

## PROJECT '21'

### **BRIEFING PAPER (revised version July 1999) for contributors to the International Colloquium on Christianity, Poverty and Wealth in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to be held in New Delhi, India 13-18 (Monday – Saturday) November 2000**

1. The overall aim of the project and the focus of each contribution is to discern what actions Christians, their churches and organisations, should now take with regard to poverty and wealth in the light of their faith and the realities of the early 21st century. The findings of the study and the colloquium will seek to address four main audiences:
  - the ecumenical family of churches related to the World Council of Churches
  - national and local churches especially within the 21 countries
  - the 'Northern' church-related development agencies and
  - their 'Southern' partners.
2. Each contributor is asked to prepare a paper (up to 10,000 words) which reflects not just their individual opinion but the context out of which they speak. In most cases the context is a country or region but for some it is an international network or sectoral issue.
3. The paper should be based on a consultative process, involving various people and organisations including but not limited to the churches. The approach needs to be ecumenical, inter-disciplinary (drawing on the disciplines of economics, politics, development etc as well as theology), orientated towards practical policies, and respectful of the cycle of action and reflection.
4. Each contributor will listen as carefully as possible to the views of at least the following seven constituencies:
  - i) the poor or the congregations of the poor within the churches
  - ii) the wealthy or the congregations of the wealthy within the churches
  - iii) the leaders of the churches
  - iv) NGO's and people's organisations (Christian and of other faith traditions or none)
  - v) Academic experts especially in economics and development
  - vi) representatives of government
  - vii) representatives of industry and commerce (the 'private' sector).

Wider consultation within regions is not ruled out.

How these constituencies are approached will vary according to what will work best in the context but everyone will try to get a reasonable cross-section of opinion within each constituency either by careful selection or by talking with several groups. Care will be taken to include women, young people, the differently abled and disabled, indigenous peoples etc.

5. Each contributor will try to work through the same sequence of questions with each of the seven constituencies, though some questions will be more relevant to some groups than others. Questions can be grouped under four main headings:

### Analysing and understanding

- i) What are people's hopes and fears for the 21st century and what are the most important realities, good or bad, old or new, that will have to be faced?
- ii) How are poverty and wealth understood in your context by the poor and the wealthy?
- iii) What are seen to be the main causes of poverty and wealth and the gap between them (eg spiritual, economic, political, social, historical)?
- iv) What are the perceived effects on the poor and the rich of national and international economic and political policies?

### Biblical and theological reflection

- v) What do Christians and their churches in your context believe about the issues of poverty and wealth in the light of their biblical and theological reflection?
- vi) How central is combating poverty and bringing good news to the poor to their understanding of the Gospel and the task of the Church?
- vii) What are judged to be the most appropriate practical responses to poverty and wealth in the light of experience and reflection, especially theological reflection?

### Practical actions

- viii) What is actually being done and what new models and alternative approaches to combating poverty are proving or promising to be creative and viable, whether local or national or at the level of international co-operation?

### Recommendations

- ix) What steps should be taken by:
  - the world-wide ecumenical family of churches
  - the churches in your country
  - the 'Northern' agencies
  - the 'Southern' partners

to combat poverty and build effective alliances for justice and sharing?

6. It is strongly recommended that each contributor creates a small reference group (eg one person from each of the seven constituencies listed under 4 i – vii) to help with the listening process and with writing up the paper for the Colloquium.
7. Each paper should try to follow as far as possible the sequence of the four headings and nine questions as set out under 5 above so that we can compare them more easily at the Colloquium. It is essential however that each paper is accompanied by an Executive summary. This summary will summarise your conclusions under the four headings:

- i) Analysing and Understanding
- ii) Biblical and Theological Reflection

- iii) Practical Actions
- iv) Recommendations

and will add two more:

- v) the main issues from your perspective that we need to debate and
  - vi) a vision for the future.
8. When we meet in Denmark (25 –27 February, to be confirmed) each contributor is asked to report on progress (a proforma accompanies this briefing paper). All papers will then need to be completed and hard copies in Michael Taylor's hands by 15 August 2000 so that copies can be prepared and sent to everyone coming to the Colloquium to read and study carefully before they come.
9. At the Colloquium papers will not be read out but briefly presented (with the help of the Executive summaries) and then carefully discussed in working groups with four or five papers being worked on in each group. Members of these groups will be from different regions. Plenary sessions will then begin to discern for example the issues we need to work at together, what we want to say to the four audiences (one suggestion is that we set targets for the churches and their agencies for 2015), how we communicate with these audiences and what other 'outcomes' of the Colloquium (such as educational, visual and liturgical materials, and an ongoing process of action and reflection) there should be.
10. The Steering Group recognises that the work of producing these papers, whilst basically of a voluntary nature, will incur expenses. Your travel and accommodation will be paid for:
- the meeting in Denmark in February 2000
  - the Colloquium in India in November 2000

You are requested to estimate any additional costs such as:

- meetings you may need to call
- your own travel if necessary to consult with others in your context
- communication, postage etc
- personal needs.

If any of these expenses can be covered by your own churches and institutions that of course will be welcomed since money for the project is limited, but if not a proposed budget should be sent to Michael Taylor. Where necessary funds of up to £2,500 can be made available for the in-country studies but only for previously agreed expenditures.

Michael H Taylor  
July 1999

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