
Editors' Introduction: Gangs, M&E, Special Issues, and Editorial Changes

Roland Hoksbergen and David Bronkema

We open this sixth issue of *CRDA* with notes about the two articles in this issue, announcements on future issues, and information about changes to the editorial team and editorial board. We encourage you to look at what lies ahead and to consider participating.

Two Articles

The first article addresses the difficulty of implementing transformational development strategies in gang-entangled communities like the ones in El Salvador. Author David Bueno, who grew up in El Salvador and has engaged in development work there for thirty years, realistically conveys the trials of development work interventions when gangs seem to control the communities and have penetrated even churches and Christian schools. He lays out the challenges, and ultimately asks others to join him in discovering how to be a redemptive presence in gang-controlled communities. What combination of work with individuals, community action, and advocacy for structural change should churches and Christian NGOs take on? Bueno closes the article by inviting “the broad development community” to join him in the conversation about how best to go about this work. What ideas do you have? **If you feel moved to respond to Bueno’s article, we invite you to send us your thoughts and comments at CRDA@accordnetwork.org.** We plan to publish a selection of this commentary/discussion in an upcoming issue. We are also planning for at least one virtual conversation with Bueno and those offering additional ideas after that issue comes out, opening up the conversation to a wide range of interested parties.

The second article, written by Subodh Kumar, Chief Data Officer at World Vision International, makes the case that Christ-centered organizations (CCOs) should engage in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) work that intentionally aims at extending God’s kingdom here on earth. After explaining how important such M&E work is, Kumar argues for a seven-point theological foundation upon which kingdom-oriented M&E work should be based. Building on these foundations, he argues, CCOs can structure M&E efforts according to what he calls a “Kingdom Impact Measurement Framework.” Kumar is responding to the

many advances in M&E strategies in the secular development community, many of which are excellent and helpful for Christian organizations, but he still wonders how Christian organizations are different in their mission, their work, and the way they evaluate their work.

While some CCOs are already working hard to implement M&E strategies that are faithful to their Christian mission, for many others this is relatively new territory. In this first of two articles, Kumar lays the groundwork, but much of the work of building practical methods upon these foundations remains to be done. In the second article, to be published in the summer issue, Kumar, along with some colleagues, will draw from their experiences at a variety of CCOs to present practical examples of methods that measure kingdom impact.

Special Issues

The most fundamental issue for the *CRDA* community is how a holistic gospel inspires, motivates, and shapes our mission to love our neighbors as ourselves, love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, integrate the spiritual with every other part of life, discern the character and role of evangelism, and learn how to make disciples of all nations in a multicultural world. The integration of faith and life has been addressed throughout Christian history, including in recent decades, in both practice and theory, and it is vital that we continue this tradition of continuous, prayerful, Spirit-led reflection and discernment, partly because we must keep up with the ever-changing world, but also because each new generation needs to keep learning from the best of what has come before, even as they generate new ideas and bring their Christian faith to life in their own times.

A sample of relevant questions to be addressed include the following:

- What guiding principles and strategies are the most useful in this integration?
- What are the major struggles organizations face in their attempts to be faithful to their Christian faith

in their work, and what are the reasons for these struggles?

- What is unique about the Christian response to present-day challenges in social change and transformation?
- How does Christian faith lead us to face such challenges differently than would secular organizations, or those of other faiths?

In our first special issue, likely to be published in the winter of 2023, the journal will tackle this topic straight-on. **If you have done some serious thinking about how Christian faith impacts our approach to life and mission, please consider submitting an essay for this special issue.**

Beyond this foundational special issue, we are also aware of how perspectives on faith and development are activated in the real-life issues that face us every day. As we consider the relevant issues, we are amazed at how much the development landscape is changing. For example, COVID-19 burst onto the scene in 2020, the impacts of climate change grow every year, and now the Russian invasion and war in Ukraine seem destined to change global relationships everywhere and at all levels. In an effort to develop a list of key contemporary issues, our January *CRDA* board meeting held a brainstorming session on the many issues we need to address more intentionally and more faithfully. We came up with the following topics around which we are planning a number of special issues in coming years. Each issue *CRDA* takes on will wrestle with the overall question of faith integration as it comes alive in practical, real-world ways:

Refugees, advocacy, and resettlement. These are big issues the world over, both in countries that have received much press, such as now in Ukraine, but also in less-publicized situations like Lebanon and Uganda.

Decolonization and racism. These are uncomfortable topics, but often seem to be lurking behind many of the interactions between North and South. Can we discuss these openly? Honestly? Inclusively? Redemptively?

The impact of COVID-19. How it impacts the poor and the possibilities for development, especially among specific groups including those of different faith traditions.

Youth, gender, and development. Many in the *CRDA* community work specifically with youth in development, while others emphasize programs that work with women/girls. What is, or should be, unique about our Christian efforts in these fields?

Efforts around the world (e.g., India) to restrict religious institutions. This includes, but is not limited to, Christian institutions. Such

suppression is often witnessed in how governments restrict funding from abroad for religious institutions. How are Christian NGOs responding?

The rise of Christianity around the world. While not a new topic for mission organizations, how Christianity has been taken on, owned, and then modified by Christians from many cultures is a topic of interest for *CRDA* organizations. This is what happened with African American Christianity, but is happening now with Christianity in Africa and elsewhere. What does relief, development, and advocacy look like through the lenses of these still-forming Christian traditions, and how does this relate to issues of decolonization and race?

