

Globalization and Inclusiveness at the Grassroots:  
Faith-based Institutions and their Organizational Innovations

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## Introduction

Globalization has proved to be both a bane and a blessing in creating more inclusive societies. On the one hand, it has precipitated large income and wealth inequalities with ever larger segments of the population being marginalized. Ever higher technical skills are needed to participate fruitfully in the Microelectronics/Internet-charged contemporary marketplace. Not surprisingly, ever more people feel left out and their relative real incomes drop.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, globalization has lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty in China alone. Moreover, the Internet-Microelectronics Revolution has opened global markets to small producers who are now able to market their wares or services to a global audience. Poor developing nations have benefitted from outsourcing (e.g., India and the Philippines). Global labor migration and its homeward remittances have been an important source of income for developing countries, often comprising a substantial part of their GDP.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the evidence is mixed on the consequences

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, <http://occupywallst.org/> Last accessed May 6, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/04/08/record-high-remittances-sent-globally-in-2018> Last accessed May 6, 2019.

of globalization vis-à-vis creating a more inclusive world. There are both centripetal and centrifugal forces at work.

This paper examines how globalization has affected the inclusive dimension of faith-based organizations' development work. In particular, it examines Catholic missionaries' work with the poor and their impact on inclusiveness.

#### Description of the data set used

There is little on faith-based organizations' (FBOs) development work in the literature because of the dearth of data. The lack of data is understandable considering that collecting and maintaining such data sets are expensive in terms of money, time, and personnel. These are resources that religious groups are short of and would much rather use in direct aid to the poor.

To get around this constraint, this study collected data from publicly available sources from the internet. Religious groups maintain a presence on the web as a way of disseminating information to their membership, lay associates, donors, and potential vocations. Included in the websites they maintain are descriptions of their various ministries and work with the poor. Moreover, the fund-raising tabs of these websites also provide information on such work with the poor.

This study collected internet-based data on 85 Catholic religious congregations that are engaged in missionary work in less developed countries. Most of these congregations have multiple Provinces or regional groupings, each with their own respective websites. In total, this study gathered data on over 3,000 projects in healthcare, education, and social services. Given the lack of uniformity in the data presentation of these websites, no quantitative studies could be

conducted. Only a qualitative analysis is possible. Nevertheless, we are able to glean enough insights to make substantive conclusions regarding globalization and inclusiveness in the work of these FBOs.<sup>3</sup>

#### Inclusive nature of faith-based development work

Faith-based development work is by its nature inclusive in its goals and results. A striking feature that is common to this data sets' FBOs is their choice of people to serve—the most marginalized and the neediest. Taking to heart the preferential option for the poor (Mt 25:31-46), the mission statements of these religious congregations boldly state that their goal is to incarnate God's love in the midst of those who suffer grievously.

We find evidence of such commitment in the selection of the communities and places they have chosen to serve—isolated rural areas and urban slums. The same commitment is evident in the people with whom and for whom they work—the chronically ill and disabled, the discriminated and the socially ostracized, indigenous tribes, the abandoned elderly, and the vulnerable. Empirical evidence from development economics show us that these are the communities and the segments of the population that are ultra-poor, that is, the poorest of the poor. It is important to note that the poor are not a homogenous group. Different studies stratify the poor into various categories from the subjacent poor (those just below the poverty line) to the ultra-poor (those with severe needs and with little prospect of getting out of destitution).

Scholars observe that the difference between the subjacent poor and the ultra-poor are so wide so

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<sup>3</sup> For a further description of this data set, see Albino Barrera, *Catholic Missionaries and Their Work with the Poor* (London & New York: Routledge, 2019).

much so that the subjacent poor share a lot more in common with those who are not poor rather than the ultra-poor.<sup>4</sup>

The religious congregations in our sample have deliberately chosen to serve the ultra-poor. This preference for the very poor is confirmed by the type of services they deliver. Basic healthcare is provided to people who have had no access to such care until the advent of these FBOs. In fact, in many cases, the FBOs were the only providers of healthcare for entire communities. FBOs expand their outreach even more by piggybacking mobile health clinics off their already remote mission outstations. These mobile health clinics often travel through rough terrain over hours in order to reach ever more isolated communities that are even more destitute.

