From 'Christians doing development' to 'doing Christian development': the changing role of religion in the international work of Tearfund

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1. Introduction

This article seeks to bring more nuance to recent discussions about the role of faith in faith based organisations (FBOs), and particularly in religious development NGOs. In recent years questions about the specific role of faith in the work of religious development NGOs have stimulated a rather polarized debate. Some scholars argue that the main purpose of FBOs is to spread their religion and that development activities are at best a 'means to an end' and at worse a kind of 'trojan horse' – providing a way to get access to vulnerable communities which veils the true intention of the organisation. These scholars consider that faith plays a very negative role and they argue that FBOs misuse their power as aid providers in an attempt to induce religious conversion (Bradley 2005, Hopgood and Vinjamuri 2012, Thaut 2009). On the other side of the debate a different group of scholars argue that faith can play an extremely positive role in development work because it enables FBOs to engage more comfortably with local populations, who are, for the most part, themselves religious (Benthall 2012). It is argued that because faith-based approaches to development often give particular emphasis to personal transformation they can bring about more lasting results and sustainable change (Bond 2004, Candland 2000, Tyndale 2006). Furthermore, they argue that FBOs have access to national and local networks of religious institutions, generally churches or mosques, and this allows them to extend their reach deep into local communities, to enter as co-believers and to work in a more sustainable manner with local institutions which will continue to exist within the community even when the development project is completed (Ager and Ager 2011; Dicklitch and Rice 2004, Jones 2012, Ware, Ware and Clarke 2016).

What has been notably lacking in this debate is in-depth, nuanced studies of the role of faith in the work of particular religious development NGOs (for exceptions see Bornstein 2002, King 2011). In particular, there has been very little exploration around the issue of whether faith shapes the very way that FBOs design, implement and measure their work. While different faith traditions may conceptualise development differently (Kim 2007), do religious NGOs 'do development' differently? Or does faith simply act as a motivator and a provider of local networks? How do FBOs themselves conceptualise the relation between religion and development? As the recent survey of Christian aid organisatiosn carried out by Lynch and Schwarz (2016) shows, the question of the role of religion in development work is something that stimulates a lot of discussion and debate within these organisations themselves and to which there is a very broad range of responses. They thus suggest that in order to further understand the specific role of faith in the work of religious NGOs it would be useful to focus "on FBOs' own discussions and debates … [in order] to see the varied ways that Christian aid groups interpret and enact their beliefs and practices" (Lynch & Schwarz 2016: 641).

This paper looks at Tearfund, a leading Evangelical development NGO and one of the ten largest development NGOs in the UK today. It seeks to show the ways in which faith shapes Tearfund's work, particularly its contemporary conceptualization of poverty and development, its programme design and its implementation strategy. It also seeks to show that Tearfund has not always worked in the way in which it does today and that, although always motivated by faith, it in fact started out working in much the same way as secular development NGOs. The paper traces the process through which Tearfund actively sought to bring faith into the centre of its development work. In doing so I seek to show two things: firstly that it is often not obvious to religious development NGOs themselves

how they should integrate religion into their development work; and secondly, that grappling with faith in this way can lead religious development NGOs to innovate new approaches to development that are at least somewhat outside of mainstream development thinking.

The paper starts with a look at the origins and early workings of Tearfund in the 1960s and 70s and shows how its work at this time was overwhelmingly secular in nature – that they were simply "Christians doing development". It then discusses how staff at Tearfund, and at other Evangelical development agencies, came to see this as a problem, and then traces the evolution of a solution to this problem, namely the genesis of a new Evangelical theology of development which seeks to combine material development with spiritual development into a holistic model of good change. The final section then explores how Tearfund has tried to translate this new theology into a distinctively Christian way of doing development with its partners and beneficiaries in the global South. Throughout the paper these discussions are grounded by examples of Tearfund's work in Ethiopia[1].

2. "Christians doing development": Tearfund's early years

Tearfund was originally established as a committee within the UK's Evangelical Alliance in 1968.[2] . The Evangelical Alliance started making small grants to missionary organisations working oversees and eventually set up a separate committee – the Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund Committee – to manage the process. As the number of donations and grants began to grow it was decided to incorporate the fund as a separate charity and in 1973 TEAR Fund (The Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund) was officially registered in the UK.[3]

Tearfund shifted away from working with missionaries quite quickly and began to work more with indigenous church organisations from the mid-1970s onwards. At this time many indigenous churches were setting up development wings and Tearfund started to give them grants to carry out relief and development projects. In many cases it was grants from Tearfund, and from other Evangelical development agencies from different countries, that led to the establishment of these development wings in the first place (Hollow 2008: 95-6).

