

Editorial Introduction

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This issue of *Transformation* contains a mix of papers on the theme 'Some Major Research Priorities in Transformational Development'. Some of them were presented at the Fourth IDR Workshop, which was held at OCMS in September, 2005; others were commissioned or volunteered subsequently. A second batch of papers on the same major theme is being prepared for publication in the January 2007 issue of *Transformation*. The previous issues of this journal which have dealt with IDR themes are as follows:

1. April 2002 (vol. 19, no. 2) Towards Evidence-based Strategies for Transformational Development;
2. April 2003 (vol. 20, no. 2) Christian and Other Approaches to Poverty-reducing Development Strategies;
3. April 2005 (vol. 22, no. 2) The Integration of Christian Mission and Transformational Development.

In the volatile battlegrounds for poverty reduction and the extension of justice and human rights, topics frequently emerge which require both greater understanding and the commitment of more resources by Christian Faith-based Organisations. For example, increasingly pessimistic assessments are being made about the probability of the Millennium Development Goals being reached by the target date, 2015 - still a further nine years down the line - especially in Africa. Is this not too early to adopt a pessimistic - and probably self-fulfilling-forecast? There is new evidence to be examined on both sides. For example, the negative consequences of the threefold increase in global petroleum prices in early 2005, and sustaining those levels into the second half of 2006, is causing a similar set of impacts on the economies of developing countries as the original 'OPEC Oil Shocks' of 1973/74 and 1979. These shocks ushered in two decades of Structural Adjustment Programmes under the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, with their well-understood consequences. Will the interna-

tional debt remission benefits conferred recently on the first 20 Heavily Indebted Poor Countries be neutralised by a further period of strain on these same countries' balance of payments placed by high fuel prices?

On the other hand, increased determination by developed countries to reduce levels of global carbon emissions in order to slow or negate rates of climate change indicates improving opportunities in future for producers of 'green fuels'. If the major share of the increased supply of green fuel comes from tropical annual crops suitable for peasant farming systems, it would seem possible to achieve significant positive impacts on rural incomes, farm productivity (via micro-irrigation, for example, especially in Africa) and rates of rural-urban migration. Numerous action-research projects are needed if the most effective ways to achieve these potential efficiency, equity and environmental gains (the rare 'win-win-win' situations) are to be adopted - and the MDGs attained, even in Africa.

Another growing and little-studied problem area receives attention in this issue, in Dr Makonen Getu's important article on TIP - Trafficking in Persons. This significantly reduces family well-being in both developed and developing countries. The article contributes to a clearer understanding of the complex range of human tragedies that this short acronym encompasses. It will surely encourage more effective strategies implemented by Christian Faith-based Organisations and other concerned agencies towards reversing these rapidly growing evils in the world today.

The editorial team would be glad to hear from readers who have new ideas or evidence-based experience re transformational development activity. If the response is significant we could well be justified in publishing a third issue in this current sequence on Research Priorities.

Front Cover: Urban Unemployment in Papua New Guinea (Photo: Malcolm Malone)