

MARC

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MARC to Make Transition, Retain Its Mission

Pioneering mission center continues to inspire vision and empower mission.

For more than 35 years, World Vision's Mission Advanced Research and Communication Center (MARC) has stood at the forefront of pioneering mission efforts. Its goal has been to inspire vision and empower mission among those who are extending the whole gospel to the whole world.

In keeping with its goal and pioneering spirit, MARC is embarking on a transition in response to the fact that the primary users of its global resources are North American church pastors and mission-conscious leaders from a variety of professional and Christian faith backgrounds.

MARC grew out of the astuteness of Ted Engstrom, then the executive vice president of World Vision, and Ed Dayton, an aerospace engineer and graduate of Fuller Theological Seminary, who believed that computers, information, research and planning complex projects could be used effectively to reach the world for Christ.

As MARC's first director in 1967, Ed introduced time management to pastors and planning tools to the mission enterprise. As the idea of unreached people emerged, Ed took the lead in gathering information on people groups. Publications began to flow.

MARC became the backbone of the Lausanne movement, providing staff support, encouragement and adminis-

trative support to Lausanne's volunteer leadership. The MARC team chaired Lausanne II in 1989 in Manila, a meeting of more than 5,000 mission leaders from around the world. AD2000 was birthed out of this process.

In the early 1990s, Bryant Myers, a man whom Ed befriended and mentored, took over the reigns of MARC. In the June 1992 issue of the *MARC Newsletter*, Bryant expressed his belief

“
World Vision
remains
committed to
serving the least,
last and lost”

that a value- and vision-driven, social-learning approach was ideally suited for managing mission in the '90s. He believed it fit comfortably within a biblical framework suited to a post-modern world.

Bryant wrote, "The kingdom of God provides us the vision of transformed people in a transformed world. The life of Jesus provides us the values by which God has chosen to bring his kingdom. Our own sense of fallibility leads us to continuing reflection and evaluation of how we are doing."

And so MARC has continued to provide leadership, information, research and evaluation to Christian mission and those involved with it. Seminary students, pastors, mission leaders and others interested in what God is doing in the world have relied

on MARC as a source for preparation and inspiration, as well as information, on a host of mission-related topics, including mission training, global evangelization, short-term mission excursions, cross-cultural issues, international health, mission reentry and a whole range of other issues scarcely available elsewhere.

Over the years MARC has evolved, putting at the disposal of Christian leaders critical thought and research content on those global issues that have the largest impact on our world but too often fail to garner news headlines.

MARC has never shied away from addressing hard-hitting issues, bringing a biblical and Christ-centered perspective to such matters as HIV/AIDS, poverty, war, hunger, child labor and child exploitation.

It has been committed to helping fulfill the founding vision of Dr. Bob Pierce that the ministry and resources of World Vision would be committed to serving and saving the least, the last and the lost. This remains true today.

MARC will continue to intensify its focus on covering a range of issues for those who may want a brief summary to those who want to pursue an in-depth examination of them. The name MARC will be retired, and this mission-focused research and inspiration ministry will be known as World Vision Resources.

It is our hope to continue upgrading this valuable resource library to serve as a research arm for some, an inspiration center for another and a prophetic voice to all.

† Steven W. Haas

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Transformational Development Pursues Fullness of Life

World Vision engages members of poverty stricken communities all over the world in transformational development programs designed to sustain change economically, environmentally, socially, psychologically and spiritually.

As a Christian development organization, World Vision has invested more than 50 years in partnering with girls and boys, their families and communities as together they pursue a better future. This involves a transformational journey that moves toward a future marked by "fullness of life with dignity, justice, peace and hope."

Too often poverty threatens human survival and involves unacceptable human suffering. It prevents people from fulfilling their God-given potential. While it becomes cyclical and intergenerational, it can be surmounted.

In its efforts to effectively confront poverty in partnership with those who are suffering its effects, World Vision is committed to a strategic mission of transformational development. This work has grown to embrace the larger issues of community development and advocacy that address poverty's many expressions.

Poverty expresses itself in a chronic inability to meet basic needs, an erosion of human dignity, a loss of identity and vocation, restrictions of human rights, a lack of access to information for decision-making, a limited development of employment-related skills, a limited means of production and capacity development, a limited access to social support networks and so on.

In its fight against poverty and its effects upon children, adults and communities, World Vision's development work embraces all these larger issues of community development and advocacy. Through more than 1,800 development projects, we have partnered with people living in poverty-stricken communities that span the Asia-Pacific region, Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

The development projects address such basic necessities as safe drinking water, immunization, education, health care, food security, microenterprise development, child protection and other matters that help equip communities to be resilient.