In Ethiopia, for example, Tearfund had been funding the relief and development work of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) and in the 1970s it shifted to work with the indigenous Evangelical church that had developed with the SIM's support – the Kale Heywet church. Whilst social work, particularly in the field of education and health, had always been central to the missionaries' work in Ethiopia, it was only after the famine of 1973 that the Kale Heywet church considered getting involved in donor-funded relief and development. Following discussions between the church and the SIM, the Kale Heywet Development Program (KHDP) was established in 1977 and started carrying out its first projects. Following the requirements of Ethiopian law that religious work and development work should be kept separate, it became a separate organisation, changed its name to the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church Development Program (EKHCDP), and was officially registered with the government as a development agency in 1984 (Dalelo 2003:36).

At this time there was as yet no specific theory of Christian development. Christian values were what motivated Tearfund to engage in development work, but they did not shape the way that Tearfund went about designing and implementing its development projects. This caused a tension within the organisation and there were different views about whether and how spiritual development should be integrated with material development, or how evangelism should be combined with material improvement. In 1979, following concerns that it was acting in too much of a secular manner and was focussing only on material improvement, Tearfund set up a Department for Evangelism and Christian Education with a remit to fund projects related to evangelistic activity, church planting and theological education (Hollow 2008:195). From then on Tearfund was engaged in both types of work, but they were largely kept separate. This separation also became the focus of many internal discussions, with some staff feeling that the separation was appropriate while others sought a more integrated approach. There was a commonly used metaphor around this time of scissors where one

blade represented evangelism and the other social action, and both were considered necessary to help people. Stephen Rand, who worked with Tearfund from 1979 to 2004 remembers it like this:

> There were varying degrees of integration and separation. In some cases Tearfund was working with Christian NGOs that were specifically social action organisations, so they were doing the relief work while another part of their denomination was doing the evangelism. I think there were some people who would even have argued that if Tearfund was supporting a development project in a country and there were Christians doing 'spiritual' work elsewhere in the same country, that was still integral because the 'two blades of the scissors' were seen on a national basis rather than on an individual project basis (Stephen Rand, quoted in Hollow 2008:197).

And he continues:

> What seemed to be missing was the idea that Christians would do relief and development work in a distinctively different way than non-Christian organisations (ibid: 197)

Tearfund's work in Ethiopia during this period gives an insight into the type of work that they were doing. By and large, it is much the same as that being done by secular development agencies. During the 1970s and 80s the major focus in Ethiopia was providing emergency relief during periods of drought. Tearfund helped the EKHCDP to distribute food, seeds and oxen to drought-stricken communities (Dalelo 2003: 41, Hollow 2008:65). In the 1990s the focus shifted away from relief and more towards development and typical projects included income generating projects such as grain mills and green houses,, environmental protection such as soil and water conservation, cattle breeding, supply of water and electricity, and medical services (Dalelo 2003: 41-50). All these were very much the same as what secular NGOs were doing at the time.

By the 1990s both Tearfund and the Kale Hewyet church were growing unhappy with this approach to development. Drawing on new ideas about Evangelical social action that had been developing in Evangelical circles, and which will be discussed in the next section, Tearfund wanted to make their work 'more Christian'. They wanted to shift from being 'Christians doing development' to 'doing Christian development'. They began to start thinking about what a distinctively Christian approach to development would look like.