The healthcare provided by these FBOs are only the beginning. These religious congregations often move further to address the causes of these people's destitution. Thus, the initial healthcare package invariably expands to furnishing education (often the only primary school in the area), nutrition supplementation, health education, boreholes for water, job training, agricultural extension services, life-skills coaching, among many other services. These FBOs are in effect providing these forgotten, isolated poor the services that markets, the national and local governments, and the larger community have failed to provide.

Our sample shows that the development work of religious congregations is by its nature inclusive in intent and impact. These FBOs reach out to segments of the population that are literally at the fringes of society—the most destitute.

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<sup>4</sup> Akhter Ahmed, Ruth Vargas Hill, Lisa Smith, Doris Wiesmann, and Tim Frankenberger, 2007. *The World's Most Deprived: Characteristics and Causes of Extreme Poverty and Hunger*. 2020 Discussion Paper #43. (Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute [IFPRI], 2007, x). Akhter Ahmed, Ruth Vargas Hill, Lisa Smith, and Tim Frankenberger. 2007. "Characteristics and Causes of Severe Poverty and Hunger." 2020 Focus Brief on the World's Poor and Hungry People. (Washington, DC: IFPRI, 2007, 1-2)

Christian missionary work is largely cross-border and, in fact, antedates contemporary globalization by centuries, even millennia. St. Paul's collection for the poor of Jerusalem (Romans 15:25-27) can arguably be presented as among the earliest examples of Christian cross-border development work that are designed to be more inclusive of the poor. The link between globalization and its impact on inclusiveness can be still be seen in contemporary Christian missionary development work.

FBO development work is inclusive in its design and impact to begin with. The issue for the rest of the paper is the question of contemporary economic globalization's impact on the inclusiveness of FBOs' development work.

Contemporary globalization's impact on the inclusiveness of FBO development work

Our data set shows that contemporary globalization has enhanced the inclusive nature and impact of FBOs' development work. Global economic integration has made FBOs much more capable in working with the poor and much more efficient and efficacious in such development work. This pattern is clearly evident in our sample in three specific ways.

#### I. Cross-border sharing of tacit knowledge and best practices

Development work is often a process of learning by doing. NGOs take time in making their work effective and efficient. They learn from their mistakes and what works or does not work in particular regions and particular problems. The tacit knowledge gained from this

process is often institutionalized within the NGOs and then replicated and transferred in other areas. We find this pattern in FBOs.

Globalization facilitates the cross-border sharing and replication of best practices and tacit knowledge. Thus, the Daughters of Charity were among the pioneers in detecting and then treating HIV-AIDS at their Carmelo Hospital in the town of Chokwe, Gaza Province, Mozambique. In 2002, it was among the first to provide antiretroviral therapy (ART) for this illness.<sup>5</sup> Drawing lessons from this initiative, the sisters collaborated with the Sant'Egidio community in 2005 and put up a *DREAM* program (*Drug Resource Enhancement against AIDS and Malnutrition*) at Carmelo Hospital. Building on their experience in fighting this disease, the Daughters of Charity replicated the program and established similar DREAM hospitals in six other sites in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Mozambique (2 sites). In just the first six years (2005-2011), the sisters not only put up DREAM programs in these six sites, but they also dealt with over 25,000 case files, in addition to testing tens of thousands of people for HIV.<sup>6</sup> Such cross-border replication of best practices allowed the Daughters of Charity to reach more people and sooner, too. Moreover, there may likely be economies of scale, especially in cases where overhead shared and purchases of supplies centralized. Globalization and the internet have made scaling up successful programs much easier because of the ease of communication, travel, the transfer of knowledge, personnel, and resources.

