17 Centre International d'Évangélisation/ Mission Intérieure Africaine's contribution to sustainable development in Burkina Faso through transformational development

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Definition of transformational development

The term *transformational development* is taken from Wayne Bragg, the former director of the Hunger Center at Wheaton College, who states that the best term that fits a Christian view of development is *transformation* (Myers 2011, 153). Bryant L. Myers argues that transformation as a change is only possible when the lies that the *poor* have accepted about themselves, '[t]hat there is no better future, at least not in this world', are replaced by the truth that 'a better future' is possible (2011, 177). For Myers, '[h]ealing the marred identity of the poor is the beginning of transformation' (2011, 178). However, in the same way as the *poor* need to change their mindset, there is also a change in mindset required from the *non-poor*, who are often led by arrogant mindsets. For Myers, there is a need to educate the 'poor' to understand that they are also created in the image of God and have the potential to contribute to social well-being. The *non-poor* must also understand that they should not adopt an attitude of control over the *poor*. In other words, transformation starts from a change of mindset of people in their various social classes in their community. For Ernst M. Conradie (2016), talking about development is to talk about a process that leads to a transformation. Development can thus be seen as a process leading to a change gradually and not something that is hasty. To put it in Myers's words

Transformational development is a lifelong journey. It never ends. There is always more before us. Everyone is on this journey: the poor, the non-poor, and the staff of the development agency.

(2011, 3)

In the Christian development programme, Jesus Christ is the focal point, because it is God who sustains life through Christ. Thus, their major aim is to bring the community to an understanding that sustainability involves a transformation of people's entire being: physically, mentally, socially and spiritually (Myers 2011, 193–200).

Transformational development, therefore, concerns the community and all the people in it regardless of their social class or their religion. For as Andrew F.

Walls indicates, 'Christian conversion involves turning what is already there – primal things, Islamic things, Buddhist things – toward Christ' (2017, 39). Christian development practitioners have to understand that a 'professional development can improve material, mental, and social life within the lifetime of the community members without changing the ultimate outcome of the bigger story' (Myers 2011, 175). In this view, it is only when people accept the saving grace of Christ that real transformational development is achieved. Although transformational development, as Myers uses it, ultimately aims at leading people to accept the saving grace of God, this does not mean that the Christian development practitioner automatically has to impose the salvation story on people. Within the concept of Christian transformational development, acceptance of the salvation story is not a human effort, but the work of the Holy Spirit who convinces people of sin, justice and judgement.

Development defined only through economic growth is missing the mark. It has to take into consideration other aspects such as social and environmental development. Sustainable development is therefore a socioeconomic and environmental development. It affects all aspects of societies: education and training, child protection and welfare, and practices that protect and sustain the environment (Lehtonen *et al.* 2002, 4). Thus, development is a change that affects the economic, social and environmental circumstances of people in a positive manner. It focuses on the wholeness of human beings in their sociocultural context by seeking to understand the community and it brings about changes that are necessary for positive transformation.

In the context of this article, I am using the word sustainability to indicate a support system that is not depleted or permanently consumed in order to lead to perpetual dependency. It is that which empowers the beneficiary to engage in a durable activity that will bring about a change in his/her conditions in a positive and lasting manner. Sustainability implies acting with the goal of leading people to achieve their autonomy rather than encouraging them to always rely on one-time gifts, which can leave them worse off than their initial state. It is leading people to implement their potential for their own benefit and not depend on outside help all their life. I therefore agree with the World Commission on Environment and Development's definition of sustainable development as '[d]evelopment that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED, 1987).

In other words, sustainable development is about empowering people to develop their own means of survival within their socioeconomic, political and environmental contexts without causing threat to their future generations. And when the spiritual dimension is added to this, it becomes *transformational development* because it involves both body and soul. Centre International d'Évangélisation/Mission Intérieure Africaine (CIE/MIA) sees its work as holistic mission and development, that is, a Christian mission that considers the totality of the human being by taking care of both spiritual and physical dimensions of life. Prior to exploring the mission statement and some of these holistic approaches to mission by CIE/MIA, I will give a brief background of the founder of the church which might have informed the church's holistic approach to mission.

