

Misean Cara Learning Brief No. 2018/03

Expanding Livelihoods Opportunities

Lessons from Misean Cara Livelihoods
Project Evaluations 2015 and 2016



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Mission Support from Ireland

1. Introduction

There is a strong focus on livelihoods in the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Of those that target livelihoods explicitly, Goal 1 seeks to eliminate poverty, Goal 2 aims for zero hunger and Goal 8 is about decent work and economic growth. SDG 13 on Climate action aims to have a major impact on the livelihoods of the 570 million small-scale farmers who account for 70% of global food production and are most affected by climate change. The scale of the challenges to realising these goals is significant.

The most recent report from the UN Secretary General on the SDGsⁱ reveals that, after a period of decline, the number of hungry people in the world is once again on the rise, up from 777 million in 2015 to 815 million in 2016. The latest estimate on global povertyⁱⁱ is that almost 11% of the world's population, or 783 million people, were living below the international poverty line of US\$1.90 per day in 2013. Significantly, over half of these people live in sub-Saharan Africa, with approximately one-third living in Southern Asia.

The precariousness of life for poor people in developing countries is often exacerbated by the limited range of livelihoods options available to them. Excessive dependence on one source of income (e.g., crop cultivation), and even on one approach within that source (sowing only one crop), can reduce significantly a family's ability to withstand external shocks. Much of the work of Misesan Cara's member organisations, as demonstrated in the examples given in this Learning Brief, aims to expand the range of options for earning an income available to a family.



Scenes from a forestation project implemented by Misesan Cara member organisation the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Loreto Sisters) in Nuevo Olmal, near Chachapoyas in the province of Amazonas, Peru. The planting of a particular variety of pine tree has had the twin effects of **balancing the soil's acidity** (thus enabling the cultivation of grazing for livestock) and **preventing erosion**.

Top: men and women from the community planting the seeds which will produce seedlings.

Middle: men clearing the ground and laying down the lines along which the seedlings will be planted out.

Bottom: a mature plantation showing grazing for livestock.

2. Background

In 2015 and 2016, Misesan Cara commissioned a number of evaluations of livelihoods projects. In 2015, a team from Coffey International (UK), led by Peter Mayers, conducted effectiveness reviews of four projects in Kenya, the Philippines and Peruⁱⁱⁱ. In 2016, Nicole Moran led a team that carried out an impact evaluation of five projects in India^{iv}. The India projects fell into the category of women's empowerment (social, economic and political), with project content containing varying degrees of straightforward income generation or livelihoods work alongside health, education or human rights elements. Such project content is consistent with the holistic view of the person inherent in the missionary development approach. Three of the five projects in India are considered in this document.

3. Development Results

A key aspect of all projects evaluated is that, while most have a specific focus on income generation and the improvement of livelihoods, all of them demonstrate an awareness that there are many factors, both enabling and limiting, which influence project outcomes and which are not strictly related to livelihoods. For example, the project in the Philippines implemented by the Gelacio I. Yason Foundation (*The Philippines 2015* - see Box 1) is, on the surface, an education project, but the Foundation's goal is poverty alleviation and the improvement of livelihoods. Similarly, one of the projects of the Good Shepherd Sisters in India (*India 2016a*) mobilises Dalit women to participate in agriculture and dairying cooperatives, but parallel initiatives in which they participate are focussed on preventing early marriage and child labour, and on promoting girls' education.

As mentioned above, women's empowerment, rather than sustainable livelihoods, was the focus of the five projects evaluated in India. The projects ranged from educational support through tuition and bridge schools; to health care provision through health centres and medical camps; to livelihoods support through income generating activities; to rights-focussed work using capacity development and life skills training. But, while one

or other of those designations might have been the primary descriptor of a project, the project activities almost invariably included other dimensions of an individual's development.

3.1 Lessons to Replicate

The following results and lessons, recorded by the consultants across the projects visited, could be considered for replication elsewhere.

The situation described here is entirely in keeping with the holistic approach to development which is adopted by Misesan Cara member organisations within the overall Missionary Approach^v.

Box 1 – A Unique Approach to Livelihoods in the Philippines

In the remote community of San Mariano, Mindoro Oriental in the Philippines, the Gelacio I. Yason Foundation, with support from Misesan Cara member organisation the Divine Word Missionaries, is running a project aimed at improving livelihoods through better education based on the day-to-day challenges encountered by the local community. The Family Farm School which the Foundation set up provides a secondary education relevant to the needs of young people in a rural area.