The Redemptorists' *Water for All* program on the African continent is another illustration of such cross-border replication of best practices. The lack of access to clean water is a major

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.hospitalcarmelo.org/carmelo/?p=1334&lang=en?&lang=en> Last accessed May 6, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.daughtersips.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/HIV-AIDS-DREAM-document.pdf> Last accessed May 6, 2019.

and common problem among poor communities. Together with healthcare and education, water always rises to the top in poor communities' wish lists.

The provision of a nearby source of clean water is not a straightforward process because different methods are required for different terrains and climatic conditions. Moreover, the maintenance of the water source (pump, well, cistern, etc.) and the capacity of the local community to provide such maintenance are key considerations in light of failed water bore holes or other projects in the past given the local communities inability to maintain the equipment or the water infrastructure. In addition, the upfront investment in labor and building materials is substantial. Clearly, a minimum level of technical expertise and experience are needed in providing water sources as part of development work.

Redemptorists in Africa have built up this expertise over the years. They have effectively used the know-how they have acquired and formalized it in their *Water for All* program.<sup>7</sup> It is a program they have replicated in Mozambique, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Burkina-Faso, and Niger. Besides the Redemptorists, Claretians have similar water programs for their mission sites.

Another example of such cross-border transfer of best practices is the sister-school collaboration of many FBOs. Many religious congregations operate schools in both developed and developing countries. Sister-school collaboration is fairly common. New schools learn from the longstanding ones. Wealthier schools send material resources and sometimes even personnel to their poorer counterparts. This is important because school management and design take years to develop and perfect. Know-how takes years to acquire. The learning process can be telescoped because of such cross-border sharing. The internet has made communications much easier and has greatly facilitated and made such sister-school collaborations even more effective.

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<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.africaredemptorists.com/mission-projects/water-for-all/> Last accessed May 6, 2019.

Another example is the Camillians' Institute for Pastoral Care in Rome in Rome. The goal of this special educational institution is to collect, preserve, and disseminate best-practices in healthcare sites worldwide. People engaged in ministry to the sick from all over the world come to this Institute to learn and then bring back to their respective sites the best-practices that have worked in other areas.<sup>8</sup> This is an effective way of sharing expertise.

Another example of globalization at work in making for a more inclusive world is Canadian government sub-contracting the services of FBOs to execute its projects. The Canadian International Development Authority (CIDA) committed to funding a five-year development program<sup>9</sup> for twenty villages of Nedumkandam Panchayath in the high ranges of Kerala, India. The goal was to empower these communities to ultimately take charge of their own development. CIDA tapped the Medical Mission Sisters to take charge of this multi-pronged initiative that included projects related to income-generation, health and hygiene, infrastructure development, gender equity, education, food security, good governance, care for the environment, and even road construction.<sup>10</sup> This is an example of cross-border collaboration, made much easier and more effective with the ease of communication and exchange of information.

These are but a few of the examples we find in our sample whereby FBOs have taken advantage of the new opportunities afforded by globalization and the Microelectronics Revolution in replicating their best-practices worldwide. More people could be reached and within a much shorter period of time. This is clearly beneficial for inclusiveness because lagging

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, [http://www.kamillianer.at/mission/07\\_2\\_uganda.htm](http://www.kamillianer.at/mission/07_2_uganda.htm) Last accessed May 6, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Sustainability through Participation Empowerment and Decentralization (SPED III) under "Save A Family Plan of India" (SAFP).

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.hdsidukki.com/v-sustainability-through-participation-empowerment-and-decentralization-sped-iii/> Last accessed May 6, 2019.

areas or FBO sites are quickly brought in line with others because of the sharing of tacit knowledge. This is the direct impact on inclusiveness. The second-order effect on inclusiveness is that these FBOs become even more effective and efficient in their work of bringing people at the margins into the rest of society.