Transformational development programs empower the community and all of its members to envision, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate the program in an interdependent relationship with World Vision, local governments, businesses, churches and other non-government organizations.

World Vision provides technical support, funding and technical oversight. Programs are designed with the expectation that changes are sustainable economically, environmentally, socially, psychologically and spiritually.

The community strategies and initiatives used in these programs reflect an integrated understanding of people.

World Vision practitioners and community leaders stand at the leading and learning edge of the best practices in

development, research and publishing. We also work to promote dialogue to share the lessons learned and enhance new understanding and to increase transparency in all of our endeavors with both donors and the communities served.

A hallmark of World Vision's understanding of development is the centrality of the child. Children younger than age 18 now make up the majority of the world's population. In some developing nations, more than 70 percent of the population are younger than age 15.

Strategically and in terms of the greatest impact for program investment, children are the key to multi-generational, sustainable change and community well-being.

As agents of transformation, children within their families and communities have proven to be the most significant measure of the effectiveness of World Vision's transformational development programs.

† Samaresh Nayak

Prayer Seen Increasingly As A Tool for Change

Among the partnership offices and staff members of World Vision International there is a growing awareness of prayer as a tool for holistic transformation within the communities and nations we serve.

We recognize that prayer, as a devotional or contemplative activity, is essential both for personal and for corporate spiritual renewal. Change is underway as we work together to integrate prayer into our ministries.

This new attentiveness to prayer is reflected in the vision statement launched last month: "Our vision for

every child, life in all its fullness; our prayer for every heart, the will to make it so."

This statement of vision links the fullness of life for children, their communities and nations with prayer that effects an exercise of will at both the individual and political levels to make such wholesome living possible.

World Vision's Office of Prayer Mobilization continues to send prayer teams to assist churches in nations around the world as they gather to humble themselves and pray. In the fall

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Reflections from Bryant Myers

The poor and the ICT revolution — 2

In the last newsletter, I told some stories about the poor and the way they value information. I tried to explode two contemporary myths about the information and communications technology (ICT) revolution and its relevance to the poor.

First, it simply is not true that the poor do not value nor use information. They are as smart as the rest of us and can use news about weather forecasts, crop prices and the like to their advantage.

I pointed out that the poor spend their *time* getting information, unlike us in the so-called developed world who spend our *money* to get the information we need.

Second, I began to build a case that access to the Internet and the information revolution is a catalyst for development, not a blessing one gains after one experiences development.

In this newsletter I am going to develop this affirmation further as well as point out some issues of concern.

Is it really possible?

The hardware already is in place or soon can be. There are a large number of major initiatives designed to extend the information revolution to the ends of the earth.

Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA), through its VITA-CONNECT project, is putting up low orbiting satellites and distributing battery and solar-powered radios that can send and receive e-mails from the most remote village. (www.vita.org)

Rogrigo Baggio's Committee for Democracy in Information Technology in Brazil is busy recycling old computers and the last generation of software from North America to the favelas of Brazil, turning street kids into comput-

er literacy instructors in computer science and citizenship schools. (www.cdi.org.br)

The Costa Rica Foundation for Sustainable Development is collaborating with MIT in the LINCOS project that places refurbished shipping containers, outfitted with a satellite connection, computers and a teaching center, in rural villages. Using generators for electricity, a telecenter is up and running in places that have no electricity or telephone service.

(www.lincos.net)

First Voice International works with local and international non-government organizations "serving communities in Africa and Asia most vulnerable

to poverty, isolation and lack of infrastructure and information" through satellite digital broadcasting made possible by an endowment of 5 percent of the satellite capacity of WorldSpace.

Partnering with SATELLIFE, WorldSpace is providing the first continent-wide public health channel in Africa. (www.healthnet.org and www.worldspace.com)

The software side is also developing rapidly.

TARahaat.com in India is busy working on its mission to provide a "road that connects the Indian villager to the rest of the world."

The TARahaat Internet portal houses a family of Web sites designed to provide rural households with access to products and services, e-mail to distant family members and other forms of information not easily available by other means. (www.tarahaat.com)

Sristi (Society for Research and Initiatives for Sustainable Technologies and Institutions) in India operates the

Honey Bee Network, an Internet-based, local language tool for sharing creative solutions originating at the grassroots, while also protecting the intellectual rights of the innovators. It has collected more than 10,000 innovations. (www.sristi.org)

How can I get up-to-speed?

The Digital Divide Network is an Internet-based forum that shares information and acts as a clearinghouse for those working on bridging the divide between the information haves and have-nots.