One aspect of the School is that the family of each student runs a micro-enterprise that generates an income to cover tuition and accommodation costs, thus relieving the financial burden on both family and school. The project helps the student to identify an enterprise that is within their household's capacity to implement. In one instance, a small-scale bakery run by one family is producing sufficient profits to keep all the children of the family in education (see photo).

One of the core values of the Foundation is "connectedness", which views the whole person in both economic and social dimensions. Through its students, the school reaches out to the wider community, promoting improved farming practices. The consultant met a woman who claimed that, during a dry spell, her organically-grown rice performed better than the chemically treated rice of her neighbours.

Also at the level of the wider community, the Farm School is promoting better health through encouraging a reduction in the consumption of monosodium glutamate, sugary soft drinks and unhealthy food. One outcome for parents has been a decrease in medical bills.

The Foundation is an active member of the Philippine Federation of Family Farm and Rural Schools, which lobbied successfully for the passing of the 2013 Rural Farm School Act, promoting Rural Farm Schools as an alternative delivery model for secondary education. Since 2001, almost 200 students have graduated from the Gelacio I. Yason Family Farm School.

The Philippines 2015



Maria Aurola and family in the shop and bakery which she designed and set up, which the family runs as an income generating activity. See Box 1. Photo: Gelacio I. Yason Foundation.

Project Approaches and Strategies

- School nurseries provide **vegetables for students** to consume in school but also to take home, improving household nutrition. There is a knock-on effect of households being inspired to set up their own vegetable gardens at home. *Peru 2015*
- An agricultural college places students on **long-term placements with local farmers**, strengthening relationships with the community. *Kenya 2015a*
- That college also runs shorter courses on improved agricultural practices, with 350 participants in 2015, and **tailors course content to local need and demand**. *Kenya 2015a*
- In a women's project in India, **men's groups** have been set up with the objective of winning support for the women's project work. *India 2016a*
- Working with marginalised waste pickers in an urban slum area, one project is trying to provide **alternative livelihoods** for women and men. Ten of those trained are now working for between 300 and 500 rupees a day, between three and five times what they could earn picking and recycling waste. *India 2016c*
- In relation to that project, the local municipality has a **progressive policy on solid waste management and recycling**. The project team is availing of the positive environment created by that policy to improve attitudes towards those who do the

sorting and recycling of solid waste, referred to as "rag pickers". There is a possibility that the group could, eventually, be integrated into the city's solid waste management plans. *India 2016c*

The training sessions held at the GSS centres have taught them how to manage finance, maintain ledger, book keeping, going to the bank ...

Moran & Rahman, 2016

"We feel confident now to go to government offices and speak".

Group participant, India 2016a

Using Technology

- A project in the Amazonas region of Peru (see also p.1) has demonstrated to people, including the local and national governments, that **land can be managed in new ways** to supply firewood, food and livestock. *Peru 2015*
- In one of the projects in Kenya, a women's group has altered its planting methods, has introduced improved organic composting and is **adding value to their produce by processing** it before sale through, for example, making yoghurt and soap. *Kenya 2015b*

Savings, Credit and Finance

- Women in one project in India have **formed a cooperative to sell buffalo milk**, ensuring a better price for the members as a whole. They fund their investment in the buffaloes through a self-help group. *India 2016a*
- In all three projects in India, the use of **Self-Help Groups (SHGs)** with women has helped to reduce significantly their dependence on private moneylenders. The projects have also contributed greatly to an increase in confidence and self-esteem. Across all three projects, a total of 115 SHGs have been set up.
- In another project, 13 Self-Help Groups with a total of 268 members (by September 2016) had total savings of over 565,000 rupees. All of this is available as loans to all of the members, with the constant rotation of cash allowing access to **quick and affordable credit**

which is used to support their household. *India 2016b*

- In one project in Kenya, the **table banking** idea is proving highly successful, providing women with a very welcome alternative to the high interest rates charged by private moneylenders. *Kenya 2015b*

4. Missionary Approach to Development

The substance of how various intervention logics were expressed was less important than the striking ways in which projects integrated multiple elements from other sectors in their programming. The link between increasing livelihood opportunities and providing a mix of education and vocational skills training was especially prevalent across the projects.

Coffey, 2016

Already mentioned in other Misesan Cara Learning Briefs, the unique view of development which is inherent in missionary work is evident once more in the evaluations of these livelihoods projects. The approach is described in detail in Misesan Cara's Learning Brief *Missionary Approach to Development Interventions*.^{vi} Briefly, the Approach involves five key features: crossing boundaries as part of a global missionary movement; a long-term commitment and a local presence; a personal witness of commitment to missionary values; a prophetic vision of what is possible; and a holistic approach, seeing people as dignified human beings with capacities, rights and needs. The benefits of this approach are highlighted in the evaluations:

- In a multi-site project in India, the Misesan Cara member **has had a presence in one of the sites for 49 years, in another for 35, and in a third for 23**. Across the five sites, the shortest presence was of 14 years. Project design can be informed by the perspective gained from living in the community over such a long period of time. This ensures compliance with the criterion of relevance, under which all projects achieved a high rating.