Meanwhile in Ethiopia, the Kale Heywet church was experiencing a number of problems being a church doing development projects through its development wing. A review of the church's development work was carried out at this time by an Ethiopian academic, and in a survey of 90 church leaders and project officers two thirds of them said they thought that there were unfavourable impacts related to the church's development work. Some church members went as far to say that the development projects were a 'curse' (Dalelo 2003:82-3). The review goes on to state that the money and resources that were coming through the development projects were leading to competition and rivalry amongst the member churches and that in many cases church leaders were using the funds in inappropriate ways. There was widespread corruption and huge internal arguments and conflict. The author of the review summed up the situation in this colourful way:

> Following the exotic ideas and practices encapsulated under what were called projects, almost all churches where the projects operated turned into a battleground. Love and concern for one another was replaced by competition and rivalry. One of the most respected church fathers… [said it was like] the behaviour of pack animals. Such animals graze on a field peacefully with minor indications of rivalry. But when grain like barley is spread on the field, their behaviour changes automatically and they become mad, kicking and biting one another. This applies to many churches where grain and some money have been injected from somewhere. People began literally beating if not biting one another (Dalelo 2003:83).

His conclusion was that the underlying cause of all these problems, alongside some managerial and accountability shortcomings, was the separation between the spiritual and development work of the church. The link between the church's overall mission and its development work was unclear to many in the church, and the tension between the two sections was seen to be at the core of the problem (Dalelo 2003:82, 85).

3. Integral mission: A new Evangelical theology of development

Meanwhile, theoretical and theological discussions about what a distinctly Christian approach to development would be, and about how the spiritual and the material could be brought closer together, were taking place in international Evangelical conferences and consultations. Tearfund leaders and the leaders of other Evangelical development NGOs were increasingly concerned that 'Christian development' looked remarkably similar to secular development. They wanted to do 'Christian development' rather than simply being 'Christians doing development'.

Between 1980-1983 the World Evangelical Fellowship convened a consultation on a theology of development. This consultation culminated in the statement released at the Wheaton Consultation in 1983, which set out a specifically Christian approach to development which built on the concept of 'misíon integral' developed by Rene Padilla and other Latin American Evangelical theologians some decades earlier (Clawson 2012, Padilla 2002). The participants chose to jettison the term 'development' altogether, which for them had connotations of modernity, materiality and sole focus on economic growth, and instead described the type of change that they wished to bring about as 'transformation'[4].

The Wheaton statement describes transformation in the following way:

> Transformation is the change from a condition of human existence contrary to God's purpose to one in which people are able to enjoy fullness of life in harmony with God. This transformation can only take place through the obedience of individuals and communities to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, whose power changes the lives of men and women by releasing them from the guilt, power, and consequences of sin, enabling them to respond with love toward God and toward others…. The goal of transformation is best described by the biblical vision of the Kingdom of God (World Evangelical Fellowship 1983).

The statement goes on to talk about different aspects of transformation, and claims that to move towards living under God's reign requires not just the spiritual transformation of individuals, but also the transformation of economies, cultures and socio-political systems. It presents a vision of holistic change leading in the direction of the Kingdom of God. Unlike 'development' it is seen as something needed not only by poor countries, but also by rich countries, which also need to be transformed in various respects. Thus 'transformation' can be seen as a biblical type of holistic change that is applicable everywhere.

The "development as transformation" movement grew in the 1980s and began to achieve greater prominence in the Evangelical world. As theorists and practitioners grappled with the idea various labels emerged, including holistic mission, integral mission, wholistic development, and transformational development. In 2001 Tearfund played an instrumental role in the creation of an international network of Evangelical relief and development agencies who would promote the vision and practice of integral mission. This network, known as the Micah Network, now has well over 500 members organisations and national networks in over 80 countries, all working to spread the idea of integral mission and to make it more mainstream. This has led to the concept of integral mission becoming well known and widely accepted amongst Evangelical development agencies and in the development wings of Evangelical church denominations throughout much of the global South.

Integral mission is a theology of Christian engagement with the world. At its core is the notion that there should be no division between belief and practice and that therefore Christians should engage with the world *as Christians*, all the time, in their families, in their workplaces, and in their politics. In the theology of integral mission religion is not a private matter to be kept separate from other aspects of life. Rather it is something that should infuse and permeate all aspects of life. Being a Christian is something that you should do full-time, not just in church on Sundays.

The worldview underlying integral mission theology is based on the doctrines of creation, fall and redemption. In this view God created the world and created people to live together in harmony, to be stewards of the earth and to share its resources equitably. However the fall was brought about by the work of the devil and people's innate tendency to self-interest. It led to human existence becoming corrupted and bent away from God's intentions. From an integral mission viewpoint this includes social sin and corruption as well as individual sin and corruption. Economic systems, political systems, cultures, society, all became infused with evil and twisted away from the way that God intended. This, then, is viewed as the fundamental cause of poverty and injustice. And its ultimate resolution is found in redemption. In the theology of integral mission redemption is not solely a personal, private affair, but it also social and worldly. In this understanding a central facet of redemption is bringing about the Kingdom of God in which there will be harmony, peace and justice.