Religious background of Karambiri

Centre International d'Évangélisation is an evangelical and international movement based in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. It was founded in 1977 by Mamadou Philippe Karambiri and his wife Marie Sophie Karambiri. The movement was officially registered on 9 December 1987. The church is a member of FEME: Fédération des Églises et Missions Évangéliques du Burkina Faso (Federation of Evangelical Churches and Missions in Burkina Faso) and sees itself as an Evangelical Church even though most people in Burkina Faso still identify it as an African Independent Church (AIC). The public opinion about the church as Independent is probably due to the fact that it was founded by a Burkinabè and not a western mission-affiliated Evangelical Church.

Mamadou Karambiri was born into a Muslim family. He learned about Christianity when he was 10 years old. In 1973 he went to study economics in France and converted to the Christian faith in the Assemblies of God Church. He went back to Burkina Faso in 1977 and started his ministry while working with the Burkina Faso administration. He also worked with various organisations, as the Director for the Promotion of Exchanges at the National Office of Foreign Trade, the Commercial Director of Faso Fani and the General Director of Faso Yaar. In addition to that, he was the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, the Vice-President of the Chamber of Commerce and the Chairman of the Board of Naganagani Airlines. His involvement in these various organisations might have influenced his development consciousness in the church and the country in general.

CIE/MIA since its inception has not only opened many branches in the country but also in other African countries and abroad, including France and the United States of America. The main branch in Ouagadougou has 7,000 members and is the largest congregation of the church worldwide. This is a first attempt to document the contribution of CIE/MIA to sustainable development in Burkina Faso. I therefore used primary source material such as the 30th anniversary brochure, oral interviews with pastors and women leaders in some of the branches of the church, and online interviews with some of the media workers. I also used some of the electronic materials available on the CIE/MIA website and email correspondence with the Advancement Officer of the church. An overview of the mission statement of the church will help to understand the church's holistic approach to mission.

Mission statement of CIE/MIA

The mission of Centre-International d'Évangélisation/Mission Intérieure Africaine is to:

- 1 Proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation and redemption of human beings,
- 2 Develop common evangelical actions that can bring members of different denominations together,

- 3 Instruct members to live according to the Word of God and develop mutual love and spiritual unity,
- 4 Plant churches everywhere that this is necessary and train and ordain ministers to lead the congregations,
- 5 Contribute to the socioeconomic and cultural development of Burkina Faso through the building of training centres, develop social actions, agricultural and breeding activities.

(Centre International d'Évangélisation/Mission Intérieure
Africaine/CIE-MIA, n.d.)

Thus, it is clear from the above mission statement that CIE/MIA is a church that is involved in evangelism, teaching, prayer, compassion and mission.

Holistic mission and development/transformational development: proclaiming the salvation story through concrete actions

CIE/MIA does holistic mission and development (transformational development) in Burkina Faso by undertaking both spiritual and social activities for the well-being of people. The main branch of CIE/MIA is called Le Tabernacle Béthel Israël/l'Eglise des Nations (Bethel Israel Tabernacle/All Nations' Church). Firmin Somé indicates that the main branch is called Tabernacle Béthel Israël, just to show that it is a place where the God of Israel is worshipped. This is the headquarters of the church and is located in Dassagho in Ouagadougou. It was initially built to host 5,000 people and is used for both church services on Sundays and national/international conferences organised by the church. Mamadou Karambiri is the pastor of this branch. Karambiri has other ministers who are working in all the other branches. CIE/MIA following its mission statement has different departments in the church. As noted above, transformational development is about leading people to accept the saving grace of Christ through an holistic approach to mission. This can include developmental projects as well as the way the church treats the deprived in society. Thus, the first department in the church is the department of evangelism, which is in charge of organising outreach programmes on behalf of the church. This department had by 2007 opened 100 branches in Burkina Faso, 20 of the churches being in Ouagadougou.

One of the church's approaches to mission is investing in education. As indicated in the definition of sustainable development, education and training is one aspect affected by sustainable development. In 1992, the church also opened its first school. Currently the church has three primary schools and one nursery in Ouagadougou. It also has a primary school in Bobo-Dioulasso and one in Niger. According to Firmin Somé, even though the church only has a few schools, it has good results in terms of the children's social and spiritual education.

