of alliances they form.

Dr. Juan Silva spoke of the WHO-PAHO's realization

that there was untapped potential in the health pastors, who work to help excluded and destitute people otherwise rejected by society due to their disability. He also recognized that the pastors face many challenges to providing effective humanitarian services, such as a lack of trained and qualified volunteers, and a lack of formal recognition from the health system, which prevents them from referring cases and forces them to work in isolation, with few resources to solve difficult cases. He noted that these religious communities do their work regardless of a patient's faith, "whether the person is an atheist, a Jew, or any other religion, because they are simply providing humanitarian assistance."

On alliance building, Dr. Silva explained, "Since what we are doing is constructing knowledge, we are building up knowledge, we have to start from the bottom, the building needs to begin at the bottom, we can't start from the top. So our idea is to create and test models that begin at the bottom so that later they become more general policies, of a higher rank. Of course we have the blessing from the top of the hierarchy, but the operationalization takes place at the base. So we've created connections to provide training, also connections between these groups and the community, and connections in conceptual development."

Corina Villacorta

For the work we do at the national level, we always rely on alliances, which vary from country to country. We have had the privilege to cooperate with both faith and non-faith based organizations on public policies dealing with childhood protection. At the regional level, we participate in the Global Movement for Children, Latin American Chapter, which brings together UNICEF, International Plan and Save the Children. These groups work together in Latin America, with an increasing search for a bigger impact on the Organization of American States and on individual governments, through the Inter-American Children's Institute. So we are working at these three levels on topics related to impact, which is a relatively new area for us.

We are trying to define why and how we should form alliances, and what we need others to do. I believe sometimes our work is so scattered that it is hard to gauge its real impact. We need more rigor in the way we measure our impact and in the methodology we use. That is a big challenge for all of us. Sometimes measur-



above: Alejandro Bilbao and Sylvia Davila;
right: Corina Villacorta



ing intangible things is very hard: how do we measure commitment, voluntary work, etc. I think we have a lot to learn about strategic alliances; we need to find more practical methodologies, we need to put our words into actions. As some of you were saying, the magnitude of this problem is worrisome, so our alliances need effective and efficient methodologies that work well.

Ana Victoria Pelaez

Regarding some positive and negative aspects about our work, and about some concerns that I have—our main focus is on impact. We want to analyze how the work of our faith-based organizations can contribute to development in our countries. But how do we do this without making it look like something imposed by the Church? We all want to sell that positive image associated with a faith-based organization. But I think there are other ways to have an impact, probably in ways that are harder to measure. I’m not talking about the kind of impact we can measure and say, for example, three laws were passed, or three ministers were approved by the Interreligious Council, or 15,000 lessons given on sexuality somewhere. The work I’m talking about should go beyond all this, and it’s certainly the longer route to achieve impact, but it’s effective.

Sometimes groups or people from different religions and experiences come together in order to target a common problem, and all these create interesting synergies. In turn, some of these people also attend other meetings organized by different groups, sometimes the government, so they get there and they already have some agreement and opinions on topics discussed before, in

the interreligious dialogue. So they have background on, for example, values, development, etc., and they attend these new meetings, for example, to discuss a bill, and they bring all this valuable information from interreligious meetings they had before. So the impact of these interreligious groups is there, it might not be so tangible, but it’s there.

Also, when leaders from different religions come together, they get to know and respect one another. This knowledge and respect is then taken to more basic strata of society, to smaller communities, and people there learn about this too.

This is not the type of work where we can, for example, receive a certain amount of money in order to achieve a very specific result in a certain amount of time. But there is some impact being made even at the international level, as Katherine Marshall knows. This impact may have a low profile, but it’s effective. I also think that this interreligious work serves as a stage to achieve even higher stages of impact. These higher stages, for example, may involve training new people, which in turn helps to create new networks.

We need to strengthen local networks, such as networks within the south or within the north, but also the dialogue between the south and the north. We need to globalize our problems so that solutions are also global, similar to the global dialogue that we had last year among four countries, thanks to the World Bank. This dialogue facilitated discussion and the process of knowing one another.



Dr. Juan Silva and Dr. Zilda Arns Neumann

Ideas for Action and Closing Comments

At the meeting's close, Raul Rosenberg, underscoring the many valuable ideas that had emerged in discussions, asked participants to focus on the three priorities that each saw for their institutions. This pointed towards the final conversation on the creation of networks and strategic alliances.