The focus on Kingdom opens out redemption from the individual to the social and calls Evangelicals to look at the world around them and to be involved in its betterment. It is a radically different view to the mainstream premillennial dispensationalist theology that is predominant in many conservative Evangelical circles. And it has radically different implications regarding the value of social action in the world. From the viewpoint of premillennial dispensationalism it is understood that the fallen world will only get more and more depraved until Jesus comes back to bring a spiritual redemption for the saved. For these Evangelicals, still the global majority, redemption is thus a personal matter and the focus of action in the world should be only to save souls so that they too get to participate in the ultimate redemption. Trying to improve life in the world, from the dispensationalist perspective, is both pointless and futile. Integral mission thus offers a radically different perspective.

Moving towards God's Kingdom requires bringing about transformation at all levels and in all matters – individual and social, spiritual and material. It requires transforming individuals, communities, societies and cultures. And it requires bringing about peace, sharing resources, having people participate in the decisions that affect them, and coming to know Christ (World Evangelical Fellowship 1983).This transformation is thus holistic, or integral. It is often referred to as 'whole life transformation'.

Transforming communities is a central part of this endeavour. A key element of this is seen as 'restoring relationships' or, we might say, changing social relations. Since local churches are seen as the basic unit of Christian society, and they are located within communities, it follows to integral mission thinkers that the local church that should be the agent of holistic community transformation, both in the North and in the South.

In this worldview evangelism and social action should not simply be combined, but it should be realized that they are actually part and parcel of the same thing. The Micah Declaration on Integral Mission states it thus:

> Integral mission or holistic transformation is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. (Micah Declaration 2001)

In this approach there are many other dualisms that should be similarly collapsed - individual/society, sacred/secular, believing/doing, and so on. It is thus is a thoroughly non-modern theology. Indeed, some of its leading promoters explicitly frame it as a kind of 'recovery from modernity' and the supposedly false dualisms that came into Western culture after the enlightenment (Myers 1999:4-11).

The International Director of the Micah Network explained it to me like this:

> We do good works because we love… and in so loving the whole gospel is shared… I don't sit there thinking 'I must first do the good works and then I can do the proclamation'. I must just live life. So integral mission is not a project, it is a choice of a lifestyle.

Integral mission is thus a very public theology. It makes no distinction between private spirituality and public action and seeks to bring faith into everything.

4. Doing "Christian development": Integral mission at Tearfund

By the early 1990s the ideas and concepts of integral mission had become broadly accepted by Evangelical aid agencies. The question then became what it might actually look like to implement integral mission in their work. As a first step to bringing spiritual development and material development closer together Tearfund disbanded its Department of Evangelism and Christian Education in 1992 and merged this work into other departments. Then, a few years later, Tearfund established a team of theologians and development professionals to develop a clear theological understanding of what would make its work specifically Christian and distinctive. In 1996 this group launched Tearfund's "Operating Principles", which set out its understanding of a distinctively Christian understanding of poverty and development, and in 1998, following the appointment of Rene Padilla as Tearfund's International President, they decided to adopt the language of integral mission.

Adopting the approach of integral mission proved rather challenging in the context of the modern aid industry, which at the same time was reacting to the influx of many new religious NGOs into the development and humanitarian arena by seeking to build firm walls between 'religion' and 'development', and in particular between evangelism and social action (Fountain 2015). In 1994 the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief was launched and quickly became the definitive standard for good practice. Its article 3 states that "aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint" and insists that its signatories "will not tie the promise, delivery or distribution of assistance to the embracing or acceptance of a particular political or religious creed" (ICRC 1994). As a leading player in the humanitarian field and a member of the UK's Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) it was imperative that Tearfund signed up to the Code, which it did in the late 1990s.