## II. Cross-border transfer for resources

Besides sharing best-practices and tacit knowledge, FBOs have also shared resources, both in terms of personnel, funds, and material goods. The internet has been a boon for the fundraising arm of these FBOs. To begin with, it greatly expands the donor base. Prior to the internet, fundraising appeals were mostly conducted through mail. Given the expense of such snail mail, the appeals were necessarily limited given the letters that had to be printed and mailed. The Internet Revolution changed all this. The whole world has become a potential donor base. Moreover, such appeals take less effort and expense because they can be done electronically. Crowdfunding is a vivid illustration of how globalization and the internet have greatly expanded the capabilities and scope of FBOs in raising funds for their development base.

In addition to expanding the donor base, the Internet has also expanded potential worthy causes. Giving away money to charity in a thoughtful manner is not easy because matching donor intent with actual needs on the field is usually an impediment. It is an information problem of matching needs with donors. This has become much easier with the advent of the internet. Even the smallest FBOs and the most remote poor areas now stand a chance of getting their needs and plight known to donors halfway across the globe. From a purely economic point of view, crowdfunding enhances the impact per dollar of donation because of the lower costs overall from searching for worthy causes and potential donors, to matching these to one another.

More of the benefactions can be spent on the development work itself rather than on fundraising expenses.

One other evidence must be cited to show the impact of globalization on FBOs' development work. In the published reports of many of these projects, the list of key stakeholders, including donors, are published and acknowledged. Globalization is evident in the long list of funding agencies and collaborators from all over the world who have funded these programs.<sup>11</sup>

A second major area affected by globalization is the inter-LDC transfer or assignment of personnel. Vocations have dried up in the developed world. Until the fifty years ago, the flow of personnel was comprised of missionaries from the developed North going to work in the poor South. This flow has long dried up because of the collapse of religious practice and fervor in the North. And with this came a dearth of missionaries going to the South. FBOs have worked around the resulting shortage of personnel by drawing from their pool of local vocations, that is, from their mission sites. Thus, one noticeable pattern for the large FBOs (e.g., Daughters of Charity) is how their mission sites in many developing nations are now staffed by communities of sisters coming from other poor developing countries. In fact, in many of these FBOs, their membership in poor developing countries greatly outnumber those from developed nations.<sup>12</sup> While such cross-border exchange of personnel has long been practiced by FBOs, it is only in the last 30 years that the practice has taken off, partly because of the precipitous drop in Western vocations, but also partly because of the ease of cross-border assignment of personnel facilitated by easier communications, travel, and the exchange of resources.

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, <http://ysbs.or.id/en/> Last accessed May 6, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> For example, we see the predominance of Ugandans and Filipinos in mission sites of the Missionaries of the Poor all over the world. The Jesuit and Salesian Provinces in India are among the biggest within their respective religious congregations. It is a similar phenomenon for many international sisters' congregations.

Another example of the impact of globalization on FBO development work is the Jesuit School in Sisophon, Cambodia. The Education Department of Banteay Meanchey Province, Cambodia invited the Jesuits to take the lead in improving the quality of education in their region. Given their charism in education, the Jesuit Order took on this challenge. Not only did they put to work their centuries-long tacit knowledge in the educational field, but they also tapped their considerable donor base to fund this initiative that amounted to €9 million for this ten-year project. Being a worldwide religious order, Jesuits would have probably been able to pull off this ministry easily with or without globalization or the internet, given the depth of their experience and the scope of their network of supporters. Nevertheless, globalization and the internet have greatly facilitated their work in this remote, poor region of Cambodia.<sup>13</sup>