Priorities

Fr. Óscar Azmitia summed up his priorities as helping the poor, improving education quality, and achieving sustainability of processes. **Alfredo Mora** was concerned with training better leaders “who are professionally developed, but also transformed as human beings.” He saw a lack of a critical mass of leaders with both the technical and human resources to achieve transformative change. He also spoke of establishing networks to take advantage of successful experiences. **Alejandro Bilbao** called for encouraging and strengthening networks to have a continental impact, starting with the Jesuits. He believes that alliances should be created between Jesuits from the South and the North to form a successful network.

Carol Lancaster asked the group whether political action was a priority for them, noting her belief that significant societal problems should be treated with political action. **Schuyler Thorup** addressed her point, noting that the hypothesis of CRS is that if the Church's platform is broadened to include topics related to peace and justice, then the Church will be better suited to

deal with political issues in different countries, such as corruption, immigration, drug trafficking, and gangs.

Elias Szczytnicki focused on education as a priority, noting a crisis in religious education. He noted that a huge gap exists between Latin American youth and their knowledge of religious teachings. He called for faith-based communities to help turn schools into places that foster equality—challenging the status quo in which the best education is offered by religious institutions that are not open to all, thus promoting inequality instead of fighting against it. He also called for faith groups to offer their support and resources to conditional cash transfer programs, such as the “Family Stipend” (Bolsa Familiar) program.

Juan Silva defined his priorities as creating strategic alliances, building off of successful strategies, for example by creating a database of knowledge to track and share successful initiatives such as the one cited by Dr. Arns Neumann that inculcates values in young children, and the PAHO's Strong Family program, which promotes the relationship between parents and adolescents. He also prioritized measuring both processes and results honestly, and disseminating that information to the public.

On Creating Networks

The group emerged with a robust consensus that creating networks and strategic alliances is a key priority. Participants linked network creation to action, noting that groups who have faith as a common denominator can have more power to create and influence public policies when they are united around issues and values. The

idea of focusing on common objectives was discussed, with many suggesting that interreligious groups have an advantage in network building because they can formulate common values, such as the rejection of child abuse, to clarify their work and focus on public policies. There was also discussion and debate around the difficulty of creating viable and successful networks. Corina Villacorta noted that “everyone wants networking, but it seems that it’s very hard to realize.” People discussed how to carry out and sustain networks, which often fall apart after a period of initial enthusiasm and participation. Several called for defining “products” that could come out of the network as tangible evidence of their work. Experience led Corina Villacorta and others to caution against becoming too ambitious; it was preferable to stick to ideas that were truly practical. She suggested choosing one or two topics that are considered the most important

and realistic, creating a balance between what is ideal and what is practical, and identifying what faith-based organizations want to accomplish in the short and long term. Elias Szczytnicki proposed forming a group not just for advice, but also for academic reflection and study, which was well-received.

Alfredo Mora saw that a strong faith network would empower Latin American society by providing direction and hope that there is a new model for development in Latin America. He called for the model to be supportive, participatory, and integral, where the government, agencies, civil society, and faith groups can agree on basic points for the kind of development change being sought. The network should empower as many organizations as possible to successfully reproduce the model, and effort should be made to create a model that fosters

BOX 2

Dr. Zilda Arns Neumann on Alliances and Accountability at the Pastoral da Criança

We always work closely with the government. One of my children is a doctor. For 19 years now, he’s been working with the Pastoral, and he cross-references the Pastoral information with information from the government.

Once a month, our community leaders meet to evaluate our training techniques. We have “The Leader’s Book” where we have 26 indicators, all of which are computerized. So even after the first meeting, I had to show our impact, results—because I didn’t have any money or resources to keep this going. So then I realized that we needed a database not only to create statistical information and to get financial support, but also to encourage our own leaders and volunteers. So, during our first meeting, we created a database, which originates in the leader. So, every three months, our system would produce results from 43,000 communities in Brazil, which comprise more than 6,000 parishes, or more than 260 dioceses, in 27 states and the federal district. All these leaders, every three months, receive a letter, which I signed until last year, as the national coordinator. So this letter says “Dear leader: Congratulations! Maternal breastfeeding is at 80%” or whatever the database produced, or “Be careful! Maternal breastfeeding is weak,

at 20%... So visit pregnant women, visit mothers within a week after delivery, so that they don’t use a baby bottle with their children.”

