

# The Role of Faith-Based Organisations in Rural Development

“During his provincial visits in 2000, the Minister observed that there were no NGOs, and CBOs in rural areas especially the three priority provinces (Eastern Cape, Kwa-Zulu-Natal and the Northern Province). The Minister found that Faith-Based Organisations were battling against huge odds to provide relief in some rural areas. As a result of discussions with the faith based organisations, they are now playing an actively, valuable and acknowledged role in the Poverty Relief Programme and are able to reach areas that have, due to lack of infrastructure, been previously neglected”<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

During the struggle against apartheid, some religious groupings, played a significant role in, providing food to the needy, running adult classes, offering skills training to unemployed and generally facilitating the formation of self help groups in various communities. Even in the advent of the new dispensation in South Africa, the challenges of poverty, high levels of illiteracy, homelessness and unemployment, many religious groups have carried on providing for the needy as they seem to be doing it more efficiently than the government. This could be one of the reasons that the government recently gave some of the churches money to feed the poor.<sup>2</sup> Against this background, it is imperative that any initiative that seeks to facilitate community development, particularly in rural areas, takes into consideration the role that FBOs can play.

There are a number of reasons why churches, in particular would remain significant in rural development initiatives. Firstly, even in some of the most remote communities, there is a church building. Where there are no church buildings, members of various congregations will always find a place to meet, even if it means meeting under a tree or in someone’s house for their sermons. Another emerging and interesting trend is that various congregations that have their sermons at different times, sometimes share same facilities. In some communities where there are no sufficient buildings such as schools and community halls, church buildings become used more as multi-purpose community centres, where all communal activities take place. It is in the light of such information that research into the role played by churches in rural development became imperative.

Since the focus of the Kellogg project was to look on ways in which distance education could be used to eradicate poverty in rural areas, this research sought to understand, firstly, what educational opportunities were churches already providing to rural people. Secondly, it sought to make recommendations on the role that churches could play in ensuring that education is accessible to rural people. Although this study will attempt to cover in details the educational opportunities provided by the Catholic

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the department of Social Development (From June 1999 – March 2000), p9 at <http://www.welfare.gov.za/Document/Doc202001/Annual%20Report/road.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Sowetan

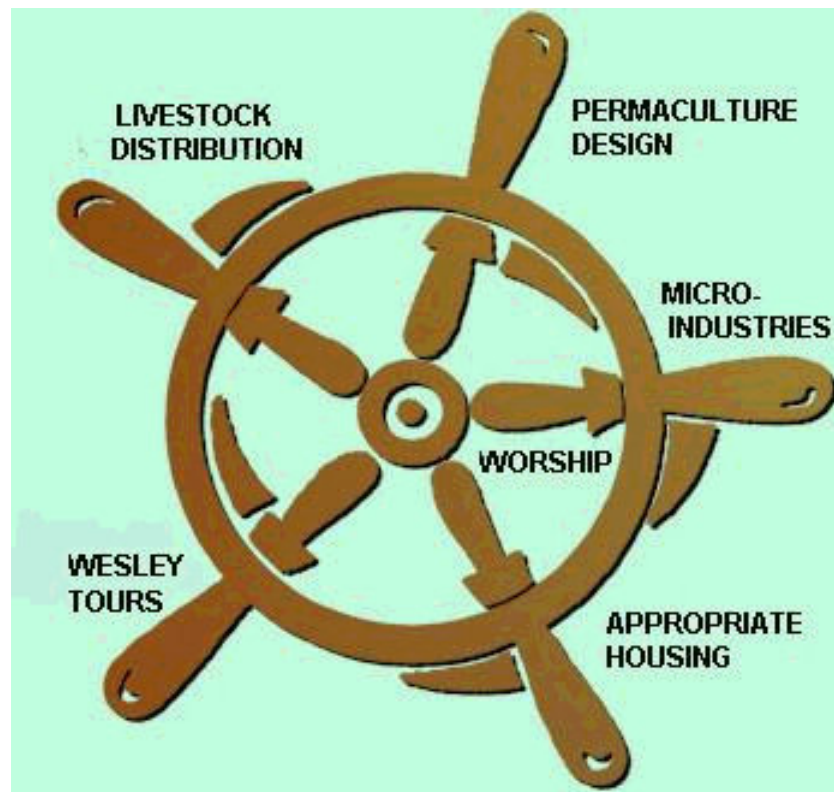
Church and the Zion Christian Church, it will also demonstrate that these are not the only two churches that have played a significant role in rural development.