From 2000, CIE/MIA started sending missionaries out of Burkina Faso. As a result, by 2007, six churches were opened in Côte d'Ivoire, three churches in

Benin, six churches in Guinea Conakry, two churches and a primary school in Niger; and outside of Africa two churches were opened in France and one in the United States of America. Melba Maggay points out that

Missionary movements, like the modern ones that rose from the evangelical awakenings of the eighteenth century onwards, likewise built schools and hospitals in their wake, doing various works of mercy in far-flung places alongside evangelisation. The impact of such work can be seen in the likes of Nelson Mandela, who in 1998 World Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare paid tribute to such efforts. As a boy he was too poor, he said. If not for mission schools, he could not have gone to school.

(2008, 46–52)

Maggay's statement shows that it is important to consider the vital need of people while doing Christian mission among them. Mandela's gratitude to the church in the quotation above is evidence that he would never have had the chance to receive formal education if not for the missionary schools in his country. The impact of Nelson Mandela in liberating the people of South Africa is widely known and one can only imagine what South Africa would be like today if Mandela had not had the chance to go to school and had not learned the Christian values that all humans are created equally in the image of God and deserve life regardless of their race.

According to Lilian Ayete-Nyampong (2015), among the 10 countries where people are the least educated, seven are in West Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea Conakry, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone. CIE/MIA is therefore meeting the core needs of people in West Africa by not only caring for their souls through evangelism but also establishing schools where many children from poor families will have the chance to receive a formal education. In her study on AICs in post-apartheid South Africa, Barbara Bompani notes that '[e]ducation as emancipation was a recurrent theme and claim in the churches' (2010, 321). Even though CIE/MIA does not classify itself among AICs and their investment in education does not look big at the moment, one can still expect long-term positive impacts, because, as indicated above in the case of Mandela, Christian education has frequently led to the creation of competent leaders in Africa. Firmin Somé indicated (in a correspondence from Ouagadougou on 11 September 2018) that one of the teachings in the schools, in addition to Christian training, is educating children to be courteous in their society. The teaching of children to live in a courteous way is a good social value for pacific relationships among human beings, especially in countries with pluralistic religions and cultural practices.

According to Myers, '[o]ften the transformational development process begins with witness through good deeds' (2011, 201). The second department in the church is the department of hospitals and maternity. Members of this department are both women and men engaged in reaching out to people in hospitals to share the Gospel with them and assist them with financial and material

support, particularly by paying for the treatment bills of some sick people. This department also sensitises people to HIV/AIDS and provides free tests for those who wish to take them. Although this may sound more like social relief and welfare, the work of this department not only touches the spiritual life of the sick people through the Gospel, but it also transforms their entire being through social and environmental concerns which are part and parcel of development. One cannot talk about sustainability when people in the community are weakened by sicknesses in an unsound environment; as we know, good hygiene and sanitation contribute to the eradication of many diseases and therefore improve people's overall well-being.

From 2010, CIE/MIA renovated its system of help for vulnerable persons such as widows, orphans and street children. The church not only visits them, but the month of December is set apart as the month of compassion. The morning of 24 December is the communion day with vulnerable people. The government, media, the public and even the church all too often convey the message that people who are incarcerated are the worst people in society, and these people often end up adopting an attitude of blaming themselves (Chapman 2008, 53–61). Reminding people of their wrongdoing all the time and making them feel guilty about their life is tantamount to rejecting these people in our societies. Instead, the members of the prison department in CIE/MIA do not go to prisons to remind people of their evil doings of the past but to reach out to them with the Good News of the Gospel. They also clean the prison cells, disinfect the place to improve hygiene and provide medical care for the prisoners. Living in a sound and clean environment is important for the health of the prisoners and also shows the importance that the church gives to creation as a whole and thus brings hope; for, as indicated in Principle 1 of the Rio Declaration, 'Human beings are the centre of concerns for development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature' (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development 1992, 1).

Furthermore, the church does not go to the prison cells just to share the Gospel but leave the people wandering on their own when they are freed. Rather, the prison department in CIE/MIA has contributed to changing former prisoners' lives by making sure that people are nurtured after prison to embrace life in a positive manner. Therefore, many former prisoners are now involved in full-time pastoral ministry. This is an indication of a positive transformation in those prisoners' lives to a point that they are also engaged in changing other people's lives not only as ministers of the Gospel, but in doing honest work in their societies. This department is also involved in rescuing street children and offering them training, such as carpentry, mechanics, and so on. Once again, sustainable development affects all aspects of societies: education and training, eliminating child labour, and promoting recycling in order to protect the environment (Lehtonen *et al.* 2002, 4).