We have a newspaper, of which we print 270,000 copies; it comes out monthly, and I think it’s around 20 pages long. We use it to exchange our experiences, and we hand it out together with the letter for leaders.

Every three months we have a radio program on 2,400 stations that transmits for 15 minutes a week giving the same message as in the newspaper. And the same message is reinforced during house visits every month, because when individual education is combined with mass education, the result is stronger.

I wanted to say that the Pastoral’s methodology is the art of success. We identify leaders, who are in turn trained in faith and life, and then we distribute, we democratize knowledge and solidarity. We attract local resources, generally related to the health system because—as I was director for 27 years before starting the Pastoral—I always felt that there was a lack of local community networks working for us.

So our information system has indicators, for example, that a pregnant woman went to a healthcare

center and was not helped, so we note that she wasn't helped and why: because the doctor wasn't there, because it was too crowded, and so forth. If a pregnant woman dies during delivery, we also track down why, the history of this woman. It's all computerized. So this is what happens... the woman went to the health center for pre-natal care, and she already had pains, but was sent back home. She went back, but was told that it wasn't time yet and sent her back home. And then she died. Then what we do is record the "Legal reason for not seeing the woman." So we go to the local Health Council to complain. If it was the doctor's mistake, we go to the Medicine Council... so this doesn't happen again.

We intervene in public policies. The leaders—for example, this happened in one community that I visited—the doctor had poor bedside manner yet he was a good doctor. The kids got better, but he always treated everybody really badly, especially the Pastoral. So the leaders, all wearing the white Pastoral T-shirt, white being the color of peace, and the cross, symbol of fraternal work, they all went to see him and asked to speak with him. He asked them to wait until the end. They had a birthday cake, and they sang "Happy birthday" to him. "It's your birthday today, and we're very happy that you see our children, that you have saved them, and we would like to thank you." A complete transformation took place in this doctor's personal life, in the way he treated people. So all actions started by Pastoral need to have faith, life, and human warmth.

Here we mentioned how sometimes the church and the government work separately. In my case, as a public servant, I've always worked together with both. After two years, UNICEF—which was the only one helping us financially—told us that they couldn't give us any more money. The bishop and I decided to talk with the government—it was during the dictatorship—and the government was against my brother, Don Paulo, who defended the political prisoners. So the government was against the Church, and my brother received a death threat. Anyway, we went to see the government and told them "We've reduced mortality, malnourishment, we organize vaccination programs, and other things. But now we need money to publish our books."

So after all this they suggested the formation of a partnership. And so some sectors of the Church said "How is it possible that the Childhood Pastoral is going to form a partnership with a corrupt government, with the dictatorship." The Church's Permanent Council—which is composed of all regional presidents—called me and asked me to explain this whole issue. I said "The Pastoral reduces suffering and saves lives. The government works with money taken out of our pockets. The money belongs to the people. It's better for this corrupt and dictatorial government to spend money through the Pastoral than to waste it on other corrupt things." So they voted; there were 13 bishops, and twelve voted in favor and one against the project.

inclusion and participation of all who are willing to help, empowers civil society, and can turn citizens into transforming agents. He agreed with Carol Lancaster that the network should have a political impact—not in the sense of forming political parties, but with the ability to affect the political structure and have an influence on power relations. Other participants agreed, noting that it shows institutional maturity when groups are able to make the leap into political action.

Corina Villacorta raised questions about the chances for success of Latin American faith organizations' involvement in public policies. She noted that faith

organizations already do work that affects public policies at the local level around health, education, commerce, and so forth, and that when speaking about impacting policies on the national level, it must be considered that the governments are often extremely fragile and weak, and lack presence in some of the communities where they work. She said, "I feel that it's not all about impacts and public policies, sometimes the government needs to be reformed first so that it can play its role. In our case, we've come across situations where we have to train mayors to develop their strategic plans! So there is a dialogue that exists with the government, as it is responsible for public policies, but some-



left to right:
Dr. Zilda Arns Neumann,
Sister Anita, San Marcos
and Katherine Marshall

times our governments are so fragile that our task ends up being to provide them with our support so that they can do their job.” She recognized the power of the community—peasants, young people, etc.—to introduce social change, which can function as a complement to a weak government’s work.