The desire to adopt a non-modern approach in which evangelism and social action were inseparable elements of the process of transformation thus quickly rubbed up against the alternative modernist conception of development as fundamentally secular and separate from religious or spiritual matters which pervaded the aid industry and the policies of governments and donors. In response Tearfund amended its understanding of its role in bringing about 'transformation' such that, as an organisation, it was to play just one part within the broader integral framework. Its Theology of Mission states that:

> While we believe that biblical mission is integral in its aim and approach, this does not mean that we are all responsible for the whole of the mission all of the time. As Tearfund … we are one part of the larger body, and as such, we play a particular part …
>
> Tearfund's calling is to follow Jesus where the need is greatest and to work with the church to see people lifted out of poverty. Our expertise as an organisation is in international development and humanitarian aid, and so the context for us as we share the

> good news is the places and people who are the most vulnerable and marginalised in our world. We use our professional expertise to serve the church as it seeks to serve the poor and to discern the ways in which the church shares the good news of the gospel and reveals the kingdom in the world today. This is where we, as Tearfund, participate and share in the mission of God and seek his justice and transformation, working as part of the global church and alongside local churches in this aspect of mission wherever possible (Tearfund 2016:13)

Debates continue among Tearfund staff about how integral mission should be enacted in their work and there are a range of views held throughout the organisation. Notwithstanding these debates, the rest of this paper focuses on the actual ways that officially adopting the integral mission approach has led to major changes in the way that Tearfund works on the ground. In what follows I will show how through integral mission faith now shapes not only Tearfund's conceptualization of development, but also its programme design and its implementation strategy[5].

The overall goal of 'Christian development' is now seen as to help individuals and communities transform towards a state of peace and justice by healing broken relationships between people, God and the environment. Therefore part of Tearfund's re-focusing has been to emphasis the importance of relationships, and this is now stated in its Operating Principles:

> A desire for good relationships is woven into all our activities. We are not isolated individuals, but persons in relationships designed to live interdependently in communities and in the wider world. Therefore a constant question for us is, how does what we are doing affect relationships? (Tearfund 1996:6)

For Tearfund the way to actually do this in practice is to shift from funding church development wings and other on-the-ground Christian development agencies to implement projects, and instead to get them to facilitate the local churches to be the main agent of transformation in their local communities (Tearfund 2009, Raistrick 2010). Tearfund's Operating Principles state it this way:

> The church is central to God's saving purpose. It is the community in which God lives by his Spirit. We are, therefore, committed to working in partnership with evangelical churches, enabling them to fulfil their ministry to the poor … The New Testament gives little explicit teaching on either evangelistic or developmental methods. Instead it calls upon the church to be a caring, inclusive and distinctive community of reconciliation reaching out in love to the world. When we see the church in this way there is no opposition between evangelism and social action (Tearfund 1996:8).

Working with the local church helps to collapse the boundary between evangelism and social action because when the local church, already an institution of evangelism, adds social action into its repertoire this results in a single institution doing both spiritual outreach and also material development. This, from the viewpoint of Tearfund, is an important step towards bringing these two elements closer together to result in transformation. And while Tearfund as an organisation is not itself actively evangelizing, it is happy to support local churches that are. A long time Tearfund staff member explained it to me in this way:

> At Tearfund we always work through the church. There were people who imagined that the only reason that we worked through the church was for convenience or for reasons of financial probity, and those were relevant factors… But, and I used to stress this in the leadership team meetings, the main reason we worked with the church is that we were working with people who can share their faith.

Tearfund, and some of its Micah Network partners, have tried to flesh out what doing transformation with the local church means in practice. They have developed a process generally known as Church and Community Mobilisation (CCM), which seeks to empower churches to be the agents of

transformation in their communities. A Tearfund staff member described its aim in the following way, in a speech made to other Evangelical development professionals in London in 2003:

> The vision is of an army of ordinary people; grassroots members in their millions, equipped and empowered to bring local transformation to their streets and workplaces. The world can be redeemed by small local action in every neighbourhood of the planet. The powerless, who sit at the back of our congregations by their millions, are our capacity for this dream to come true. If we can envision and empower the 99% in our members who we have taught to be passive consumers of privatised religion, the church will become the most powerful agent for transformation the world has ever seen (Izsatt 2003:1)

There are a few different methodologies with slight differences in detail and emphasis, such as Umoja or the Participatory Evaluation Process (PEP) by Tearfund, and the Missional Cycle used by the Micah Network. However all CCM processes use the same basic five steps.