- The long-term presence and commitment contribute also to the **level of acceptance and trust** that project staff invariably enjoy within the communities they serve. In one of the projects, the presence of missionaries on the project team was enough to persuade beneficiaries, who had in other cases felt left down, that they would not be cheated or abandoned during the implementation of the project.
- As a consequence of the holistic perspective adopted, **projects are typically multi-faceted**, integrating elements from sectors other than livelihoods, frequently involving education and/or vocational training.
- Because of the multi-faceted approach, one solution can also have **multiple dimensions**. This is nowhere more evident than in the construction of a multi-purpose hall. In one project (*India 2016b*), this hall is being used for by schoolchildren for evening study, by the local Children's Parliament for its meetings, by women's SHGs for monthly meetings, by youth and adolescent groups for their meetings and for other village-level meetings. The availability of the hall provides a physical focus for initiatives, and makes the planning of group activities easier.
- Missionary organisations are viewed as being **morally accountable**. Beneficiaries from a number of the projects which involved savings and loan schemes expressed confidence in their money being held safely and returned when requested.
- The **values embraced and demonstrated** by project staff and volunteers are evident to beneficiaries and earn both respect and buy-in from direct beneficiaries and external stakeholders.

[t]he skills and training provided by projects were identified by local stakeholders as highly relevant and all of the projects reached low-level subsistence communities

- *Coffey, 2016*

Projects

The projects mentioned in this Learning Brief are:

- Baraka Agricultural College, Franciscan Brothers (Kenya 2015a)
- Shalom Farm Project, Good Shepherd Sisters (Kenya 2015b)
- Gelacio I. Yason Foundation – Family Farm School, Divine Word Missionaries (Philippines 2015)
- Capacity Strengthening for Local Forestry Development, Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary/Loreto Sisters (Peru 2015)
- Empowering of Vulnerable Women through Human Rights and Economic Development, Good Shepherd Sisters (India 2016a)
- Empowering women, youth and children, Presentation Sisters (India 2016b)
- Integrated Community Development project for Women, Divine Word Missionaries (India 2016c)

Misean Cara Learning Briefs

This is one of a series of Learning Briefs produced by Misean Cara with a view to promoting learning and contributing to discourse within the development sector. The Briefs are based on monitoring and evaluation work done for Misean Cara. Previous issues cover education, health, project evaluation, women's empowerment and girls' education. All Learning Briefs are available at www.miseancara.ie/public-resources.

About Misean Cara

Established in 2004, Misean Cara is an international and Irish faith-based missionary development movement made up of 91 member organisations working in over 50 countries. We work with some of the most marginalised and vulnerable people in developing countries. Adopting a human rights focus, we support communities addressing basic needs in the areas of education, health, and livelihoods, as well as advocating for economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. At times of humanitarian crisis, the trusted and long-term presence of missionaries in affected communities also allows for rapid, efficient and targeted responses.

Misean Cara and our members work collectively and individually through the missionary approach to development. This framework is based on five values: respect, justice, commitment, compassion and integrity. Together, these establish the basis for the approach of missionaries to good development practice.

Our Strategy 2017-2021 identifies five goals:

1. Uphold the right to quality education
2. Uphold the right to better health, clean water and sanitation
3. Uphold the right to sustainable livelihoods
4. Uphold and advocate for human rights
5. Enhance and promote the missionary approach to development.

Further expressing our desire to reach the most vulnerable and marginalised, the Strategy will see Misean Cara bringing a particular focus to bear on targeting five groups: women, children, refugees, displaced people and people with disabilities.

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Endnotes

ⁱhttps://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/18541SG_SDG_Progress_Report_2018_ECOSOC.pdf

ⁱⁱwww.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview, updated April 2018.

ⁱⁱⁱCoffey International (UK): Effectiveness Reviews: Final Livelihoods Thematic Report, February 2016.

^{iv}Moran, Nicole and Lakshmi Rahman, Women's Empowerment Projects in India – Thematic Evaluation Report, December 2016

^vSee Misean Cara's Learning Brief *Missionary Approach to Development Interventions*, at <http://www.miseancara.ie/public-resources/>

^{vi}www.miseancara.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/LB2018-02-Faith-based-and-Missionary-Approach-to-Development.pdf