Fr. Óscar Azmitia described how his vision of a true network does not have to have a center, and is an organism where no one group propagates the overall message, but all participants make different issues their own and work from their own nodes on topics they are passionate about and want to disseminate for the others’ consideration. The network should afford the opportunity to discuss issues that have no other forum or context to be talked about. He noted, “Latin America, which has been monolithically Catholic up until some years ago, desperately needs to hear other versions and points of view in order to broaden our understanding and spirituality.”

Ana Victoria Pelaez underscored that it is important to start with and take advantage of network elements that already exist: looking for those people who are working in faith based organizations, examining the progress in their own countries, which topics have already been dealt with, and what networks already exist. “We have to foster inter-network communication so that we identify a common goal.” She believes that networks need to leave behind the territorial approach and instead adopt a more theme-based approach to networking, maybe in the shape of virtual networks, or roundtables focused around specific themes. She also called for the

need to strengthen capacities and provide information to network members.

Some participants argued that it was somewhat premature to move actively to create a specific new network, and that precursory steps were necessary, such as first forming an advisory group. **Alfredo Mora** felt that a network would arise when the group achieved a clear vision of what to do together and how. He said that the presence of the government is necessary as well, and suggested inviting governments to take part in the conversation, perhaps country by country at the local level, and then expand to the regional level. This would allow governments to see that other countries also have faith communities working on similar issues.

Alejandro Bilbao noted that the strength of the present group was in its wealth of knowledge about issues affecting children and youth, and he suggested focusing on that concern, and identifying the critical points for children and youth, as a first step. Fr. Óscar Azmitia suggested also focusing on the topic of ethics and values, as this incorporates projects on health, education, childhood, youth, etc.

The Berkley Center was suggested as a vehicle to help the group transform knowledge into learning. **Schuyler Thorup** proposed establishing a platform where they could place products that have been rigorously tested around different topics. Many different faith-based organizations could work on a given topic, such as children and youth, and then the Berkley Center could develop a filter for the programs, and other institutions

Elias Szczytnicki on challenges of multi-religious work in Latin America

Maybe this region in the world, with the exception of the Caribbean, is the least multi-religious. Let's be honest about this. This makes our job quite difficult at times. When we look at Latin America, we see that Ecumenism seems to work, now that Evangelicals have a stronger presence. However, when it comes to a multi-religious presence... it's harder to find. Maybe there's a little bit in Argentina, or Brazil, where there are important Jewish communities, with a strong public presence, or maybe Mexico. In other countries, however, non-Christian minorities are almost something exotic.

So it's hard to introduce a multi-religious perspective into a continent which by nature is quite far from this reality. On top of this, non-Christian communities are relatively new in Latin America. The Jewish community, for example, arrived right before or after the WWII, some refugees. Muslims, who far outnumber Jews in Latin America, have much less public presence. Then we have the topic of our indigenous brothers. It's still very confusing for my people to find indigenous leaders who deal

with political and spiritual issues separately. When we finally manage to get to them, we encounter a speech about vindication and protest. We try to approach them since we're looking for allies, just as we're doing here. They have a very underdeveloped organization, with educational and social services which practically do not exist, at least coming from the indigenous community. So they have little to contribute to this process.

So we find that it's very hard for us to 'sell' an inter-religious perspective in our region. For example, when Juan this morning was talking about possible topics from PAHO to include in our agenda, I was thinking whether his proposals could be applied in the Jewish and Muslim communities. We also face the problems other countries in the region face; we basically have two very different social levels, without a middle class. And the Jewish and Muslim communities are generally in the upper level. Therefore, they do not turn to public services, so many of their problems are not related to what we've been talking about here.

could access the database. **Katherine Marshall** built on this idea by describing work already underway at the World Faiths Development Dialogue and the Berkley Center. Her goal is to create a space where people can talk about difficult issues, without a major political platform, because other groups (such as the WCRP and the Parliament of World Religions) already cover the political angle.

In closing, the group voiced their positive view of the seminar itself, reflecting that the flexible and open format and the invested and knowledgeable participants forged a sense of real understanding and connections among the group that went well beyond simple tolerance. **Alfredo Mora** spoke of being grateful to be surrounded by "people and not institutions," and all were grateful for the contacts and strong ties created. The group urged that this foundational network be maintained and deepened, and looks forward to future communication and next steps.





About The Berkley Center Religious Literacy Series

This paper is part of a series of reports that maps the activity of faith-based organizations around key development topics and regions. These reports explore the role of religious groups in addressing global challenges as a way to bridge the coordination gap between secular and religious organizations in the common effort of international development work.



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