Troublesome trends in wealth, inequality, migration, and authoritarianism. NGOs have long battled poverty, but that fight has often taken place at a micro level. Do we need to take a more macro look, and focus on the broader context within which communities exist, especially in the context of trends toward authoritarianism and the decline of democracy and civil society, in which evangelical NGOs might be in some unintentional ways aiding and abetting these trends?

Changes in mental health. These can be related to the loss of meaning, hope, and purpose, the interior life, and the life of faith. This is a problem in some countries of the Global North. How about in the Global South? How should the Christian community respond?

Environmental health. Disease, climate change, melting glaciers, and climate adaptation in urban areas all are issues that need to be addressed in one way or another. Some argue that there is no more fundamental issue. Are we dealing with it adequately?

Urbanization, shelter, and homelessness. As cities all over the world expand, are they becoming more livable? Are we finding solutions for the people who seem simply to be cast aside by the workings of our urban centers?

Transition of many churches and small NGOs out of orphan care. Orphanages are closing around the world and many of these organizations are shifting toward integral community development. How are Christian NGOs handling this transition?

Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS). Do Christian NGOs affirm and accept the nine commitments of the CHS? Do they live up to them? Are there commitments beyond these that motivate Christian NGOs?

Cryptocurrencies. What new possibilities for the *CRDA* community are cryptocurrencies

introducing? What ethical and other challenges might exist?

Wildlife and farm animal welfare. What are our ethical and practical commitments toward the animals God created for us to live among and, in some cases, to shepherd and care for? As global food needs push the world toward factory farming, how is the Christian community responding? Can the Global South teach the rest of the world how to live harmoniously with the animal kingdom?

Technology development. How are today's ubiquitous technological innovations, such as television, antibiotics, the interstate highway system, automobility, commercial aviation, the pill, A.I., the Internet, rampant digitalization, the Human Genome Project and genetic screening, *in vitro* fertilization, organ transplantation, personal computers, smartphones, and instant messaging, changing our lives? What role do and should they play in the integral development of people everywhere? How do we channel these great forces for good and avoid misuse?

Inter-religious cooperation. The world is divided into several great religions. How can/should we work in such a multi-religious context? Can/should we collaborate? How do we address the thorny issue of Christian/Church exclusivity?

Role of the Church in responding to the shifting burden of disease. In recent decades, the global burden of disease has shifted towards non-communicable diseases (NCDs), resulting in more than two-thirds (71%) of deaths caused by NCDs, which kill 41 million people each year. Of this number of deaths, 15 million people are aged between 30 and 69 years. Many of these conditions are preventable through early interventions and prevention activities (see the [World Health Organization](#) website). How can the Church respond to this shifting burden of disease?

School education post-COVID-19. We saw encouraging statistics on primary education in 2020 when 90% of the world population completed primary education. But this percentage was only 66% when it came to attending secondary education, and it continues to decrease for the higher levels of education (see [Statista](#) website). How has COVID-19 affected this situation, and what should be the strategies to address this apparently new normal?

This is, of course, only a partial list. Many more could be mentioned. Do you have something to say about any of these or other important topics? Are you engaging in research on any of them? If so, please

contact us at CRDA@accordnetwork.org so that we can start thinking together about how to construct some special issues on these and other topics in years ahead.

Changes to the Editorial Team

Six years ago, when *CRDA* was little more than an imagined possibility, David Bronkema was among the group of half a dozen collaborators who led the journal through the birthing process. He now joins Roland Hoksbergen as co-editor. David is an anthropologist, bringing the skills, knowledge, and wisdom of that disciplinary perspective to join the economics background that Roland brings to the table. David currently serves as an associate professor in Eastern University's Organizational Leadership Program, where he spends much of his time mentoring Ph.D. students as they research and write their dissertations. In years past he has worked with a number of Christian development NGOs and has spent many years working in countries throughout Latin America. Over the last decade he has become well-known in *CRDA* circles as a leader in the area of spiritual metrics. To contact either David or Roland, write to CRDA@accordnetwork.org.

At our January board meeting, we also welcomed the following scholars and practitioners to the *CRDA* editorial board:

Sharon Gramby-Sobukwe, Associate Professor, Political Science; Chair, Department of Social Transformation; Director, Campolo Institute for Applied Research in Social Justice, Eastern University, St. Davids, PA.

SP Kalaunee, Country Representative in Nepal, BlinkNow Foundation.

Subodh Kumar, Chief Data Officer, World Vision International.

Nina Kurlberg, Theology Development Officer (Diversity and Inclusion), Tearfund UK.

Mike Mtika, Professor of Community, Economic, and Political Sociology, Eastern University, St. David's, PA.

Rebecca Redfield, Senior Listening, Monitoring, and Evaluation Manager, HOPE International, Lancaster, PA.

Kurt Verbeek, Professor of Sociology, Calvin College; Founder and President, Asociación para una Sociedad más Justa (ASJ).

As *CRDA* co-editors, we are thankful for the opportunity to serve the Accord Network, the *CRDA* community, and our sisters and brothers around the world.

Roland Hoksbergen and David Bronkema