Thus, preaching the Gospel in prisons is important but the most significant action here is the initiative to prevent reoffending, because sustainable development is not only about dealing with the current circumstances of people in their communities, but it is also helping them face their future in a responsible

manner. As already noted above, CIE/MIA sees its work as a holistic approach to mission. As Myers argues

We must know who we are and the purpose for which we were created. Therefore, restoring identity and recovering vocation must be the focus of biblical understanding of human transformation.

(2011, 178)

The prison department does not overlook the socio-religious past of the prisoners in dealing with them in their present condition in prison. That is why this ministry is organised in such a way that it can find suitable activities for freed prisoners to do after they are released so that they do not fall back into their past habits and even become worse than they were before going to prison.

The plan of finding jobs for street children is also commendable because one cannot talk of sustainable development in a country if children in that country do not have access to basic education and spend their time in the streets where they learn all kinds of social vices and participate in antisocial practices that disturb the peace and security in society. In other words, the transforming message of the Gospel is preached through practical deeds and helping the people to be aware of their vocation in their communities so that they don't rely on one-time gifts handed over to them, but grow out of dependency to contribute to the building of their society (Myers 2011, 193–202). Mamadou Karambiri himself is involved in educating people to maintain peace in Burkina Faso and other parts of Africa, thus making the church an instrument and promoter of peace in Africa (*l'Observateur Paalga* No. 9530, 2018, 18).

Another department in the church is the children and youth ministry. The children's group is made up of all those between 5 and 15 years old in the church. This ministry is carried out by adults in the church who have volunteered to educate all children to learn from the Bible and also activities like art, songs, dance and drama and so on. The youth department involves young people above the age of 15. These young people meet to learn how they can bring about a positive change in the world. They also have a programme which consists of visiting elderly people who live in isolation in order to support them in their lives. There is also the student department, which consists of reaching out to students in secondary schools and universities. Extra classes are organised in order to help students improve their academic abilities. In other words, the students in CIE/MIA are involved in seeking excellence in the country, which is a positive engagement from their department.

Another important aspect of development is the role of women. Principle 20 of the Rio Declaration of 1992 is that '[w]omen have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development.' This implies that women have fundamental contributions to make towards the sustainable development of their countries. This can be achieved through concrete actions taken by women in the communities to bring about changes that have positive and lasting impacts. Thus,

one of the major departments that is impacting the life of the church and people's lives in the entire country is the women's movement. It is reported in the brochure of the 30th anniversary of CIE/MIA that Marie Sophie Karambiri, co-founder of the church, started the movement as soon as she and her husband founded the church in 1977. She named the movement 'Group Esther'. The 30th anniversary brochure introduces the group in this way: 'Le groupe Esther: ce groupe, initiateur de la vie de prière du Centre International d'Évangélisation/Mission Intérieure Africaine continue à le soutenir par ses prières hebdomadaires' (Group Esther: this group, initiator of the prayer life of CIE/MIA still continues to sustain the church through its weekly prayers). This movement, from its inception, dedicated its time to praying for the church under the leadership of its founder until her death. In 2010, Mamadou Karambiri remarried Orthance Palm and the group took the name Femmes de Destiné (Women of Destiny).

The women's ministry works particularly for the independence of women through the establishment of the compound of trades such as soap making, weaving, tailoring, hairdressing, restaurants, and the commercialisation of peanut butter and so on. The women's products are sold in the 'Boutique de la Femme de Destiné'. All these activities have contributed to creating jobs for women who can now meet their personal needs. There is also the widows' section which is called 'the Ruth'. This section allows women to borrow money from their own account to start their own business.

For instance, in the Birifor area, there is a Group Esther in Batié (South West of Burkina Faso) which started in 1998 with Mr Abdoul Karim Ouédraogo and his wife. According to Jacqueline Somdo/Abème, the secretary of the Group Esther, they meet every Saturday to intercede for the church, their families and the whole world.