The first step is to 'envision the church'. Envisioning is defined as a process of passing on a vision to others. In this case, the vision is of integral mission and more specifically that the church should be involved in social action as well as evangelism. Thus the first step of CCM is spreading the vision of integral mission to local churches in the South. In a guide published in 2007 entitled 'Partnering with the Local Church' Tearfund explains:

> 'Integral mission'…is used to describe the church's mission to meet people's needs in a multi-dimensional way. We argue that proclamation and demonstration of the gospel should not be separated. Integral mission is about speaking of and living out our faith in an undivided way, in all aspects of life. … Since churches tend to separate proclamation and demonstration of the gospel, we will explain integral mission … by showing why the separation should not be made (Blackman 2007:10)

The envisioning process can include discussions with church leaders, training sessions and group bible study. Following that the church is equipped with new skills and approaches and may be given trainings on facilitation, teamwork, needs assessments and so on. Churches are encouraged to think about the community and its needs and how it might be transformed.

In step two the church seeks to envision the community. This is about getting people to think how they can work together for the betterment of their own community. Church leaders are invited to meet with community leaders and to arrange a big community meeting. During this and subsequent meetings the church facilitator will lead community members through a process of identifying their needs, analyzing local issues and making lists of local resources. A variety of participatory methodologies are used to collect the relevant information and for the community to analyse the situation.

The third step involves imagining possible futures, defining goals and making plans. Community members are taken through more participatory processes to imagine what changes they could make, with their own resources, which would improve their lives. They are then invited to make a plan of action, allocate responsibilities, and collect resources.

In the fourth step they then carry out the chosen action, and in the fifth and final step they meet back together and evaluate how the process went and the how satisfactory the outcome is. The idea is that they will then repeat this cycle again and again such that communal social action becomes an integral part of church and community life (Blackman 2007, Carter 2003, Tearfund nd).

This is clearly a very different style of doing development from Tearfund's earlier model and since the late 1990s Tearfund has massively changed the way that it works with its partners in the South. By

2015 Tearfund claims to have mobilized some 97,000 local churches across the world through its CCM process (Tearfund 2015: 3).

To work this way clearly requires a major change of operation on the part of the Southern partners as well, particularly the development wings of large denominations. They too need to be 'envisioned' and 'equipped' to work in this new way, and Tearfund generally starts by taking them through an organizational change process that tries to re-orient them from top-down hierarchical organisations to more bottom-up responsive organisations with a focus on local churches (Blackman 2007: 48)

One of the first denominations to go through such change process was the Kale Heywet church, which is now the largest Evangelical denomination in Ethiopia with over 7,000 local churches and some 7 million members. Its development wing, EKHCDP, is now a large development agency, funded by a number of overseas Evangelical development agencies including the Protestant Association for Cooperation in Development, Germany (EZE), World Relief Canada and others, and has separate departments covering areas such as urban development, integrated rural development, medical, water and children, and a network of regional and zonal offices. To shift this big organisation into a different way of thinking and working has required a major, multi-year effort, which in many respects is still ongoing.

The organisational change process, known as Project Gilgal, started in the late 1990s with a survey of the situation and the development of new statements of their vision, mission, core values and strategic direction (Yakob 2001). In the following years they have worked with Tearfund on a massive change management project, which has sought to embed integral mission deeply within the church structure and to enable EKHCDP to support the local churches to transform their communities. The focus has been 'envisioning' and training all members of the denomination about integral mission. A national change team was set up and a huge training program was implemented, starting with the senior leadership and then cascaded down the whole organization right down to the local church (Blackman 2007:51, Izatt 2003:3). Thousands of practical workshops have taken place at all levels of the church, right down to the local church level, covering issues such as teamwork, 'God's agenda', and participatory project planning. Small local churches have been encouraged to stop relying on local lay leadership and to employ a professional pastor who can lead the local change process

The outcomes of this new approach to development are still unclear. Some local churches have started to try to initiate small community projects, such as fattening sheep and goats, and producing and selling cash crops like coffee, sugar, onions and mango (Izatt 2003:5-8). From 2009 onwards Tearfund and EKHCDP have started to support local churches to set up Self Help Groups (SHGs). These are groups of 15-20 poor individuals who are organised together to share friendship and support and to save small sums of money, which can then be used to give loans to members to help them through times of need or to engage in income generating activities. By 2013 EKHCDP had set up some 3,800 SHGs in 1,800 local churches with over 60,000 members through Project Gilgal. As well as these financial aspects the SHGs focus on empowering individuals, building relationships, transforming behaviour and fostering independence. To evaluate the success of this work, and the role of faith in it, requires further ethnographic research at the village level. The point here has been to show how a desire to embrace a faith-based approach to development has led to a major change in the way that Tearfund goes about its development work.