There are many other cases in which globalization has put the expertise and resources of FBOs to good use. For example, it is not surprising that FBOs were among the first responders in keeping Ebola at bay when it broke out and was raging out of control in Western Africa in 2004-2005. After all, FBOs not only had the expertise but also had the people on the ground or in countries close by to where the epidemic was rampant.<sup>14</sup> Conscious of their years of experience and unique capabilities in the provision of healthcare, the Camillians have put at the service of the global community their Camillian Task Force, a team of experts that is ready to move at a moment's notice and attend to the needs of victims of natural or man-made disasters.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> <http://jesuitschoolcam.org/project/> Last accessed December 12, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, the pivotal role of Franciscan Missionary of Mary Sister Barbara Brilliant in dealing with the Ebola crisis in Liberia in 2014-2015. <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/interviews/a-discussion-with-sister-barbara-brilliant> and <http://globalsistersreport.org/news/ministry/sisters-liberia-fight-ebola-12196> Both last accessed March 26, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.camilliani.org/en/camillian-task-force-2/> Last accessed May 6, 2019.

### III. Organizational innovations

Globalization has facilitated organizational innovations among FBOs. Consider the case of South Sudan. The Bishops of South Sudan appealed to religious congregations to help build this new nation out of the ashes of longstanding and ongoing strife. Traditionally, religious congregations sponsor specific mission sites and projects and staff these with their own personnel. But not in the case of South Sudan. Religious congregations banded together and responded jointly as a group to this appeal from the bishops of South Sudan. They formed what has been called *Solidarity with South Sudan*.<sup>16</sup> In deciding to respond together as a single group, these religious congregations were systematic and strategic in the interventions and development projects they proposed. They agreed to focus their efforts on training teachers, nurses, midwives, farmers, and leaders—the very people who will be needed in building a nation. Thus, these FBOs concentrated on education, healthcare, agriculture, and pastoral services.

Various training sites had been established and religious communities at the various ministry sites were run by religious coming from different orders. In other words, religious from various orders lived together as a single community in staffing and working on these development projects. The advantages of these arrangements are clear. First, poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon requiring intervention on a wide front. Very few FBOs have such expertise since most of them have one or two core competencies. In working together, FBOs contributed their personnel and expertise in their respective core competencies (e.g., healthcare, education, pastoral work, etc.). This allowed not merely for a more holistic approach, but a faster response as well. In addition, they prevented the wasteful duplication of effort.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.solidarityssudan.org/> Last accessed May 6, 2019.

This organizational innovation facilitated by globalization and the internet comes at a fortuitous moment when FBOs themselves are under stress because of declining personnel and ever limited financial resources. Even religious congregations that had enjoyed a burst of local vocations are now themselves experiencing a decline in religious vocations. Pooling resources and expertise together are an effective way of pursuing new development initiatives in the face of these challenges.<sup>17</sup>

## Summary and Conclusions

Contemporary globalization has turned out to be a boon for religious orders in their work of incorporating the poor into mainstream socioeconomic life. Religious institutes have long been at the forefront in creating more inclusive societies in emerging nations through their work with the poor. However, these efforts have been constantly at risk because of inadequate funding and a decline in religious vocations in the West.

The organizational innovations that globalization has enabled have been key to mitigating these religious orders' financial and human resource shortages. From a qualitative analysis of over 3000 development projects in education, health, and social services from 85 religious orders worldwide, this paper finds anecdotal evidence of the role of contemporary globalization in enhancing the efficacy of missionary religious orders in their work of creating more inclusive societies as a result of the much freer flow of funds, know-how, and personnel across borders.

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<sup>17</sup> Note, that the decline in vocations in the South may be partly be an adverse effect of globalization and the internet—young people in poor developing countries now have opportunities and pathways out of poverty and upward mobility besides religious life.

Globalization has greatly expanded religious institutes' pool of donors and has made it much easier for them to match benefactors from developed countries with funding needs and causes in poor countries. Moreover, best practices are quickly transmitted across different projects, religious orders, and continents.

Religious orders now field missionary teams comprised of religious coming from different parts of the world. The traditional North—South model of engagement has been replaced by a South—South cooperative effort, whereby missionaries are increasingly no longer coming from the West but from poor developing countries themselves. Indeed, contemporary globalization has precipitated organizational innovations that have extended the reach and efficacy of faith-based organizations in their work of creating more inclusive societies for the benefit of the poor.