With the direction that the group took from 2010, the women added other activities to their prayer programmes. They also have social ministries which consist of visiting people in the community, in the hospital and in the prison. For instance, one activity of the leaders of les Femmes de Destiné is to help Birifor women who were brewing local beer and converted to Christianity to find alternative income-generating activities. Femmes de Destiné Batié is trying to assist women to do activities that will not jeopardise their Christian witness. The Birifor local beer is very lucrative for Birifor women, but it is also the source of various social problems among these communities.

Philip Jenkins argues that

Membership in a new Pentecostal church means a significant improvement in the lives of poor women, since this is where they are likely to meet men who do not squander family resources on drinking, gambling, prostitutes, and even second households.

(2011, 97)

In Birifor society, some men are addicted to drinking local beer and find it very difficult to stop drinking even when they convert to Christianity. In other

words, Femmes de Destin does not ask people to stop their lucrative activities that people may find questionable for these women's Christian identity and leave them to manage on their own without any support. The group is fully engaged in following up with its members and provides financial support for those who desire to undertake a different activity but do not have the means to do so. In talking about the Women of Destiny's activities among the Birifor, I explain that the importance here is twofold; that is, helping women who converted to the Christian faith find an income-generating activity that is suitable to their Christian faith and bringing about social change in families because men who are addicted to alcohol frequently spend all their time outside of their households squandering family resources on alcohol without paying attention to the needs of their wives and children (Dah 2017, 168). The idea of social transformation is very important in the ministry of the Women of Destiny because the social aspect of change is one of the pillars of human activities that sustainable development has to affect.

The church also has the department of media and publications and a television station named Impact TV. Impact TV was inaugurated on 7 March 2008 and Marie Sophie Karambiri, co-founder of the church, passed away on 12 March the same year. The TV programmes started in June 2010. Impact TV was the first private television station in Burkina Faso to be on satellite. Today it is on two satellite stations, social media, and so on. Impact TV works in partnership with churches, associations, NGOs, the civil society and the state in order to contribute to the spiritual, social, educational, political and economic development of the country. Thus, it has the lowest advertisement rates with the aim of contributing to the socioeconomic development of the country.

The impact of CIE/MIA through Impact TV is not limited to its programmes. It also creates jobs for young people in Burkina Faso and thus reduces unemployment in the country, by contributing to solving one of the major concerns of Goal 14 in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations 2015). In his talk entitled 'Challenging Cultures, Changing Nations for a Common Good', at the Institute for Christian Impact Seminar on 'Mission for a Bright Africa', in Ghana on 2 July 2018, David Zac Niringiye indicated that the church does not need to pray for young people to find jobs, but must rather create jobs and employ the young people. For, even though Darrell L. Whiteman in his discussion about economic development argues that, '[e]conomic development does not automatically lead to human development', he points out 'the creation of jobs, and the reduction of dependency' as one of the new alternative values for development (1990, 121–122).

Conclusion

Centre International d'Evangelisation is an Evangelical Church founded by a native Burkinab and his late wife, a fact which has contributed to the local community seeing it as an AIC. However, the church is a full member of FEME. Its mission statement focuses on evangelism, teaching, prayer, compassion and

mission. The church uses a holistic approach to mission to touch both the hearts and lives of people and is spreading the Gospel in Burkina Faso and other parts of the world through its various ministry departments.

Using the holistic approach to mission to impact both communities and individuals is a way of participating in the sustainable development of the country because the church does not only undertake actions that meet the temporary needs of people, but is developing mechanisms that can help them face both their current and future circumstances in order to not return to their negative pasts. In other words, it is helping people who are in need in such a way that they are not always depending on temporary aid and being left worse off when that aid runs out. It is empowering people to meaningfully face their life circumstances so that they can improve their lives, circumstances and societies.

Thus, CIE/MIA is contributing to sustainable development by not only proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom through the preaching of the word of God, but also undertaking concrete actions through teaching, healing and empowering people to help them improve their lives, and for those who have been excluded for various reasons, to be readmitted to their communities where they in turn can help and impact others for a positive change in their society. For '[t]he activity of God redeeming and restoring creation includes poverty eradication along with the other elements of the Gospel' (Myers 2019, 12).

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