## CHURCH INITIATIVES IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Various church groupings have played roles to help the rural poor. The Methodist Church has developed a church-based model for rural development which links spirituality with development through revitalised worship. The church has developed a ship wheel image to capture the role that their church should play in ministering the spiritual and material well being of people while also fostering a care for creation. Through their Khanya Programme, the Methodist Church has been facilitating the development of rural communities in the Eastern Cape by:

- offering training in permaculture design;
- facilitating the development of micro-industries in local communities;
- training people in building appropriate houses;
- organising what they called Wesley tours for Methodist from other parts of South Africa and the world to visits Methodist sites of significance in the Eastern Cape and using the money to finance the Khanya Programme; and
- distributing livestock to help peoples' lives better and facilitating many other projects aiming at developing rural communities.<sup>3</sup>

Below is the ship wheel developed by the Methodists to capture the relationship between worship and materials development, as they perceive it.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>3</sup> <http://www.sa-eastcape.co.za/khanya/> opened on 10/11/2000 at SAIDE

At the centre of these development initiatives is the whole idea of revitalising worship. This is done with an understanding that materials development without spiritual growth is not good at all. While this wheel has been formulated by the Methodists, it seems that many other church groupings also apply the same approach where worship and spiritual richness is put at the centre of development.

The Apostolic Faith Mission has also established a welfare department. The responsibilities of the department include:

- taking care of hundreds of abused, abandoned and neglected children;
- taking care of the frail and the poor;
- re-deploying social workers to areas to work with disadvantaged communities where poverty, joblessness, alcohol abuse and breakdown of family structures are prevalent.
- Mobilising volunteers in local churches to undergo training in various aspects such as doing community needs assessment and then look at how best they could serve the community, receive training to do AIDS awareness in communities, receive training in job creation through micro-enterprise.<sup>4</sup>

In its endeavor to facilitate rural development, the Welfare Department of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM-SA) had contracted the National Development Initiative for Social Welfare (NDISWE) an independent development trust, to offer training to its church leaders on how to support and facilitate development in their communities. The main model of training applied by Ndiswe was cascading. Ndiswe offered regional leaders of the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) training in various skills. To facilitate the training, Ndiswe developed modules such as Focusing Church to Serve and 70 Ways to Serve. In Focusing Church to Serve, trainees learned how to compile a community profile and run community service workshop while in the module on 70 Ways to Serve, they were exposed to a number of projects that could be started in various communities. After the training of regional leaders, they were expected to train local church leaders who were expected to organise voluntary community service workshops where communities could identify their needs. In terms of Ndiswe training it was the responsibility of local church leaders to facilitate the community's thinking around projects that could be established.<sup>5</sup>

When community needs had been identified, Ndiswe would help the local church to register as a Non-Profit Organisation so that it would be able to raise funds for local projects. Ndiswe noted that in some places there was capacity but in most rural places there was no capacity. In such rural places, like Lusikisiki, Ndiswe facilitated the establishment of a Faith Based Development Committee that brought in different denominations. Leaders in the Non-Profit Organisations would then be trained on how to run organisations. Such training included, writing a constitution, basic book keeping, basic administration skills, leadership and management skills etc.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.afm-ags.org/departments/welfare/> opened on 10/11/2000 at SAIDE

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Dr. Jonathan Mostert, Director of the National Development Initiative for Social Welfare, 18 October 2000

Ndiswe had also made a number of observations, which prompted thinking around putting youth at the forefront of rural development. This model was thought about after a realisation that while local church ministers and priests were good in preaching, they lacked capacity when it comes to facilitating development. Ndiswe had also realised that in most rural areas, there is youth, and some of them had finished matriculation while others were in fact qualified teachers who could not find jobs. Following these observations the Transkei FBO Committee had put together a business plan and sent it to the ministry of welfare to look into ways of making full use of the educated youth in rural areas to spearhead rural development.<sup>6</sup>

Besides utilising the services of Ndiswe to training church leaders to facilitate rural development, the AFM has also collaborated with The Harvest Church in Durban to run a relief programme to the rural churches of KwaZulu-Natal. The programme has apparently had an impact on lives of millions of people. The project entailed importing tons of food, clothing and education equipment including secondary schools books donated in containers by American churches and other groups in the Netherlands.<sup>7</sup>

In the Western Cape, amongst other churches, the Bay Community Church has also played an almost similar role to that of the Apostolic Faith Mission. The church also collected food and clothes from donors and distributes these among the homeless and needy individuals and families living in and around Muizenberg.

