



Ring of Fire – Australia July 2006

JUSTICE AND FUNDING FOR MISSION

In my current ministry of Funding for Mission with two congregations and some local NGOs in Asia, one often faces ethical and just choices around who funds projects and the administration of these funds.

There is a growing trend for middle sized, or family corporates, to offer financial assistance or 'partnership' to NGOs, foundations, mission or solidarity offices of a religious congregation. Undoubtedly, entering into a partnership can ensure continuity of a project for the disadvantaged especially when the income and investments of the congregations' provinces of the developed world are strained by such contrasting budget items as aged care and the calls of international mission expansion.

However, one has to ask why are these firms moving towards us? Is it solely alumni loyalty or part of an upsurge in philanthropy among smaller corporate investors? These motives maybe a part of the reality but their marketing which we get drawn into by partnership is always outcomes driven!

Among the diverse issues to confront in this arena is that of some controls over the ethical principles of publicity the new 'partner' uses on websites or in printed materials. Images in the public domain speak about our congregation's priorities. Do they enhance the dignity of the child, women or family members? Do they convey these people need us in such a way that they are inadvertently portrayed as dependent on us and thus rob them of their human dignity – the core value of Catholic social teaching?

I am also confronted with how to assess the ethical practises of a potential corporate or funding agency partner. It is wise to research the corporate's product sources and what work practises they have in place. For firms with international off-shore operations might we also check the local church's concerns, if any, with the firm? The Australian firms in the Philippines mining industry are currently

opposed so successfully by the local church on justice grounds that the Australian Ambassador in Manila has even rallied publicly to their support.

When we enter into financial agreements with funding agencies we also enter the web of the NGO culture. This might sound a little sinister but some check on the NGO's funding sources and publicity materials warrants an examination in our commitment to JPIC. Should our congregations enter into partnerships with faith based agencies, whose administration and marketing costs run to over 10% of their budget? Is this budgeting reflecting a just relationship with their donor base?

These are but a few antennae I raise when that European coffee distributor telephones me or a faith based funder wants to move their child sponsorship income towards my solidarity office bank account!



*Allen Sherry fms
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New Arrivals Programme

In early 2005 having finished setting up and coordinating a literacy unit at Loreto Kirribilli Junior School, I was offered a position for two days a week at St. Joachim's, a multicultural primary school located in Lidcombe, Sydney.

The Principal was very open to a programme which included visiting families in need, helping with difficult students, organising the Learning Assistance Programme (LAP) and a myriad of other activities to provide support for children with both learning and emotional problems.

Children who had come to Australia from refugee camps needed considerable help to learn to speak and read English. Also there was a general feeling of paralysis among older children who had slipped through the education net and were unable to complete work of any kind. It seemed this was the area in which I was most needed and as I would get to know the children, it would provide a good base for following up other family needs.

A coordinated approach involving the English as a Second Language programme, Reading Recovery teachers, Class teachers and Librarians, enable a testing system to be set up to find out where children were in the developmental continuum of reading with fluency, meaning and comprehension. I also used the children's ideas and preferences in choosing books and set up a borrowing section in the Library with high interest/low level books. At this stage Sr. Elizabeth Johnson IBVM offered to help with Years 4-6 students and with the testing results and library resources she was able to access what the older children needed.

I have concentrated on the students in years 1-3, most of whom are Sudanese children from refugee camps. Besides supporting the children's education, I also visit their homes and got to know their family situations. Because I know the children well from school, I fit in easily when I visit and am able to find out what difficulties the families are experiencing, for example, the case of three children being looked after by an elderly grandmother and their 18 and 21 year old siblings. When their bills arrive, they realised that they did not have enough money for food. In another case, a Sudanese family was given a child's bed for a 14 year old girl, which was much too small for her!



Out of my experiences I make the following observations:

- We have a male Sudanese worker who comes in 2 days a week to liaise with the families. This is the second male Sudanese we have had and I am certain this work is better done by a female, because in Sudanese culture this kind of work is considered demeaning for a man. Thus little is done to help with immediate needs.
- It is the 'personal' contact that really counts. Once you are accepted as someone who will listen and follow up on their needs whether it be – how to work out trains to the city; where is the local library; what can I do about local library; what can I do about a fridge that is not working; etc – then you are of real help to people with real problems.
- I think the whole support system needs to be reviewed. We had three new families who arrived late last year and though they received money, housing, etc; there was no personal support provided for things like rental difficulties, buying white goods such as refrigerators & washing machines – it is all down to filling in the correct forms and keeping files so that correct procedures are seen to be followed.

I love what I do and am fortunate to work with dedicated and open people who, despite the difficulties, find ways to help these amazing families. *Anna Gaha IBVM*

JPIC and our Schools



*JPIC Committee
Teacher Representative
Damian Whelan
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History

In March 2005 Social Justice Coordinators from all Australian Loreto schools came together for a conference at Aldgate, in the hills outside of Adelaide, organised by Loreto sisters, Libby Rogerson, Anne Kelly, Margaret Burchell and Diaann Stuart.

Those who attended were addressed by a number of speakers from the areas of Aid and Development and Justice Advocacy. On the second day of the conference the staff attending the conference were joined by our school principals, who then had the opportunity to become informed about what had been discussed prior to their arrival, and also contribute to the formulation of strategies for the future. All who attended the conference left with both a sense of affirmation, about the good work already being done in our Loreto schools around Australia, and a renewed spirit of enthusiasm for future possibilities.

Following the conference, Anne Kelly ibvm, began to make regular contact with the schools Social Justice Coordinators (the "Aldgate" group), via email, sending information on Justice issues and a

liturgical celebration to all Loreto schools. This year, as a teacher representative on the JPIC Committee, I have assumed this responsibility.

What are we trying to achieve?

In the broadest sense, making connections with the network of Australian Loreto schools is another way of fostering the 'living out' of Direction 2.

To promote the dignity and liberation of all, particularly of women and children; to challenge unjust systems and structures; to stand with those on the edges of society; to show reverent care for the earth and all creation.

JPIC then, is not just something that the sisters of the ibvm do, it is, rather, something that every Loreto community, teacher and associate becomes engaged in and involved with. The regular communication with the Social Justice Coordinators in schools will have great merit over time, I believe. Their leadership within their own communities helps to disseminate information to all staff in our schools and assists in making justice integral to the education of both our students and, perhaps also, our parents.

This year, as the Committee focuses upon "Making Indigenous Poverty History", we have already sent out a fact sheet for distribution to all our schools on the world-wide campaign "Making Poverty History". This will be followed up with a fact sheet, which deals specifically with indigenous poverty in Australia, as well as, a Prayer/Liturgy later in the year.

In March 2005, students from Loreto Coorparoo participated in a simultaneous "Live 8" concert with 15

other schools around South East Queensland to promote the "Make Poverty History" Campaign, the Millennium Development Goals and Project Compassion.

(Photos: courtesy Kieran Donnelly, Loreto Coorparoo)



Through the school network, letters petitioning Members of Parliament and information about specific justice related events has been communicated. It is envisaged that the network can become an efficient way of reporting justice activities, particularly how we are profiling the Millennium Development Goals within our schools to the NGO office at the United Nations.

The Mary Ward Justice Lecture, held for the first time in 2005, is also another way to involve our schools over time. At this stage, our two Sydney schools make a direct contribution, but the JPIC Committee has asked all schools to provide feedback on activities they have participated in this year to highlight the poverty of indigenous people in this country, and also to develop questions that can be posed to speakers about the theme of this year's talk. There are wonderful possibilities for us all to learn from one another in our Loreto schools and to be strategic in our approach to JPIC issues in our country and our world.