(www.digitaldividenetwork.org)

Digital Dividend, a project of the World Resources Institute, is working to "promote sustainable solutions for bridging the global digital divide." It provides an e-mail newsletter of excellent value that reports on projects underway around the world.

(www.digitaldividend.org)

Digital Partners is a Seattle-based nonprofit that links leading intellectuals, development specialists and ICT entrepreneurs in a virtual organization that focuses on cultivating a world in which everyone reaps the benefits of the digital revolution.

(www.digitalpartners.org)

Can you imagine?

How might the poor around the world benefit:

- If local health workers had access to medical advice?
- If local farmers had access to crop disease diagnoses?
- If market prices were readily available?
- If weather forecasts were available?
- If government services, forms and regulations were available?
- If ground stations or telecom centers were present as Microenterprise Development (MED) projects?

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“Major initiatives help extend the information revolution”

Reflections (from page 3)

- If the communities learned how to raise money for their projects on their own?

- If Bible study and discipleship materials were available online in ways that protect privacy?

- If churches in the West created Internet connections with churches in the developing world?

Aren't there dangers?

Of course there are dangers.

Highways allow traffic in both directions. Not only do the poor have access to information, but the non-poor have access to the poor.

The Internet tends to empower the non-poor preferentially. Middlemen and moneylenders take advantage of the poor because they have capital and information.

The Internet upgrades their advantage in terms of information. There is a serious risk that creating access through the Internet could be misused to further disempower and exploit the poor.

The Internet also creates an entry point for everything, the good and the not-so-good. Pornography and advertising for things the poor really do not need will come as easily as weather reports and current market prices.

Education and protection, especially of children, becomes an urgent concern.

Finally, the Internet is a powerful cultural force for both globalization and Westernization. Like radio and television, this new medium is not culturally neutral.

It carries a modern and secular vision of a better human future that Christians would be hard pressed to affirm. The seductive quality of materialism and consumerism is now being made available anywhere in the world.

Yet the only protection from these liabilities is to stay disconnected. This seems an impossible option unless one feels the poor deserve a permanent seat on the sidelines.

It seems to me that if we in the West are willing to risk our children and ourselves to the good and the not-so-good of the Internet, we must trust the poor with this choice as well.

What's the challenge?

James Wolfenson, president of the World Bank, states the challenge clearly: "We must work towards the day when through the Internet, through distance learning, through cellular

phones and windup radios, the village elder or the aspiring students will have access to the same information as the finance minister.

Communications technology gives us the tool for true participation. This is leveling the playing field. This is real equity."

In biblical language, it is an issue of justice.

Where's the church?

In the last five years a wide range of initiatives have been launched at the global level to address this digital divide.

There is a call for a "Global Digital Opportunity Corps," a Peace Corps-like volunteer system for establishing community-based technology centers.

In 2000 the Japanese government announced \$12 billion in loans and \$3 billion in grants for information tech-

nology initiatives in the developing world.

In April 2000 Kofi Annan, secretary general of the United Nations, made a call for a new international voluntary corps that he called the UN Information Technology Service.

But what is the church doing? I really don't know. Perhaps you can tell me.

What I do know is that some of the parachurch groups are slowly getting into the game. I assume that individual churches in the West are setting up telecenters in their churches for those in their area who are information poor.

But in those parts of the world where information is the privilege of the rich and the educated elites, where the church itself is poor, I suspect there is much to be done.

The first challenge is to accept the facts. It is a fact that any new technology is the gift of a creative God made possible by creative human beings made in God's image.

The second and corresponding fact is that the Evil One will do all that is possible to bend this innovation, and its potential to enhance life, to uses that dehumanize, destroy and deceive.

Therefore the church must accept the challenge to find its place and its call regarding this global innovation in a conflicted, fallen world.

I am not sure what that call might be, but I am quite sure that ignoring the information revolution, or simply using its benefits without working for access for everyone, would be wrong.

What do you think?

“ It is an issue of justice

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Prayer as Tool (from page 2)

of last year I led an international team that participated in a prayer initiative in Zimbabwe.

One participant asked that we lay before the Lord a desire for the church in Zimbabwe to be purposefully united on issues that relate to peacebuilding, famine and HIV/AIDS.

Earlier this year we received a report that God is indeed moving the church in unison concerning these vital matters. A workshop to

draw up strategies for responding to these issues was attended by representatives from all three of the key ecclesiastical institutions in that country. This is the first time this had happened in the course of many meetings.

The church in Zimbabwe no longer is speaking in isolated, dissenting voices. It now speaks and acts as one.

✦ John Robb