Following the successful roles that many FBOs have played in facilitating development, there seems to be greater realisation that these groups can not be left behind. According to Dr. Mostert, Christian organisations and other Faith Based organisations from Jewish and Muslim communities have come together to form the National Religious Association for Social Development (NRASD). These groupings came together in a common vision to facilitate community development and eradicate poverty. He also pointed out that their organisation had already received invitation from the Minister of Welfare, Mr. Zola Skweyiya to assist the government in the fight against poverty in rural areas. The NRASD has been granted R100 000 from the Department of Welfare to put together a business plan to establish a FBO Trust, which will be able to distribute money to local churches. Churches will control the trust.<sup>8</sup>

Dr Mostert further indicated that at a conference of the FBOs held in Nairobi from the 06-10 March 2000, the World Bank also expressed willingness to work with FBOs in their fight against poverty in Africa. Subsequently negotiations are underway between the World Bank and FBOs in South Africa to start a pilot project that will see the state together with the World Bank, setting a fund to be controlled by the FBOs.

Clearly while some of the FBOs and churches in particular have played significant roles in housing the homeless, caring for the children and the aged, feeding the hungry and even trained people in various skills where possible. It is the latter (training

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Dr. Mostert. Op sit

people in various skills) that we are more interested in. Feeding the poor, housing the homeless and dressing the naked are worthy practices but are not completely liberating and could perpetuate dependency. It is important that people are trained to do things for themselves rather than depend on others to feed them. The next section focuses on educational opportunities conducted by the Catholics and by the ZCC.

## WHY THE ZCC AND THE CATHOLICS

Both the Zion Christian Church and the Catholics Church are among churches commanding the biggest following in South Africa. The Zion Christian Church (ZCC) is one of the indigenous churches in South Africa. It was founded in 1910 and has since grown to become arguably one of the largest churches in Southern Africa with its membership estimated at 5 000 000. Both churches have members and branches in almost every village and township in South Africa and many of their members are unable to read and write.

The size of membership to a church was not the only reason why these two churches were chosen. We also noticed that these two churches had very different initiatives and models for rural development. As we will see, both have units that specifically deal with educational issues. The Catholics, have the Catholic Institute of Education and the ZCC have the Kganya Education Trust Fund. These units function differently. The Catholics present a model similar to that of other churches in which their local churches also play active roles in taking initiatives to feed the poor and clothe the naked. At the same time they have various training initiatives where people are taught various entrepreneurial skills. For purposes of this report, we will focus on their initiatives intended to support and build the capacity of rural teachers.

The ZCC present another model in which while local churches do not play that major role in feeding the poor and clothing the naked, church members from various communities are taken to a central place to receive training in various entrepreneurial skills to enable them to run small businesses. The church organises service providers to provide training for its members. The next section looks at these models in detail and it discusses first opportunities offered by the Catholics.

## EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY THE CATHOLICS

History has it that the Catholic Church has been involved in education in South African for more than 150 years and has in the past offered alternative education to the then Bantu Education. Recent reports show that the overall network of Catholic schools consists of over 380 schools, 5700 teachers and 156 000 students.<sup>9</sup> Most of the educational activities within the Catholic Church are coordinated through the Catholic Institute of Education, which was established by the South African Catholics Bishop Conference in 1985. The CIE has since then been one of the few NGOs with a long track record of stability and constant service to the poor in deep rural areas around.