Conclusion

This paper has looked at the way that Tearfund, a leading Evangelical development NGO, has sought to integrate religion into its work and to develop a new form of "Christian development". It has traced this process from the 1970s to the present day and has shown how Tearfund has grappled with this issue, expended considerable time and effort reflecting on it, and ultimately massively changed the way that it works in order to try to put faith at the heart of its development work. This detailed case study has shown that the integration of religion and development in the work of religious development

NGOs is far from straightforward. In the early years Tearfund was motivated by faith, but faith did not shape the way that they carried out their development work. Since the late 1990s, after years of theological discussion and reflection influenced by broader debates within the Evangelical world, Tearfund has developed a new and distinctive approach to 'Christian development' in which faith crucially shapes their conceptualization of development, their programme design and their implementation strategy.

I have also hinted at the tensions that exist between attempting to act in a non-modern way in the context of the modernist aid industry. Whilst Tearfund receives much of its funding from Christian individuals, trusts and churches, it also receives a significant amount from governments and large secular donors. It is thus pulled between the different value systems and different conceptualisations of 'development' and 'mission' held by these two groups of stakeholders. In practice this means that Tearfund has not been able to implement integral mission in its fullest manifestation and in many activities has had to separate 'religion' from 'development' rather more than it would have liked.

Even without the influence of secular donors acting in a holistic, non-modern way is itself extremely challenging in the context of the modern world. The potential to default into modernist dualisms is always there – whether by trying to bring together evangelism and social action (and thus acknowledging that they are separate) or by turning integral mission into a 'project' that is done by churches in collaboration with external aid agencies separately from their regular activities.

Nonetheless, the embrace of the theology of integral mission has led to very real changes in the way that Tearfund works with its partners and beneficiaries in the South. Using the example of Tearfund's work in Ethiopia, I have shown how the attempt to do 'Christian development' has led Tearfund to move away from carrying out large-scale development projects through the development wings of church denominations and to start instead to train these denominations to facilitate local churches, at village level, to plan and carry out their own community development initiatives.[6] Embracing a self-consciously faith-based approach to the way in which they do development has thus led Tearfund to change its conceptualization of poverty, its programme design and its implementation strategy.

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Notes

[1] Research for this paper is based on in-depth interviews with staff from Tearfund, the Micah Network and the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church carried out in Ethiopia between February and March 2010 and in the UK

between September 2015 and May 2017. Information was also drawn from an analysis of published and unpublished documents from all three organisations, a review of relevant Evangelical and academic literature, and my experience of working with and researching development NGOs in Ethiopia over the past 20 years.

[2] In later years similar Tear or Tearfund organisations were set up by Evangelical Alliances in other countries, such as Australia (1971), New Zealand (1973), the Netherlands (1973), Belgium (1979) and Switzerland (1984). Unless otherwise stated this paper refers only to the work of Tearfund UK.

[3] In the early days there was a lot of inconsistency as to the correct spelling and the organisation was variously referred to as TEAR Fund or Tear Fund. In 1998 it became Tearfund. I will use this term throughout this paper.

[4] The word 'transformation' was also chosen in contrast to the word ' liberation', which Catholic and Ecumenical Protestants had chosen instead of 'development' (Tizon 2008:69).

[5] Tearfund has of course changed the way that it works with partners in the South many times in the last 50 years and I do not trace all of these changes here. For the most part these previous changes were in step with changes in mainstream development thinking, for example the shift from top-down development interventions to 'small is beautiful' community projects and then to a participatory approach. What is different about the change that I discuss in this paper is that it was brought about by an explicit desire to integrate religion into the development process.

[6] It is unclear quite how distinctive this new approach is when translated into actual development interventions on the ground since in recent years many secular development NGOs have also started to carry out small-scale, market-based, self-empowerment projects in local communities.