
Editors' Introduction

Roland Hoksbergen and David Bronkema - CRDA Co-Editors

It is always a blessing to see how the Spirit brings together an issue, and this one is no exception. We are particularly thankful for the way that the engagement with our journal is transcending the originally published articles with follow up webinars and conversations. In fact, a significant portion of this issue is the result of follow-up reflections based on David Bueno's article in our Spring issue where he wrote about his experiences with transformational development work in communities where gangs are present, pervasive, and powerful. Bueno offered ideas for work at both community (or micro) levels, and national (or macro) levels, even as he wrestled with the best way forward. Working where gang activity permeates a community, complete with the threat and reality of violence, as well as threats to attract and enfold community youth into the ranks of the gangs, is difficult, to say the least, and despairing, to put a more accurate label on it. Where is God, and where is redemption, amidst such trouble?

In this issue we present three thoughtful responses to Bueno's basic questions around how our faith helps us understand gang presence, inspires us to act, and informs our mission of doing development work that is truly transformational. Two of these responses, by Barbara Rowe and Fabiola Ramirez, emphasize individual, Spirit-led change that comes through faith commitment and the formation of Christian character. The local church plays a key role here, and, as Ramirez argues, church engagement must begin by connecting with children at an early age. A third response, from Edgar Aguilar in Honduras, adds another dimension based on the work of his organization, the Asociación para una Sociedad más Justa (ASJ - in English, Association for a More Just Society) in Honduras both at the community and the national level in terms of meeting needs and tackling entrenched structures. Aguilar explains how ASJ partners with churches, not only for the spiritual nurturing emphasized by Rowe and Ramirez, but because churches form key parts of the community and are entry points that help ASJ engage the whole community in seeing to its own security and development, and based on which policy level actions can be undertaken. This brief introduction to the three responses is intended mostly as a teaser. There is more to be discovered and appreciated in each response.

But, that is not all! This summer issue continues with...

1. A thoughtful piece from Samuel Verbi of EIDO Research about how to measure the impact of spiritual transformation programs over time when respondents' very understanding of the extent and nature of that transformation may also change during the time period of the program. Verbi proposes the use of retrospective pretest designs as a promising tool to deal with this "response-shift bias" to improve measurement and appreciation of the spiritual changes many programs seek.
2. A synopsis of the two most recent research intensives held by the Accord Research Alliance, one, in 2020, in an online format due to COVID-19, and the other in 2021 (in person). The first intensive focused on integrating improved practices of listening into all aspects of organizational life, and the second addressed faith-based aspects of evidence that organizations use to assess their work.
3. Book reviews of four recent books of interest to the CRDA community

Because Bueno's article and the three responses arise out of Spanish-speaking cultures and nations, we decided to have his article translated into Spanish and include it in this issue, which you will find after the three responses. David Bueno and all respondents are either native Spanish speakers or completely fluent, which of course helps them enter into the reality they are describing and analyzing. Similar to Bueno's article, the response by Ramirez is written in both English and Spanish. Perhaps we should have ensured that the other two responses were written in both languages as well, but we did not achieve that. To any who would like either to read all three responses in Spanish or share them with Spanish speakers, we apologize.

As editors, we are fully aware of how important fluency with different languages is to development work in general and to communication across cultures. Pentecost-like dreams of full communication inspire all of us, but we will work through language issues as we are able, bringing as many people across the globe into conversation as possible. Our efforts in this issue are minimal, but we hope meaningful in some way too.

As our opening comments noted in the most recent issue (winter 2022), we are pursuing special issues that address topics that Christians find both challenging and compelling. Nina Kurlberg and Roland Hoksbergen are leading an effort to assemble a special issue on decolonization and its significance for Christian-inspired development work in all regions of the globe. A good number of contributors have already joined the project, but if you feel called to participate in

this special issue, please write to us at the address below. Other special issues in early stages of development include one on the foundational question of the relationship of faith and development, and another on mainstreaming gender in Christian NGOs. If you feel inspired to lead and edit a special issue on a topic of relevance to the CRDA community, please write. All communication to the editors can be sent to CRDA@accordnetwork.org.