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<sup>9</sup> Dran from a document entitled <The Work of the SACBC's Social Agencies –Educator Sector

Among the many activities of the CIE is in-service teacher training with specific focus on rural teachers. Their in-service teacher training programmes are underpinned by the belief that teaching skills cannot be divorced from focus on values, particularly justice, human dignity, reconciliation, service and empowerment of the poor. The CIE works in six provinces where it has established small regional teams. While the teams may have similar areas of focus, for example equipping teachers with skills to teach literacy and numeracy, in most cases, different teams run slightly different upgrading programmes in their schools as determined by regional variations. For purposes of this report, we will focus on activities of the regional offices based in the Northern Province and KwaZulu-Natal (Kokstad)

## PROVINCIAL ACTIVITIES OF CIE

For purposes of this report we focus on activities of CIE offices in the Eastern Cape/Kwa-Zulu-Natal and Northern Province. As indicated earlier, different teams run slightly different upgrading programmes in their schools as determined by regional variations how most of the programmes are similar. The Kokstad office of the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE) works with teachers in two Provinces – Kwazulu-Natal and Eastern Cape. According to Brother Murtagh, in these areas, they work with 17 schools in Maluti, 10 schools in Kokstad and 10 schools in Bizana. On the other hand, the CIE NP works with a total of 43 schools from different villages such as Ga Mashashane, Mulima, Burgersfort, Bochum, Ga-Molepo, Ga-Chuene and Messina..

The work of regional staff includes holding workshops in Second Language literacy and communication as well as numeracy, mainly for Grades 1 – 3. In some cases this has included Grades 4 – 6 at the request of local education officials and school Principals. These programmes were introduced after it was discovered that levels of literacy in home language for learners were very low and that literacy skills in second language were almost non-existent. The workshops are therefore held to build the capacity of teachers to develop literacy and numeracy skills. They also train farm school teachers in multigrade teaching and class management and planning.

According to Brother Murtagh in the Eastern Cape, they have also developed a new programme in Religious Education for all Catholic Primary schools with prepared lessons and materials for teachers and public school principals and teachers have already shown interest in the programme because of our stress on values-based education. They also train School Management Teams in leadership, management skills and administration and School Governing Bodies in their roles and responsibilities in Governance. This is done because departments do not have the capacity or available personnel to do the training. Finally, they also do Staff Development Days. According to Murtagh progress is slow. However a big plus for them is that they all enjoy the work immensely and all have lots of school management experience.

## MATERIALS

According to CIE regional co-ordinators, materials are always a problem in rural schools and the Institute tries and provide some. They indicated that materials used in

training have been developed by the CEI. However, Read materials are also used. They also indicated that there are Sunday newspapers that also provide a double page of stories and suggestions for the Foundation and Intermediate phases which is most helpful and that funders provide these newspapers free for schools. However few schools have any form of transport and it is left to the CIE to organise distribution of the newspapers to schools.

## WHERE AND HOW IS THE TRAINING DONE?

In most cases CIE provide training in schools through direct contact with teachers. School visits take about three hours for a day or two. After the training, teachers are left to implement what they have been trained in and then after about two week the CEI official will revisit the schools to assess progress and to provide further assistance to teachers. According to Murtagh, in the region this year, they have been able to spent 181 days in schools. He argued that in most rural schools, planning is usually very poor; lesson preparation is often neglected and group work for children, which they strongly recommend is slowly catching on.

Mr. Murtagh further pointed out that when they visit schools they talk with the principals and listen to their problems, discuss what plans are in mind, if there is a Governing Body in place and if it is functioning. Usually, it means more re-training but they are always most welcome at the schools and are never considered as inspectors. We also check on whether there is a co-ordinator for R. E. and most importantly these days if HIV/AIDS and Sexuality training take place. In the last mentioned areas they also do training and try and introduce HIV/AIDS and Sexuality across the curriculum.

## FUNDING AND EVALUATION

Much of their work is funded. The funders pay consultants to inspect the work and the progress made. They report back to our National Office and this, at least, has the advantage of assisting them in reviewing their efforts and involvement. According to Brother Murtagh, the CIE conducted its an evaluation of its involvement in rural development over the last six years. The evaluation showed that they have made a significant contribution to the upgrading of teachers and restoring their confidence as well as providing teaching materials but that they have not really impacted on a school as a whole – certainly not the bigger schools (500+).

The regional office has introduced WSD&R (Whole School Development and Renewal) in 10 in Mbizana. In this regard, they are assisting schools management to effect systematic changes in the school and its Curriculum so that the overall goals of a school are realised and as much as possible, they help schools become self-reliant.

## TRAINING FOR TRAINERS

According to Murtagh, much of the work has meant constant training for themselves. To receive training, they travel to National Office twice a year for training, reviewing

and organisation sessions. At regular intervals, their Director sends trainers to the regional office to work with us on the spot.

## EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY THE ZION CHRISTIAN CHURCH (ZCC)

As indicated earlier, the ZCC has established Kganya Education Trust Fund to oversee all educational initiatives in the church. Kganya Education Trust Fund is an educational wing of the Kganya Group. The head of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) Bishop Barnabas Edward Lekganyane formed the Kganya Group after he had observed that his church community, comprising a significant portion of members who did not conduct bank accounts, needed a burial assurance. The Bishop initiated the formation of a team comprising of Group directors and after months of preparatory work, a Burial Benefit Scheme launched in September 1991. Members of the church were to contribute R15 per month to the scheme and the following were outlined as the objectives of Kganya Group:

- Developing, administering and promoting affordable and effective Burial Benefit and Personal Accident Scheme;
- Facilitating the collection of cash on behalf of the ZCC; and
- Channeling funds into areas with specific aim of uplifting the community.

As the bishop and the Group directors perceived, included in the R15 monthly contributions by members, was to be an amount earmarked for community upliftment projects. Some of the projects that had already benefited from the scheme included, the erection of Evelyn Lekganyane Clinic in Moria, the extension of the Primary School at Moria, provision of study guides for matriculants at a subsidised price and the Basic Skills Education Programme. For purposes of the Kellogg Rural Development Project, this report focuses on the basic skills education programme.

## BASIC SKILLS EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The Kganya Basic Skills Education Programme was initiated in 1997 and is coordinated through the Kganya Group offices in Pietersburg. The programme emerged as a result of realisation that unemployment was rife and its main aim was to offer basic skills by way of grants to selected candidates. Its target learners are the unemployed rural poor members of the ZCC. Learners are trained in such skills as, bricklaying, carpentry, plumbing, electrical training, motor mechanics, panel beating, agriculture (farming, chicken breeding etc) upholstery, culinary skills, baking, sewing and fashion design. These skills are provided through various services providers registered with the department of labour. These include Skills Academy, Boskop, Northern Training and Foskor.

Initially candidates for the programme were drawn from Northern Province and Mpumalanga as communities that showed greater need for skills training. However, the intake had since expanded to other provinces. During our visit to the programme, among the 32 predominantly female learners that we spoke to in the sewing and baking groups, 4 came from Mpumalanga (former KwaNdebele area) 3 from Northern Province and 25 came from various parts of the North-West. Age in the sewing and baking group ranged between 22 and 52 with a majority being between 30 and 40



years of age. Because of time constraints, we could not speak to individual learners in the welding, building and plumbing groups, which were comprised of male learners. However, the languages they spoke suggested that many of them also came from the said provinces. Learners in all the groups indicated that they heard of the training programme through announcements made in their local churches and in district church gatherings where those interested in attending the training were invited to register.

The process of training learners starts anytime when the Kganya office sends out letters to district and branch ministers inviting church members who are interested in attending skills training to register. After registration, officials from Kganya offices would then invite interested candidates to district meetings where they would be interviewed and advised on skills they want to be trained in. The interviews are conducted mainly to find out if candidates do know what the skills that they have chosen are all about, the level of interest in the skill and how they intended to use the skill to the benefit of the community and not only ZCC members.

Once people who want to attend training have been found, Kganya organises venues for the training. During our visit to the training sessions we found that they had hired a building in one of the sites earmarked for industrial development. The building had been divided to provide separated sleeping spaces for men and women. There was space where training in baking and fashion design took place. Mr. Mosotho indicated that the duration of training differed depending on the course. However in most cases training took between three and four weeks. The understanding was that these were adults who did not want to be kept away from home for too long.

As indicated earlier, different service providers registered with the Department of Labour were used. According to Mr. Mosotho each service provider had areas of strength. For example, Skills Academy provided training in baking, fashion design, leatherwork, hair care, culinary skills and child day care. Boskop provided training in sewing and agriculture. Northern Training Trust was also used to provide training in agriculture and mechanical. Foskor provided training in childcare, business skills, carpentry and upholstery.

According to Mr. Mosotho, one of the co-ordinators, the church works very closely with the Department of Labour that provides them with information on areas in which there is need for skills. Such information helps them decide on which skills to train people in. According to Mr. Mosotho they have also tried to train people in relevant skills for areas that they come from for example, they would not provide electrical training to people who come from areas where there is no electricity.

According to Mr. Mosotho, between 1997 and March 2000 about 1833 members had received training in various skills. After providing training, Kganya follows up on those who have been trained to see if they were making any progress. In fact during our visit to Kganya offices we found that the person in charge of the Kganya Basic Skills Education Programme was in Whiteriver to check on what some of the people who had received training were doing. Mr. Mosotho further indicated the follow up enabled them to collect statistics on progress and he was able to indicate that of the 1833 people who had received training about 85% were successful. Successfulness

was defined in terms of those people having been able to establish sustainable income generating projects and had reached a stage where they could be left on their own.

Through the follow up the church was also able to provide continuous support to those who have been trained. Mr. Mosotho indicated that from time to time those who received training in various skills get called to the church's head quarters at Moria near Pietersburg where they receive further training in business skills.

During the visit to the training sessions trainees indicated satisfaction with the training they were receiving. Most had dreams of opening their own business and they were optimistic that the skills they were learning were going to enable them realise their dreams.

## LINES OF COMMUNICATION IN VARIOUS CHURCHES

In this research we were also interested in understanding lines of communication within church. This interest was prompted by a realisation that in most cases it proved rather difficult to find relevant people who could provide details about those programmes. In some cases we found that one person would tell you that the church did not have such educational programmes but on the following morning when you phone again someone tells you that the church does have those educational programmes. It was for these reasons that we became interested in understanding who lines of communication and who ultimately made decisions about programmes.

During our telephonic inquiries interesting elements worth mentioning emerged which need to be fully acknowledged if churches are to be fully engaged as partners in the war against poverty in rural areas. It emerged that:

- Some church organisations are very bureaucratic. Decisions in these churches can only be taken in consultation of the highest offices. Working with such churches has its own advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that once permission has been granted by the highest office, everybody else complies. In one of these churches we sent a letter to their educational unit expressing our interest to capture the educational programmes that they offered. After about two weeks, the board of directors that included the bishop of the church granted permission through a letter. After the granting of the letter, their educational office was more enthusiastic to keep us informed of development in their training and the dates for such sessions. This enabled us to visit training centres.

The disadvantages of working with bureaucratic church organisations are that unless permission is granted from above, nothing can be done. In such instances it becomes easy for initiatives not to start or to die quickly depending whether the highest office deems to them of priority or not.

- Some of the churches are highly decentralised. In these churches, activities and initiatives with regard to educational programmes take place at local level. The advantage of working with such church organisations is that a researcher can go into any village, talk to the people in charge and get necessary information without having to wait for permission from the highest office. The problem

however is that often their activities are not properly coordinated at national level and in most cases as researchers we have contact numbers of national offices. The problem is that when you phone the national office no one knows what is happening at local level. At times you are given the name of a particular reverent who might know about educational activities at local level. The other problem then becomes that every time you phone, that reverent is not available. Then it becomes risky to even think of just visiting villages look for church building not knowing if anything is happening in those churches or not.

- In some of the churches certain individuals within the church take initiatives and project become based on those individuals. The advantage here is that once you find that individual and he or she buys into your ideas, the project is likely to succeed. But, as in the case of bureaucratic structures, if that individual is not willing to work with you then there is nothing you can do.
- Some churches are decentralised and also have structures within the church that are responsible for various activities. For example, in of the churches we phoned the office of the bishops. This office referred us to their head of their educational unit. In this office we found that the unit had provincial or regional presence in 7 of the nine provinces and we were referred to these offices to understand their activities. The national office felt that that was where we would get the necessary information as those were the people who ran most of the rural programmes and interacted with rural people directly. The provincial or regional coordinators we very willing to share information without having to ask for permission from the central offices.

There seem to be more advantages than disadvantages in working with such churches. If one knows where they are offering their training one can visit then without having to get permission from the bishops office or the education head office.

- Lastly, in some of the churches that we phoned, we were told that they did not offer any educational programmes to their rural members.

## CONCLUSION

This report has demonstrated that many churches have for a long time taken the issues of rural development very seriously. Many of them have actually established education and welfare departments to provide many services to rural people including training. The report has also shown that to reach out to some of the most rural communities, it is worth exploring possibilities of establishing links with churches because as indicated earlier churches have presence even in the most remote areas. It is important however to understand that these churches operate in completely different ways and these ways have to be understood.